

# NOTES

## 1. AN EARLY BRONZE AGE FUNERARY CUP FROM CHOLLERFORD IN NORTHUMBERLAND

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### SUMMARY

*The Early Bronze Age tradition of placing small ceramic cups into the burial context is widely acknowledged yet poorly understood. The recent identification of a Funerary Cup in private hands from Chollerford in Northumberland adds additional data to a wider study of such cups from northern England. Originally thought to be a Roman pot due to the proximity of Chollerford to Hadrian's Wall, this small cup can now be re-assessed and compared with other vessels from North Yorkshire and Northumberland. In addition to focussing on the individual attributes of the Chollerford Cup, the wider role of cups within funerary practices of the Early Bronze Age is discussed and finds that far from being accessory to other ceramics, the role of the cup was to accompany the remains and acted as an important grave artefact in its own right.*

In the 1950s, while working as a young man on a farm near Chollerford in Northumberland, Mr John Errington was gifted a small ceramic cup by the farmer who had found it in the upturned roots of a tree on his land at Hill Head Farm (NY 940 690). The exact find spot on the farm is unknown, there was no reported burial evidence or associated finds and in the intervening years the cup has been curated as a Roman vessel due to the proximity of Hadrian's Wall.

In January 2016, the cup was produced for the author's inspection following a lecture to an archaeology group in Harrogate where it was immediately recognised as belonging to the Funerary Cup tradition of the Early Bronze Age; a pottery type often also referred to as an Accessory Cup or Incense Cup. Data from a recent study of all known extant cups in northern England (Hallam 2015) has been used to assess the attributes of the Chollerford Cup and its place within the wider northern assemblage.

The Chollerford Cup (fig. 1) is biconical in form with a contracted mouth and a flat base. Some minor damage has occurred to the flat-topped rim and on the mouth interior but otherwise it is in good condition. The dimensions of the cup are mouth diameter 35 mm, height 24 mm and base diameter 45 mm; measurements which mark this cup out as being at the smaller end of the norm for the tradition in the north of England. The fabric is orange brown in colour, smooth in texture and has inclusions of sand and very tiny mica crystals that sparkle. The mica inclusions are sparse at 5% (PCRG 2010) on both the interior and exterior cup surface. Blackened patches or fireclouds are present on the exterior surface as the result of open bonfire firing (Gibson and Woods 1997, 156) but do not occur internally.

The decorative motif incised on the cup exterior comprises very neatly executed oblique criss-cross lines forming latticework with the design bounded at the top of the cup by one encircling incised horizontal line. The tool used to create the motif must have had a similar width to a modern darning needle, probably no greater than 1 mm in width, and inspection under strong light using a magnifying glass reveals the incisions to have a flattened



Fig. 1 The Chollerford Cup. Approximately double size. For exact dimensions see text.

'channelled' profile with no evidence of displaced clay. Faint marks can be seen on the base interior which may be either fingerprints or the very slight impression of a textile imprinted into the fabric presumably resulting from the manipulation of the cup whilst the clay was still plastic.

It is a feature of the Funerary Cup class that no two vessels are identical and the sheer diversity of form and decoration found within the northern assemblage can be viewed as an important trait of the tradition, yet conversely this has made classification of Funerary Cups problematical for those attempting to arrive at a workable scheme. Longworth's (1984, 50–56) accessory cup typology resulted in the identification of 11 categories with a further 25 sub-types based mainly on form and even though Gibson's later (2004, 272) assessment of the Scottish material reduced the typology down to 10 basic types, the idiosyncratic decoration and variety of form types of this ceramic class continues to pose an ongoing typological challenge.

To illustrate the nature of the variety, three cups from Northumberland will be discussed and can be used as comparanda to the Chollerford Cup. A cup from near Belsay Castle (fig. 2) appears to reference the collar of a full-sized Collared Urn in form and has a decorative motif comprising faintly incised triangles which once contained a white decorative inlay, now much abraded. When discussing Beaker decorative techniques, Clarke (1970, 10) noted 11 definite cases of a white paste being used and which subsequent analysis suggested may have originated 'possibly from burnt bones'. Use of inlay on cups in this manner may have been a

