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the Middle-earth Reenactment Society presents



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From the editor

Welcome to our Summer issue! For this second installment of our newsletter, we have implemented several changes, which we hope will set the precedent for future editions and further our goal of becoming the premier journal dedicated to 'living history'-style interpretation of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth. As well as introducing a rotating editorship, we have also put a focus on all-new (or at least greatly expanded) member-created content, and as you can see from the table of contents, we have tried to cover a range of topics and aspects of this pursuit. Within you will find thoughtful musings on what it means to 'look like a Ranger', one person's quest to craft a piece of Tolkien-authentic kit, an examination of the possible source of a memorable Middle-earth foodstuff, a sprinkling of useful tips and tricks, and an introductory lesson to historical sewing methods that you can apply to your own crafting projects. And, of course, no publication would be complete without reviews of top-notch gear that will give you an edge in your journeys through the wild places of the world. Thank you for reading!



On Form and Function

by Gregory D Lammers (MERF handle Greg)

As the collective community of persons interested in Middle-earth re-creation grows, the sheer amount of outside influences, naturally, is expanding as well. And rightly so! Everyone has their own opinion of what Tolkien envisioned, and will interpret even concrete references to materials or culture in their own unique way. This is, after all, part of what makes these pursuits fun!

As we introduce ourselves to more and more interested persons, a few key topics continue to lodge themselves in the forefront of my thoughts: form and function.

It is often said that form follows function,

but in our hobby, where capturing the essence of an unseen, "historical" culture is critical for a believable impression, I'm finding form often takes center-stage to functioning gear. The word "aesthetic" is widely used to reference umbrella genres, such as the "Ranger Aesthetic" or the "Hobbit Aesthetic". Function is, as we all know, a critical part of creating a believable, realistic, and legitimate impression: if it doesn't *work*, it isn't going to "work". But which should be the trump card? Which should be taking backseat to allow for the other? Can we strike a balance? **(continued on next page)**



“Who or what decided that a Ranger should wear tall leather boots, arrows on their back, a heavy cloak, a leather vest, and carry a bow, a sword, and a dagger?”

With form, and “The Aesthetic”, I see both sides. Following a predetermined “Ranger Aesthetic” can help ensure that an impression is recognized for what it is meant to be. This is vital for a re-creationist who is in the public eye often, lest he or she be mistaken for a character entirely unrelated. However...who and/or what chose the definition of “the aesthetic” of any one culture? Who or what decided that a Ranger should wear tall leather boots, arrows on their back, a heavy cloak, a leather vest, and carry a bow, a sword, and a dagger? So often, this is exactly what “Ranger Aesthetic” evokes. Is there anything wrong with it? Not necessarily...but is anything sacrificed by following this “aesthetic”? Does “aesthetic”-based garb pigeonhole an impression too specifically to be considered Middle-earth, or too generally to be considered one culture? We should really be sure that when we follow such a framework, that we are using Tolkien as a base first.

With function, I can approach both arguments as well. To make our gear function properly, it is commonplace to plan and assemble individual “kits” for each of a handful of functions that may serve to fulfill a task while out and about, such as sewing, cooking, hygiene, and various other specific functions. These various sets of gear tend to result in several to dozens of separate bags or pouches to contain them all, and setting up camp turns into organizing an apothecary’s worth of bags that serve a myriad of uses. To fulfill these various *tasks* for time in the wilds without one’s pack becoming too burdensome to carry, outfitting ones’ self with tools that serve multiple purposes is common practice. Multi-purpose tools and equipment can be very useful...but is this always the correct approach to take in attempting to reduce weight/bulk? Perhaps the issue is not the number of tools needed, but rather the number of *needs* one has in the wilderness. Instead of having a dozen pouches filled with “kits” for every conceivable condition, should we be striving to establish a more general-purpose approach to kit, allowing us to handle a wider variety of needs, without accumulating a gearset that must be catalogued to maintain

organization? Should we be striving to perfect bushcraft skills that will be used with varying levels of frequency, or would it be better to come prepared with a task-specific piece of equipment to nix the need for the skill? Should a Ranger, for example, practice skills to survive with nothing, or should a Ranger practice the art of *preparing* so that, in a survival situation, one simply goes on living? Does this require more gear, or simply more *planning*?

