

Sewing Supplies

By Baroness Kaleeb the Green Eyed

Many of the sailors on the Mary Rose were described as wearing rags or clothing that was beyond repair. Several sewing kits or collections of items related to sewing were found on the Mary Rose. Those items were all found in locations that indicated personal possessions. The sewing kits include equipment that imply repairs of sail cloth and other heavy duty sewing tasks were required. For example the thimbles were heavy duty, with thick sides and deep dimples.

Most of the items in William's sewing kit were purchased or collected from various spots in my house. I like to sew and have a fair amount of sewing gadgets. I have two lovely period thimbles which were not chosen, due to the type of sewing which they would need to perform. Instead I have chosen a thimble with medium pits, a cap and a small rolled edge. I chose a thimble with a medium size because William's hands will not always be small. I have backed up my collection of sewing supplies with a minimum of research and pictures.

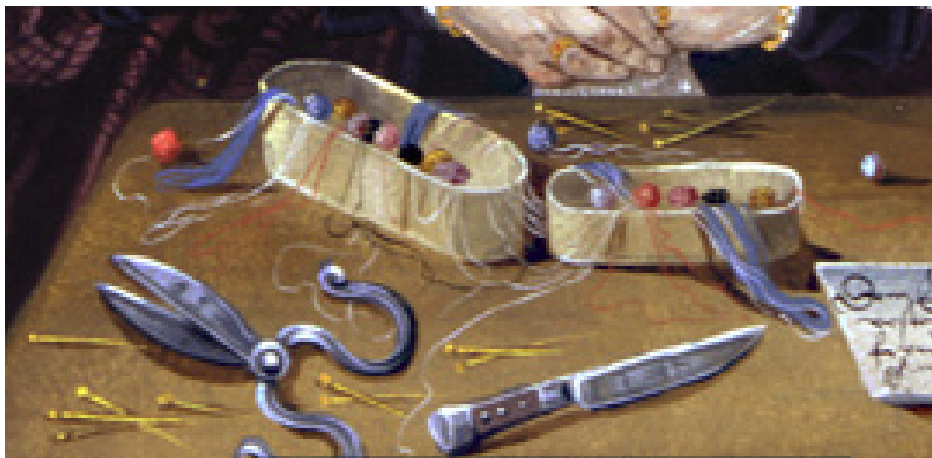


Before the Mast, color plate 42.



Seefeld, c. 1470-1586

I have included this picture because it shows yet another heavy duty thimble and a needle. Thimbles have not changed much through time.



The picture to the left is from a 1575-1585 painting of an embroiderer. Her kit is beautiful and elaborate with the inclusion of delicate silks. It is not the kit of a sailor. William's kit is much more practical for his needs.

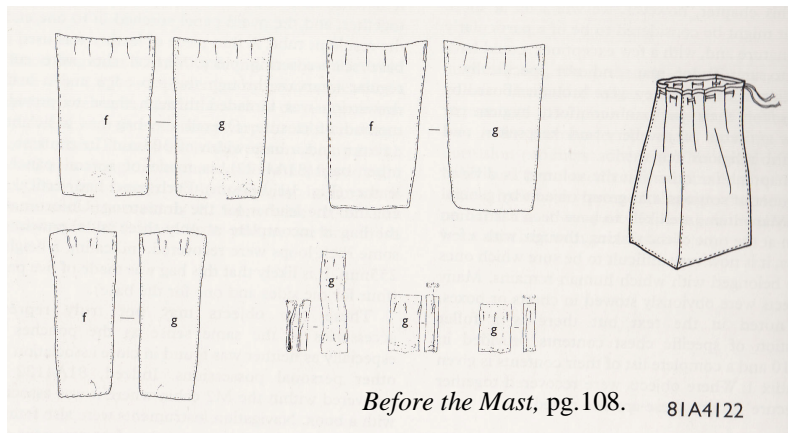
The Portrait-Book Hieronymus Beck von Leopoldsdorf, c. 1575-1585



Before the Mast has very few color picture pages, yet two of the pictures depict sewing items. Some of the wooden spools are designed to hold both thread and needles. If you look carefully at the ends of some of the spools they have a large round hole where the needles could be stored. All that is left of the needles are trace deposits. A cap or plug would have kept the needles or pins inside the case. One of the spools is pointed and might have been used as an awl. The larger brown spool was also

listed under the carpenters tools and might be a chalk line reel. I do not know why it is pictured here. The small pin case in the lower right hand corner is just like cases which are still in modern production. It had some form of a cap and kept the few pins, which were stored inside it in good condition.

The sewing kit that I assembled is designed to make repairs for the clothing in the bench chest. I have included some linen thread, needles, pins and a thimble. The kit is small on purpose and placed in a small leather pouch, so the pieces do not get lost in the bottom of the bench chest. I do not think that William would store a sewing kit in the till, as that is a storage spot of special items, for example rocks, dice or a knife.



The sewing kit has been placed in a small leather bag. It has 5 pieces of leather sewn together using "a closed seam with backstitch using small stitches." (*Before the Mast*, Table 2.7, pg38.) The stitching was done with waxed linen thread. The draw string is a cotton lucet cord. The cord fiber should be silk, but the silk I have work with is either too fine or hot pink. If I have any hope of William ever using the kit it had better not have a hot pink

draw string.