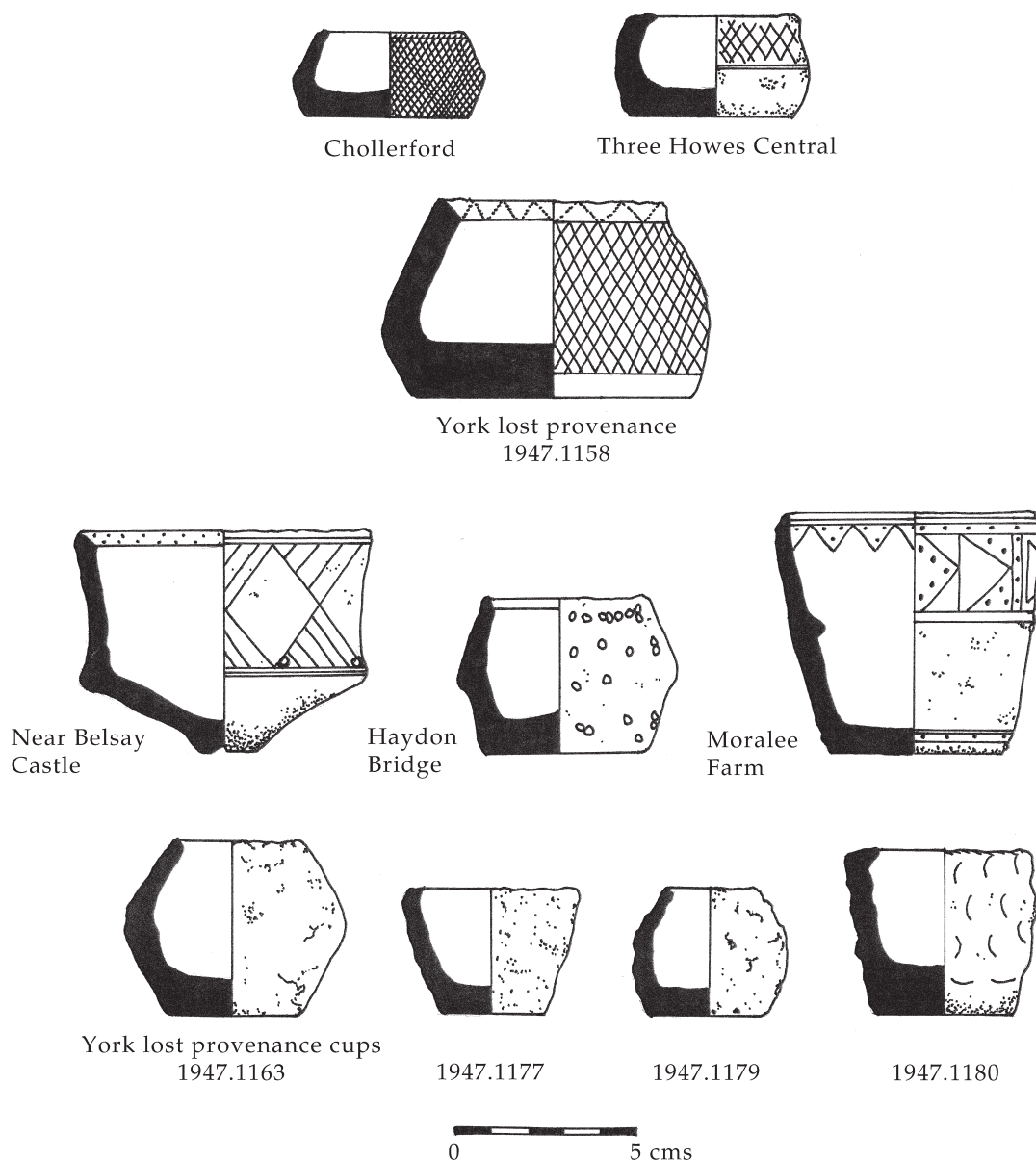


Fig. 2 Funerary cups discussed in the text

visual link to the Beaker tradition and may have elevated the prestige of the pot.

An interesting cup from Haydon Bridge (fig. 2) also has decoration unparalleled elsewhere in the northern cup assemblage. The small biconical cup has been impressed on the exterior with a haphazard motif of thin circular impressions. It is conjectured that this may have been executed using a metal tube, an act indicating the possession of metals within the community and one which may have used a motif to increase the prestige of the cup. A cup from Carrier's

Croft, Pendle in Lancashire was found to be associated with a thin piece of rolled tubular goldwork described as a bead (Barrowclough 2008, 117–119) and proved that although such objects are extremely rare, gold was in circulation in northern England during this period. It is also possible that the tool used to create the motif on the Haydon Bridge cup was something far more mundane such as a bird-bone, hollow reed or as Longworth (1985, 236) suggests, a quill.