There are many questions here...a great deal have been left unanswered. This is not something that can be decided for anyone. However, I would caution against the term “Aesthetic” on the very principle by which it exists: it is too general. Claiming that any one piece of gear fits into an “Aesthetic”, rather than a *culture*, even within the wide-ranging interpretations of J.R.R. Tolkien’s writing, opens the door for outside influences far beyond the scope of Middle-earth. In the same way, the word “kit” can also be misconstrued to suggest that the only functional way to devise a gearset is to diversify with as many separate “kits” as one can assemble...as dangerous as suggesting that carrying a tool that only has one function is incorrect, or even unwise. Perhaps instead of juggling *form* and *function*, it would be wise of us to consider pursuing *culture* and *need*.

“What does my impression need for purposes of sleeping, eating, defense, and upkeep? How can I structure *my* kit (rather than “a kit” or “several kits”) to fulfill these needs in the context of my chosen *culture*? Can this be done in a way that all parts serve a critical need, and work together rather than independently? Or do separate “kits” suit my needs better? Is it possible, perhaps, to define my impression culturally in such a way as to evoke Middle-earth as a reality, rather than fantasy? Is this necessary for my impression?”

I pass the questions on to you to answer. Enjoy the journey!



Making the Dúnedain Need-Wallet

by Jennifer C. (MERF handle Elleth)

In October of 2015 on the Middle-earth Ranger Forum, Greg began exploring “On Need Wallets and their Contents.” He begins his topic with references from the lore:

“As for me, I am of the Noldor, and long must be the hunger and cold the winter that shall slay the kin of those who passed the Grinding Ice. Yet how think you that we could labour countless days in the salt wastes of the sea? Or have you not heard of the waybread of the Elves? And I keep still that which all mariners hold until the last.” Then he showed beneath his cloak a sealed wallet clasped upon his belt. “No water nor weather will harm it while it is sealed. But we must husband it until great need...””

-Unfinished Tales, Part I: The First Age: Of Tuor and his Coming to Gondolin

“Though it was a long journey, each of the Dúnedain carried in a sealed wallet on his belt a small phial of cordial and wafers of a waybread that would sustain life in him for many days – not indeed the miruvor or the lembas of the Eldar, but like them, for the medicine and other arts of Númenor were potent and not yet forgotten. No belt or wallet was among the gear discarded by Isildur...””

-Unfinished Tales, Part III: The Third Age: The Disaster of the Gladden Fields

From that time, I had been wrestling with creating my own interpretation of the Dúnedain need-wallet. It has been a long road of trial and error, but I believe I have finally (mostly) arrived at the destination.

Theory of the Need Wallet:

What is a need wallet? Let us first start with what it is not: it is not a "possibles bag" nor a munchies bag nor a utility pouch. It is a life preserver – a last hope thread of survival held in reserve to the last. If all goes well, the Ranger returns from a long trek in the wild never having once had to resort to opening it.

Likewise it must always be there: if the camp is scattered in the night by an orc patrol, if heavy baggage is hastily dropped in a river crossing: the contents must not be lost. So what does this mean for design?

The wallet should be as small and easy to carry as possible. Since it contains primarily sustenance unsealed only at great need, it is not so critical that it be immediately accessible; some convenience can be sacrificed for the sake of protection and portability.

I thus ended up with a wallet that was about 4"x9", worn across the small of the back and fastened to the belt with two straps. By unclasping the straps, the wallet may be removed from the belt and the contents accessed:



Construction:

The wallet contains two main portions: an inner oval pouch similar in concept to the “portmanteaus” used by Greg and others – albeit flatter to keep it closer to the body. It is further protected from the elements with the addition of a cover to which are sewn the carriage straps:



Construction Method:

Step One:

Cut out the pieces for your wallet following one of the supplied templates (see page 14). I used a 4-5oz single shoulder for mine. Depending on your finishing method, you may wish to do your dye step at this point, as I did (recipe on page 13).



