

A Reconstruction
of a
12th -13th Century Toilet Seat



Master Richard Wymarc
(MKA Timothy J. Mitchell)
Barony of Stierbach

Summary

This is a reconstruction of a toilet seat from the twelfth or thirteenth century found during an excavation in the city of York, England. Care was taken to make as exact a copy as possible given modern materials and tools

The Artifact

“York, 16-22 Coppergate, Lavatory (or garderobe) seat, 12th- 13th century, Oak. It is made from a rectangular board and has a central hole the edges of which are chamfered on one face. It was found in the cess pit where it was used. Dimensions: L.1.07m, W.360, T.28mm” (Norman World)



The artifact is a board, made of oak; measuring 42 inches long, 14 inches wide and 1.1 inch thick. The central hole is approximately 9 inches in diameter and slightly oval, possibly due to wear, or poor workmanship. The interior of the hole is beveled on one face. The design of the artifact and its discovery in a medieval cesspit leads to it being identified as a toilet seat.

The Recreation

In recreating this artifact I wanted to get as close as possible to the original. I used a plank of 1 inch thick Red Oak to construct it, this meant a slightly thinner result, but the cost of acquiring a thicker board would have been more than the difference was worth. The hole was made with a mallet and wood chisel, and the interior of the hole smoothed with a fine wood rasp. This rasp was also used to bevel the edge of the hole on the upward face of the plank. The result was sanded to prevent possible embarrassing splinters and the wood was treated with linseed oil to protect the wood and bring out the grain. This is probably more than was done to the original, but I like to put out a result that someone would be proud to use.

Sources

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