Another Northumberland cup from Moralee Farm (fig. 2) near Haydon Bridge has its nearest decorative southern parallel in the Aldbourne sub-type found in Wessex. Unlike the Aldbourne Cup form, the Moralee Farm Cup does not splay outwards but has the shape of a small bucket or tub. Uniquely amongst northern cups the Moralee vessel has a collar protruding into the cup interior and this may have been due to a failed attempt to create an Albourne style cup.

Some comparison may be drawn between the Moralee Cup decorative motifs and those found on a Grooved Ware cup from Unival in North Uist (Henshall 1972, 309) where dots are confined within panels bordered by incised lines, however this motif is uncommon on northern cups appearing on only three out of the total 240 examples recorded so far.

Other cups recovered in the nineteenth century from the Ford area of Northumberland are much less ornate, two being plain and one being a miniature Food Vessel bowl.

Some similarities to the decoration on the Chollerford Cup can be found in a small cup recovered from the Three Howes barrow, Glaisdale in North Yorkshire (fig. 2). Measuring only 28 mm in height, base 50 mm diameter and with a 32 mm contracted mouth, the cup is decorated on the exterior with incised cross hatching above the midline only with two encircling lines incised around the carination.

A slightly larger biconical cup with lost provenance curated by York Museums Trust (fig. 2; 1947.1158) is also decorated with fine incised lattice which covers most of the external surface. This motif is bordered at the rim by an encircling incised line. Further afield, a Scottish biconical cup from Brackmont Mill, Fife also displays incised lattice on the exterior and underneath on the base (Gibson 2004, 285, Fig. 97). The instances of lattice-decorated cups appear to have a bias towards North Yorkshire with the Chollerford Cup being the only example found in Northumberland so far.

In terms of its size, the Chollerford Cup can be identified as being one of the smallest in the assemblage where the average cup dimensions are recorded as a height of 55 mm, maximum diameter of 75 mm and a mouth diameter of 50 mm. Across all the extant examples there is a wide size range varying from the widest maximum diameter recorded as 140 mm on a cup from Skirwith Moor, Cumbria, to the smallest at 25 mm found at Goodmanham in East Yorkshire.

There are a further four examples of diminutive cups from the Yorkshire area with dimensions similar to the Chollerford vessel, unfortunately the exact provenance for these cups has been lost. Are all unperforated, crudely made and have thick heavy bases (fig. 2; 1947.1163; 1177; 1179 and 1180) and decoration which is simple, minimal or non-existent. Cups 1947.1163 and 1179 appear to share similar form, fabrics and inclusions therefore it is possible that these vessels may have originated from the same locality but unless the original find-spot records are rediscovered this must remain conjecture.

As it would appear that every cup was uniquely made as a one-off, to find a grouping with size as a common attribute suggests that this may have been a preferred regional style. These

small cups should not be viewed as miniatures however as they do not occur in larger forms and should be considered as a small sub-type within the wider northern cup tradition.

Many Funerary Cups have been found in burial association with full-sized Food Vessels and Collared Urns, however the recent study found this type of association was far less frequent than expected with only 75 cases out of a possible 240 recorded. In 46 cases the cup was the only funerary vessel found in the burial (Hallam 2015, 179) therefore the cup itself may have been viewed as a prestige object.

The only stylistic funerary pairing of small and full-sized urns to be found in the north are the two Yorkshire Vase Food Vessels recovered from a cist at Well House Farm, Newton near Corbridge (Gates 1981). Both small and full-sized urns appear intricately decorated with motifs utilising a combination of herringbone and fine twisted cord or combed teeth impressions. Although not identical, both vessels have a cruciform motif on the base and the similarities of both technique and motif suggest that they may have been the work of the same school of potters.

All the cups in the northern assemblage, apart from those found associated with inhumations, exhibit heat damage seen as spalling, pitting and blackening. Three cups from northern England (North Newbald and Dalby in North Yorkshire and Garlands in Cumbria) have catastrophic spalling where the firing damage is so extreme that they could not function as a container but still had a use as grave goods. A miniature Collared Urn from Holystone Common in Northumberland has been fired to the point of vitrification indicated by the bubbling on the vessel collar. The high occurrence of heat damage seen within the cup tradition, first noted in the Scottish corpus by Gibson (2004, 282), is an indicator that these pots may have been fired on the pyre where the fluctuating and intense heat and rapid temperature rise would have made it difficult to carry out a controlled pot firing (Gibson and Woods 1997, 52).