Step Two:

Once the pieces are dry enough to work, sew the inner pouch together into a cylinder: I use a modified ladder stitch to join the leather edge to edge to get the most stability possible while maintaining a single thickness of leather:



Step Three:

Next, the end ovals are inserted into the ends of the main pouch body and sewn into place with a standard saddle stitch. Here is where you have the opportunity to decide how low the opening to the pouch sits. You must size the placement of stitches in the end piece carefully: if the stitch line does not properly match the circumference of the pouch body, you may find the pouch tapers in or out at the edges rather than maintain a consistent flatted oval profile:



Step Four:

Sew keepers onto the cover body. The exact positioning is up to you, but keep in mind how high you want the pouch to sit on the belt – the top of your belt will be approximately even with the bottom edge of the keepers: in this case the pouch rides approximately centered on a 1.25” belt.

By placing the keepers at the top of the pouch, you allow friction to keep the pouch solidly at your side even when unclashed, should you wish to access the contents as you would a normal belt pouch.

By moving the keepers to the bottom you can remove some risk of rain infiltration through the stich holes, but upon opening the carriage straps the pouch will tend to fall away from you.

In this case, I have also tacked the carriage straps to the keepers to keep everything in place when unclashing the pouch and withdrawing it from the belt.



Step Five:

Next, the cover and inner pouch are sewn together. The components are sewn together along the side edges only: this does give the option for tucking a kerchief or similar material between them if desired, but more importantly minimizes the sewing holes punched through the leather that might one day leak water onto the contents.

**Step Six:**

Finally, attach your desired buckles to the carriage straps. I used the “3/8” Small D Buckle” from web vendor ThorThorsHammer.com, but hope one day to replace them with custom castings.

**Finish:**

In my attempt to replicate a historically plausible artifact, I have kept my methods as traditional as I can yet manage. The leather is lightweight vegetable tanned tooling leather, naturally dyed with powdered walnut and madder root, then treated with a traditional dubbin (recipe on page 8).

The end shade actually looks quite close to Tandy’s “antique brown” which may be no coincidence. You can see a bit more of the texture of the skin than with a commercial dye, but for those not ready to make the leap to traditional methods, I’ve found at least in this case the end result in color and texture is surprisingly similar to a basic modern finish.

Lessons learned:

Every new project is a learning experience, and one no sooner completes a project than ideas for improvements come to mind. Were I to do it over again, I would make two changes. First, I would add a light vinegar wash on top of my walnut dye to get a deeper, darker brown prior to adding the leather dubbin.

More importantly, I believe I would flip the pouch around inside the cover so that the seams face out:



This does expose some stitching I'd rather hide, but it would allow a secondary flap over the contents proper, thus giving a bit of extra protection from any water that might find its way in through the stitch holes on the strap keepers. It also would allow me to place the strap keepers higher on the cover, so that the wallet can sit lower on the belt.

I'm content enough with the design as it is, however, and don't intend to remake it in the near future.

Coming next issue: a dive into the wallet contents! ✦



Kit Review: Bohemond's Medieval High Shoe

by Elliot Burton (MERF handle Taurinor)

The inhabitants of Middle-earth do a great deal of walking. Whether embarking on an epic quest to destroy a source of unspeakable evil or wandering down to the inn to listen to the latest news, much of the traveling seems to have been done by foot. All of this walking makes a Middle-earth reenactor's footwear an important part of his or her kit.

The Professor did not place a great deal of importance on describing the material artifacts of Middle-earth (Letter 211), but *The Fellowship of the Ring* provides us with some clues as to which styles of footwear are appropriate for the different races of Middle-earth at the end of the Third Age. Aragorn wears “high boots of supple leather that fitted him well” (Book 1, Chapter 9), and Boromir and Gandalf are also described as wearing boots (Book 2, Chapters 1 and 3, respectively). Both Gimli (Book 2, Chapter 4) and the Eastfarthing hobbits (Prologue, Chapter 1) are described as wearing “dwarf-boots”, although the characteristics that distinguish dwarf-boots from other boots are not discussed. In fact, the only member of the Fellowship described as not wearing boots (besides the barefoot hobbits) is Legolas, who “wore only light shoes, as he always did” (Book 2, Chapter 3).



*Selections from Tolkien's illustrations for *The Hobbit*, showing footwear of Bilbo Baggins and dwarves. (from Hammond & Scull's *Author and Illustrator*)*

Although it is potentially dangerous to generalize clothing choices from a single character to an entire group, it appears that rangers, wizards, dwarves, and hobbits (occasionally) wear boots, and elves wear shoes. This provides us with a general classification of footwear to consider, but still does not provide a lot of detail.

When discussing the clothing of Middle-earth in Letter 211, Tolkien refers to the illustrations Pauline Baynes created for *Farmer Giles of Ham*, stating that she drew her inspiration from medieval manuscripts and that “the style seems to fit well enough.” While he makes clear allowance for regional and cultural differences, in this letter Tolkien seems to suggest that in general, clothing of Middle-earth appeared similar to that of the Middle Ages.

The footwear of medieval Europe was constructed in a manner different from modern shoes. The leather upper and sole were stitched together with the inside of the shoe on the outside, and then the entire shoe was turned so that the stitching was on the inside and protected. This style of footwear is therefore called a “turnshoe”. Shoes with a welted sole (constructed in a similar manner to a modern dress shoe) seem to have become more common around 1500, which is considered to be the end of the medieval period in Europe. Thus, it seems reasonable to think that the boots worn by the inhabitants of Middle-earth would be turnshoes.

Craft It Yourself!

Leather dubbin (to soften and ‘waterproof’ leather shoes and gear)

Melt 1 part beeswax in a double boiler, and slowly stir in 1 part neatsfoot oil. Use at once or pour into a sealed jar for storage – it will store at room temperature for months without issue. Whenever you need to use more, just cut out a chunk and remelt in the double boiler. All materials may be obtained via [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)—at the time of this writing they may be found there as:

Neeshow Stainless Steel Double Boiler Universal Insert (item B015LY1Q0M, \$10)

Stakich 1lb Pure White Beeswax Pellets (Item B001LQZOLW, \$11)

Fiebing's Pure Neatsfoot Oil (Item B0000B3ASR, \$10)

There are several online vendors that carry turnshoes, but one that is fairly well known is Boots By Bohemond (boots-by-bohemond.myshopify.com). Michael J. Fine (known in the SCA as Sir Bohemond le Sinistre, Order of the Laurel, Knight of the Company of St. Martin and Baron of the court) has been making shoes and boots for over 20 years. He produces a variety of footwear appropriate for reenactors portraying a range of personas, from Roman cavalry to French musketeers, of varying prices and levels of authenticity. Many of his products are based on surviving examples of period footwear, and all are made with reenacting in mind. I was interested in a relatively inexpensive shoe (something around \$100) with a high level of authenticity (a true turnshoe) for my impression, so I selected the Medieval High Shoe, which is modeled after a 13th century shoe found in the Netherlands.



The Medieval High Shoe as shown on the *Boots By Bohemond* website.

While called a shoe, Bohemond's Medieval High Shoe has a shaft of about the same height as a modern combat boot, so it seems as though it could fall into either category. It is constructed by hand in the turnshoe method and is priced at \$105, so met both of my basic Middle-earth footwear requirements. I also liked the idea of the boot being closed by laces instead of buckles, laces being easier to repair or replace in the field than a buckle and strap. By coming up over the ankle, I hope that the shaft might provide some protection from snakebites, but I don't intend on testing that particular hypothesis, if I can avoid it. I also liked the look of it!

The boots came with a "Care and Feeding" page and advice on fitting. The boots fit well out of the box (there is a 30 day exchange period I would have taken advantage of if they had not), but the real beauty of leather shoes is that they will form to the wearer's feet over time. The hand-stitching is visible on the inside of the shaft, and seems quite strong and secure. The soles are veg-tan leather, which are initially quite slick, but that is true of any leather-soled shoe. I am unsure of the type of leather used for the uppers, but they have a heavily grained "pebbled" appearance, which resembles (to my eye) modern metal-tanned leather more than veg-tan leather, which would be more authentic. My guess is that this is a chrome-tanned leather than was purchased pre-dyed to keep labor costs and turnaround time low, but I have not tried to confirm that.

I have put about 15 miles on my Medieval High Boots, and I have been pleased with their performance. The majority of that distance has been on gravel trails, which quickly solved the problem of slick leather soles, but while the soles are now decidedly more textured, they don't appear to be torn or structurally damaged. The thread holding the sole to the upper is now visible in some spots at the seam from the leathers stretching and shrinking after getting wet, but shows no sign of fraying. The leather ties have also held up well.



The author's boots showing the wear described.