Dating of the northern Funerary Cup assemblage relies more on known associated artefact typology due to the meagre number of reliable radiocarbon dates and this suggests a date range of 2000 cal. BC through to the tradition diminishing around 1500 cal. BC. Where radiocarbon dates have been made available, they appear to support this currency and as the tradition was relatively prolonged it may have allowed the development of regional design preferences as seen in the incised latticework and small cup examples discussed here.

The production of small cup-like vessels is known from the Early Neolithic onwards (Garrow *et al.* 2005, 145) where they formed part of the wider repertoire of domestic wares. Around 2000 cal. BC there appears to have been a deliberate development of small cups into various non-domestic forms and this can be aligned with changes in funerary practice away from Beaker style crouched inhumation to the use of cremation. It is during this period that Funerary Cups start to appear in burial contexts in the north of England and although recent data shows only a small number associated with inhumations (18), a much larger number are found to be associated with cremation deposits (97) (Hallam 2015, 179).

Some graves have been found to contain more than one cup and where two cups are found together they inevitably do not share decorative or form attributes. This is exemplified in the burial of the cremation deposit of an adult female at Slingsby, North Yorkshire (Greenwell 1877, 354). One cup was biconical with a triangular twisted cord impressed motif and the other had a conical profile with a footring under the base and 27 perforations. Another example of a Funerary Cup pairing can be found at Roose on the Furness Peninsula where a miniature Food Vessel Cup decorated with round perforate impressions accompanied a



tripartite miniature Food Vessel decorated on the rim exterior only with a single line incised zig-zag motif. The two cups were found placed together at the head end of a cremation deposit in a cist (Anon. 1846, 68). Both vessels appear to be contemporary in the burial and share a brown-orange fabric, but in the absence of petrological analysis it cannot be assumed that the clays were sourced from the same location.

There is still so much to learn about these intriguing and enigmatic vessels, particularly from cups which have been excavated and recorded using modern techniques as these can be used to greatly increase our understanding of local and regional preferences in funerary behaviours.

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## 2. A WOODEN CLOG FROM VINDOLANDA

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## SUMMARY

*A wooden clog made from alder was discovered wedged between the flagstones of a floor surface within a building dated to c. AD 105–120 inside the fort at Vindolanda, possibly placed to stop water from coming into the room. The clog, when worn as a pair, would most likely have been used to reduce discomfort when walking on the heated flooring (hypocaust system) of the bath house, but other uses are possible. Comparisons can be made with those already found at the site, at other Roman sites, and from later examples, although their specific function and designs vary.*

During the 2015 excavations at Vindolanda, a wooden clog (W2015-25; fig. 3) was discovered in the room of a period four building inside the fort (c. AD 105–120), which had a flagstone floor (context V15-57B) set between a series of oak uprights; the clog was found wedged between the flagstones. Numerous wooden objects have been used as flooring at Vindolanda (Birley 2009, 84), and the gaps in flagstones are ideal places for lazy housekeepers to dispose of unwanted rubbish (Birley 2009, 53) or to fill gaps in the flooring to stop water coming in. The room has been interpreted as a probable kitchen/storeroom due to the nearby remains of a large oven, as well as artefacts such as wooden barrel lids and bucket staves found within.

The clog measures 250 mm in length, with the largest width (at the ball/tread of the foot) being 85 mm, and the thinnest width (just before the heel) being 65 mm. It is quite clearly a left-footed clog from the deliberate deeper angle of carving of the left side. The wood type is alder, which was commonly used to make clogs (Pugsley 2003, 49). In terms of depth, the right side is more worn than the left. The left side has a depth of between 20 mm (just before the heel) and 17 mm (at the middle and front), whereas the right side has a range of 16 mm to 12 mm. The top of the sole is plain, and the underside has a heel and two stilts (positioned under the ball/tread of the foot). The heel and stilts have a depth of 3 mm. It is square fronted, with this part being 35 mm wide. The heel is in a semi-circular shape that is 45 mm long from the back of the clog. There is a small perforation through the front of the clog to hold a leather upper in place (not present), 40 mm from the front, 40 mm from the left and 35 mm from the right, so it is positioned slightly more to the right. The clog has three iron nails, each with a diameter of 15 mm, which were presumably there to support a strap or thong. The nail on the left side is 95 mm from the heel, the nail on the right side is 105 mm from the heel, and the nail on the bottom is 110 mm from the heel, 28 mm from the left, 40 mm from the right. The nails are almost cone-like in their shape, and the nail on the bottom does not pierce through the upper part of the clog. The two stilts are triangular and do not meet, two sides are straight, and the side on the edge of the clog is curved, with the left stilt more worn than the right (when looking at the stilts facing upwards). They are both the same measurement, 35 mm from the front of the clog to the point where the stilts begin, 40 mm wide and 75 mm long.