These boots do have some disadvantages compared to modern footwear, but I believe they would be true of any turnshoe. Walking on leather soles is very different than rubber ones. As I said, most of my walking has been done on gravel paths, and my first hike in these boots (a 3 mile hike to a primitive campground) resulted in bruises and a blood blister on the bottoms of my feet. The soles of my feet have since toughened some, and I have learned to walk more gently in turnshoes. They are also not as water resistant or as quick to dry as modern hiking boots, but this would be true of any leather turnshoes.

Overall, I would recommend the Medieval High Shoe from Boots By Bohemond to other Middle-earth reenactors. They offer a lot of authenticity for the price, and I believe they would fit well with many Tolkien-inspired kits. ✦



[Photo credit: Primitive Tim]

Try This Trekking Trick!

Don't waste the space and add the weight of fletching tools for arrow repair in the woods. Full-function fletching can be done at the hearth, but if you have an arrow emergency in the woods, you can make a functional arrow with as little as one primary from a goose or turkey. After you split the feather and shave the quill thin with the edge of a knife, lash on the feather near the nock, and wrap it forward in a spiral to form a flu-flu. Lash down the front edge as well, and you're good to go, with no glue, jigs, or the need to find, cut, or carry three feathers. The range will be somewhat limited, but plenty serviceable for woods hunting. ✦



In Search of Tom Bombadil's Beans

by Austin L Hollis (MERF handle Udwin)

There are few things that can better help to connect us with an unfamiliar time period, setting, or culture than FOOD – after all, everybody needs it, and therefore everybody has some interest in it! Among the various references throughout Tolkien's writings, I find the food encountered in the house of Tom Bombadil to be particularly interesting. Perhaps the one I have found most intriguing is that which Frodo sees out Tom's eastern window: "*Frodo...found himself looking into a kitchen-garden grey with dew...his view was screened by a tall line of beans on poles...and the red flowers on the beans began to glow against the wet green leaves.*"

While it may be entirely possible that Tolkien penned the above line without a specific plant in mind, I thought it might be a fun exercise to try and find out if any known beans match up with his description, and if so, how they might have found their way into old Bombadil's garden.

To start, let's summarize what we know about Tom's crop:

- 1) they are stated to be *beans*;
- 2) they have red flowers;
- 3) they grow on poles;
- 4) they are growing at approximately 51° N latitude.

4a) At this latitude, considering the time period in question (~4000 BCE)—or during the Atlantic period of the Holocene, much before the cooling of Europe at the end of the Bronze Age—I think we might imagine the climate of the Shire was much warmer and sunnier than it is at present.

Based on the above conditions, I don't think there are any *perfect* period solutions, and that two or three out of four might be the best we could hope for. But with a little research and some creative thinking, I may have found a good fit for Tom's beans.

While I usually think of beans as a strictly New World plant, a quick bit of research reminded me of Old World types like broad or fava beans, peas, and chickpeas, as well as related vetches.

Broad beans (*Vicia faba*) are suitably ancient (known in the eastern Mediterranean by 6000 BCE and Europe by 2000 BCE) and hardy (perfect for today's cooler climate at Shire latitudes). I even found two varieties with red flowers: a 'Crimson-flowered' heirloom cultivar, and one named 'Red Epicure'. While they may be supported or staked to upright poles, broad beans are not vining 'pole' beans, and their maximum height is only about three feet—which would probably not be considered "tall" to a hobbit of about three-and-a-half-feet. Additionally, broad beans are traditionally a cold-weather crop, although some may be able to harvest through August, and Bombadil's were only still in flower on 27 Halimath (approximately September 17th).

Peas (*Pisum sativum*) were also known in the ancient eastern Mediterranean and are definitely vine-friendly; however, they are also a cold-weather crop, and I have yet to find a true pea with even reddish flowers.

Chickpeas (*Cicer arietinum*) are similarly quite ancient (known in southern Europe by the late Neolithic and Bronze Age), but they, like broad beans, are also short, non-vining plants, and my search to uncover any red-flowered varieties has been unsuccessful.

Since none of the Old World options seem to be a good fit, I turned my attention to the genus *Phaseolus*, which originate in the Americas. The best candidate seems to be, coincidentally, the very bean which I grow as part of my native "Three Sisters" garden!

Runner beans (*Phaseolus coccineus*) originate in Pre-Columbian Central America, and are vigorously vining plants. They are tolerant of heat, drought, *and* cool nights, which make them ideal for growing in many climates. Many varieties—including the original heirloom 'Scarlet runner' cultivar, but also more recent breeds like Firestorm, Polestar, and Red Rum—are known for their red flowers. Even more encouraging, I understand that they are the most popular green bean grown in England!—and as such *may* have been familiar to Tolkien, though how this could be confirmed I do not know, as—to my knowledge—he never wrote of a fondness for eating Runner beans.

These beans fulfill all four of our earlier requirements, with the one obvious hitch that they would be anachronistic in an ancient Northern European setting.



Scarlet runner beans flowering in the author's garden

Because ‘Scarlet Runner’ beans are otherwise such a good candidate for those grown by Tom Bombadil, I would like to try and determine how New World beans such as these *could* be explained in a late Third Age setting. (It would be simple to just shrug and dismiss the issue, but believability and justification are what *authentic* Middle-earth interpretation, to which we here aspire, is all about).

It is important to remember that Middle-earth is also home to other ‘anachronistic’ flora that we normally associate with the Pre-Columbian New World, such as tobacco and potatoes. (Tolkien’s occasional use of ‘corn’, however, does not refer to the all-American *Zea mays*, but is the traditional Old English word for a cereal grain).

The lands that would correlate to the Americas in Tolkien’s published ‘Flat World’ cosmography would be among the “new lands” created following the Downfall of Númenor near the end of the Second Age (Tolkien’s later—though unrevised—‘Round World’ concept would possibly allow for these lands to have existed prior to the Downfall) and the only ‘world power’ known for its exploring and seafaring prowess was that

of the Númenoreans. These “great mariners”, who “sailed furthest” and “set...a girdle about the Earth” would be ideal candidates to visit the new lands and bring back examples of its unique flora.

What, then, is the connection between Númenor and Bombadil? The key, I think, is Bombadil’s close proximity to the village of Bree, located at the crossroads of the Great East Road and the old North Road that once connected the Númenorean kingdoms in exile (Gondor and Arnor): a location ideal for a trading hub in Eriador.

Once in newly-founded Gondor, the plants or seeds from overseas could have been spread north to Arnor via the North-South Road while the two kingdoms were still in communication (until perhaps the Great Plague of 1636 TA).

There seems to be a precedent for this, as evidenced by Meriadoc Brandybuck’s *Herb-lore of the Shire*, which suggests that that pipe-weed reached Eriador (and Bree specifically) from Gondor via the Greenway. As Tolkien himself wrote, “Hobbits are represented as using tobacco, and *this is made more or less credible by the suggestion that the plant was brought over the Sea by the Men of West-ernesse...*” (emphasis mine)

Therefore, it is my conclusion that Scarlet Runner beans, if we believe that they could be found in Middle-earth, likely reached Bree, and eventually Bombadil, by following the same vector. ✦

References:

Bombadil’s garden: LR: Book I The Ring Sets Out, Chapter 7 In the House of Tom Bombadil

Equation of Oxford and the Shire’s latitudes: Letters, No. 294

Date of the Third Age: Letters, No. 211

Runner beans: <http://www.southernexposure.com/scarlet-runner-bean-42-g-p-759.html>

‘New lands’: The Silmarillion: *Akallabeth*

“Round World”: History of Middle-earth Vol 10 Morgoth’s Ring: Part Five.

Númenorean exploration: The Silmarillion: *Akallabeth*.

Pipe-weed: LR Prologue, 2: Concerning Pipe-weed

Tobacco: quoted in Hammond and Scull: Reader’s Companion, p. 612.

Kit Review: Arrows by Eledhwen

by Greg

These lovely arrows were commissioned through Eledhwen, forum member at middleearthangers.org. They arrived well-packed, and in perfect condition. The finish and craftsmanship are spot-on. The threading on the fletching, in particular, is perfect. The spirals are even, do not wander, and are very low-profile. The nocks are centered nicely, and smooth, showing no tool marks.