Twenty-six clogs have been found previously during excavations at Vindolanda, but these are of varying degrees of completeness. The closest comparison is W2014-35 (not in good condition), it has the same stilt, nails, heel, hole, but is a right foot and found in an earlier period (period two or three c. AD 90–105). Clogs have been found in a large variety of contexts at different sites (Pugsley 2003, 51). At Vindolanda, clogs have mainly been found in fort

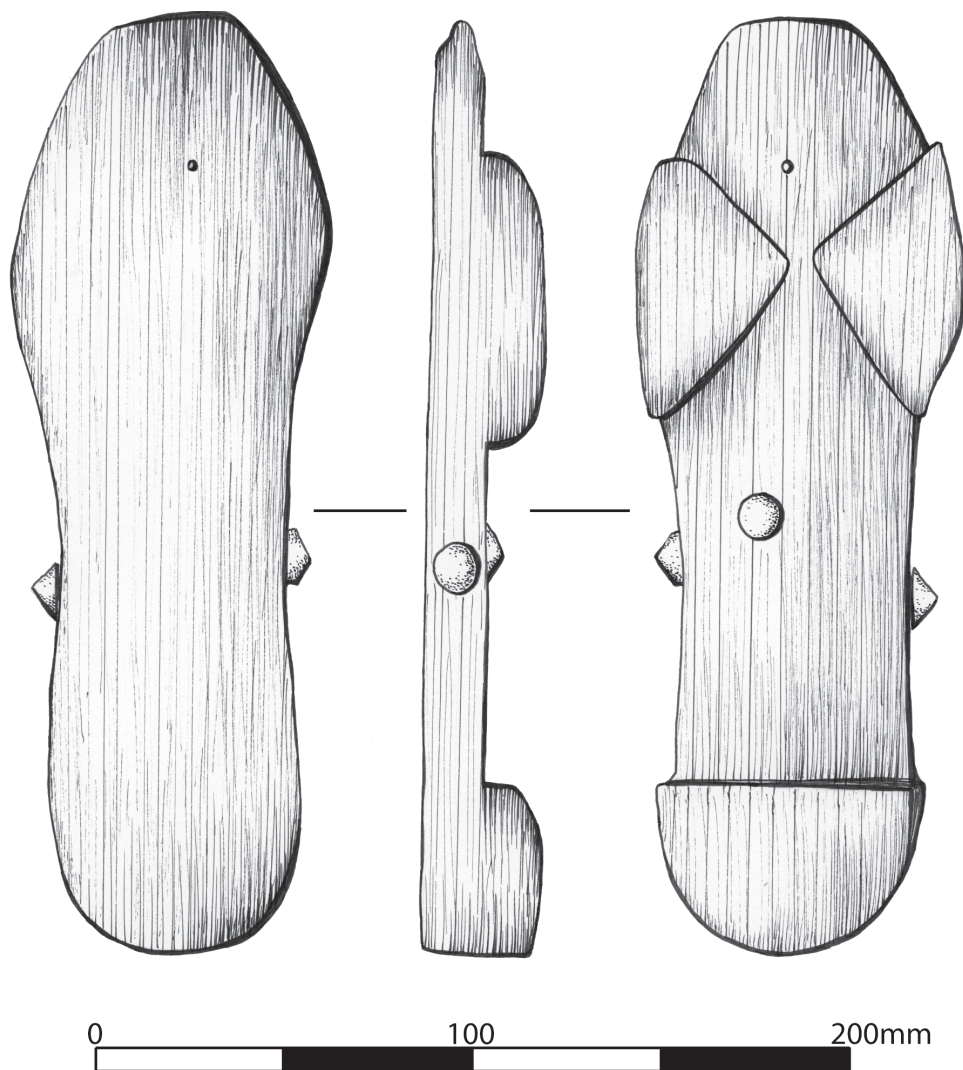


Fig. 3 A wooden clog (W2015-25) from Vindolanda (from left: top, right hand side, bottom). Illustrated by L. Bearpark.

contexts as the majority of anaerobic excavations have taken place here, with deposits dating from period two (c. AD 90–95) to period four (AD 105–120) (Birley 1994, 44–100; Birley 2003, 30, 207).