My first round, seen pictured, from fifteen yards proved that the spine was also dead-on. I have never shot arrows spined by an at-home fletcher that came

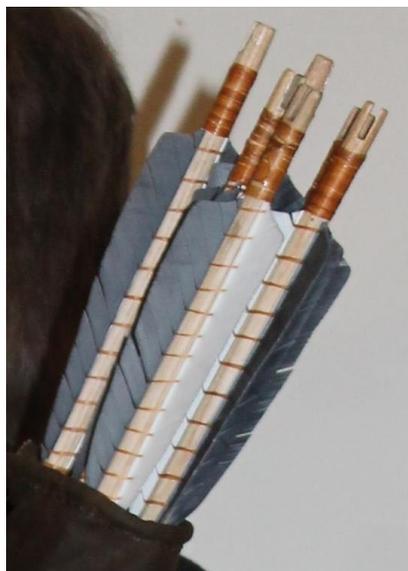
close to the consistency of these. Cost varies, as these are handmade to customer requests and specs; inquire with Eledhwen via forum personal messages for price quotes and availability.

Shaft Material: Ash;

Spine: 55#;

Fletching: Shield cut, wrapped with artificial sinew.;

Cost: Custom



Craft It Yourself!

Leather dye:

3 parts powdered walnut hull : 1 part madder root.

Use enough to make the dye bath a heavy, sludgy syrup, then let it soak for hours. In my experience it takes multiple applications worked into the leather to come close to the darkness of a modern dye. Others have reported soaks in the dye lasting days: this may be the approach I try with my next project.

This dye CAN stain skin so I have always worn gloves, though I've found the solution weak enough that short exposure typically produces no stain that can't be immediately washed off.

Contrary to advice I have read online, in my experience the dye takes better when applied to dry leather: I assume this is because wet leather is already saturated and can't accept more water carrying the dye in suspension.

Powdered walnut husks (*Juglans Nigra*) and madder root (*Rubia Tinctora*) can be found online with a cursory websearch. As of this writing, I was able to obtain them from Starwest Botanicals and "NaturalDyesAndFiber" Etsy store respectively.

Introduction to Historical Sewing

by Jack Horner (MERF handle Caedmon)

This is the first in a series of articles dealing with historical sewing. It will initially cover common historical sewing stitches, and later branch out. However, I will start with some explanation and philosophy.

When I started hand finishing, and later hand sewing, I just guessed; I taught myself several stitches and went for it. Luckily, there are only so many ways you can put a needle through fabric, so the basics have remained constant for thousands of years. However, what stitches to use and where to use them was still a mystery – this led to some seriously over-engineered clothing. That is, until I encountered Jennifer Carlson's page on stitches in historical clothes (<http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/cloth/stitches.htm>). It is by no means exhaustive, but is the best I have found so far. Hopefully it can help you to find the middle path.

Surveying the stitches in that document has turned up several trends (Table 1), while the second set of stitches were well represented but were removed from the list for the following reasons (Table 2).

Table 1 – Most-used Stitches:

Stitch	Occurrence
Hem stitch	57
Running stitch	56
Overcast stitch	36
Backstitch	25
Upright hem stitch	11

Table 2 – Removed from consideration

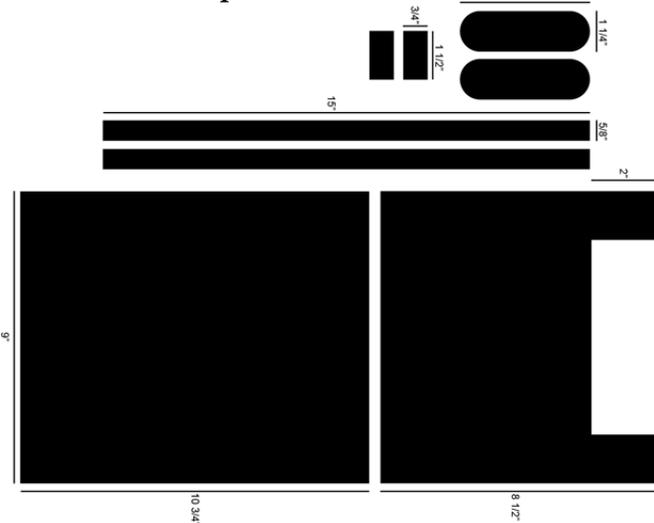
Stitch	Occurrence	Reason for removal
Buttonhole stitch	29	Buttons—special case
Eyelets—overcast stitch	20	Buttons—special case
Gathering stitch	14	Late period
Pad stitch	12	Late period (all from 17 th c.)
Worked buttons	12	Buttons—special case

From this data, it seems that—by and large—most clothes were sewn with the running stitch and reinforced with a standard hem stitch. Following distantly are the overcast stitch and the backstitch. The running stitch may seem a bit lightweight, but if seams are finished with a hem stitch, and mended promptly, it should hold together for quite a while. Both of these stitches will be explored in the next issue.

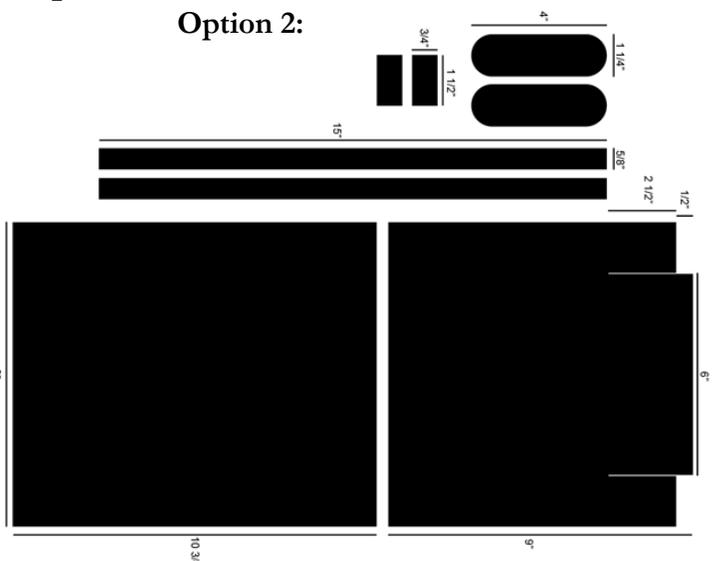


Need wallet templates:

Option 1:



Option 2:



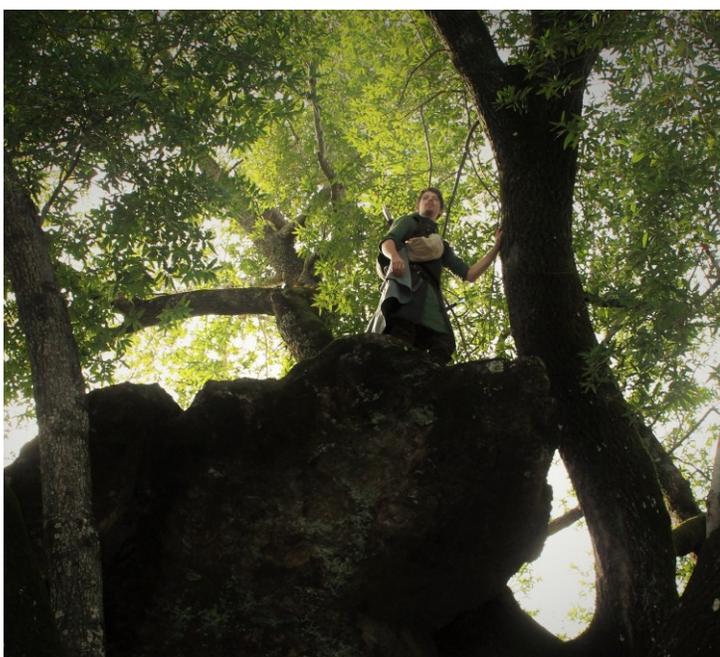
the Middle-earth Reenactment Society:

who we are and what we do:

The Middle-earth Reenactment Society is dedicated to the furthering of J.R.R. Tolkien cultural studies, within the framework of 'historical' reenactment. We exist to recreate the cultures of Middle-earth in both form and function, and to mold ourselves into peoples fitting to associate with and live as these fully-realized cultures. A part of the online Tolkien re-creation community found at middleearthrangers.org, the Society publishes an online periodical titled 'Edge of the Wild', showcasing new research, methods, materials, and instructional articles, and meets throughout the year at various sites deemed 'wild' enough to still capture the reality and imagination of the wild lands envisioned within the pages of J.R.R. Tolkien's works.



The Road Goes Ever On...: Highlights From Our Hikes



Above: Dúnedain Ranger on lookout in the Woody-End in the month of Thrimich.

Below: an intrepid Bounder surveys the swollen Brandywine near the end of Winter.