Other comparisons can be drawn with an example found in a barrack at Carlisle, dated to between AD 83/4 and AD 93/4 (Howard-Davis 2009, 840), and a first-century AD example from Vindonissa, Switzerland (Fellmann 2009, 74). In more modern times, assessments of style and use can be compared. Medieval clogs/pattens with stilts were worn as an overshoe from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries AD (Pugsley 2001, 10) to protect shoes from muddy terrain (Grew and Neergaard 1988, 91). In Egypt (AD 1560 to 1812) wear patterns on the sole



of clogs suggests that they were used for climbing and descending steep hills (Veldmeijer *et al.* 2005/6, 152).

Birley (1977, 125–6) considers that the primary use of Roman clogs was to protect feet from hot, wet bath floors. There is a Vindolanda writing tablet (number 197) that mentions *balnearia* or bath shoes (Bowman and Thomas 1994, 170) as well as numerous mosaics, and a stone carving relief from the Langres Museum showing bath slippers (Van Driel-Murray 2007, 370). However, as with many examples of Roman artefacts, they may have been multi-purpose. Some clogs have been found with iron nails on their soles (W88 435 with nails around edge of sole, W91 927 with nails on heel, and 876 with nails on the stilt), possibly for grip outside on muddy or slippery ground (Birley 1993, 33), similar to medieval examples (Pugsley 2001, 10). There are also two late second-century bronze statues in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna of two slaves wearing clogs (Pugsley 2003, 45), described by sources as water carriers (Fellman 2009, 75).

A wide variety of wood was used to manufacture Roman clogs (Pugsley 2001, 9) and it seems that any suitable readily available wood in the area was utilised. One example from Vindolanda is willow, a Carlisle example is alder, and at Vindonissa maple, ash and beech were used (Pugsley 2003, 49). Alder was ideal being soft and light with a smooth grain that could be easily worked, as well as being resilient and extremely durable when wet (Grew and Neergaard 1988, 98). Overall Roman clogs were specifically worked for a left or right foot (Fellmann 2009, 75) as W2015-25 is, and all are of adult size (Pugsley 2003, 49). Stilts are positioned under the tread of the foot, which allows the foot to turn (Pugsley 2003, 46). Triangular stilts are prominent in military contexts (Pugsley 2003, 51). The straps, from the examples that remain, would be made tight to the foot and of leather, with one example cut from a chamfron (Pugsley 2003, 49) others from old boot uppers (Birley 1993, 33). The straps were fixed between the big toe and second toe and secured to both sides of the sole by iron nails, of varying amounts and sizes, with a perforation at the front of the sole where the leather would be most likely knotted (Pugsley 2003, 44). Upper sole decoration is mostly plain, but some have elaboration (Pugsley 2003, 49) such as toe marks and patterns, which include lines, triangles and cross hatch (Vindolanda W91 928 and W91 927) (Birley 1993, 33). There is also a beautiful Vindolanda example that has, as well as decoration, a circular piece of copper alloy attached to the area where the heel would sit (W87 398).

This simpler clog design was selected as a starting point for future research, analysis and illustration, to further contextualise the catalogue of Vindolanda wooden clogs, with a view to explore if it will be possible to extract more information on the potential gender and age indicators held within the clog collection. Of particular note is the current shortage of child-size examples from Vindolanda and elsewhere on the Roman frontier, which raises fundamental questions about the social and practical uses of bath houses. Children were present at Vindolanda and other Roman military sites in the pre-Hadrianic period, as seen by the numerous examples of children's shoes recovered from Vindolanda (Van Driel-Murray 2001, 194). Whether or not the absence of children's clog sizes in the collection can be viewed as a statistical anomaly or taken as evidence for the prohibition of children using this type of facility, or heated areas of the baths, needs to be considered by future studies.

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