



Before the Mast, color plate 6.

Toilet Kit

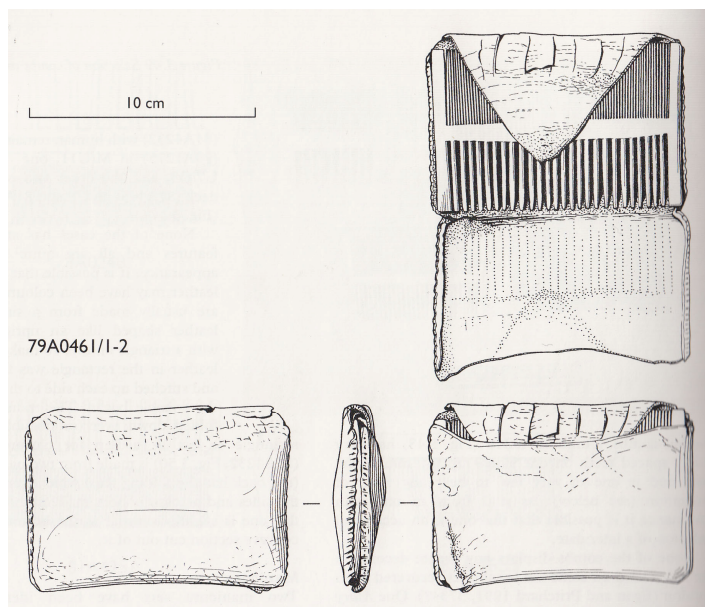
By Baroness Kaleeb the Green Eyed

As a parent I would like William to have some concept of Personal Hygiene. (I think of that statement as modern.) If I am honest William will brush his teeth before bed, bathe when requested, clean out his ears just before he sees a Doctor for his yearly check up and comb his hair on school picture day. That

leaves a very short list of personal hygiene items. I will be taking the moral high ground and as a parent packing William a comb. He can use his finger to clean his teeth and wait until he gets home to have his ears cleaned.

“Combs represent the most common personal possession with 82 examples found.” (*Before the Mast*, pg. 156.) In the Tudor period combs were made from bone, wood or horn. The Mary Rose has the largest concentration of boxwood combs found anywhere. Boxwood was the wooden material of choice, because it has a very dense grain and the combs would be long wearing. I wish I had remembered that when I went comb shopping. I picked out a nice horn comb. It has teeth on the scale of the comb found in a leather jerkin which is pictured above. When a common item is missing from the Mary Rose dig it is speculated that lighter weight items either floated away or did not survive the sinking of the ship.

I have made a leather pouch/wallet to hold the comb. Of the 82 examples of combs found, 8 had cases. The case is a simple length of leather with a triangular flap which can be tucked inside, so the comb will not fall out. The cases have little to no thread left. Two of the jerkins have traces of wax and linen fluff and a tiny bit of silk. I have sewn the comb case with a waxed nature linen sewing thread. The leather was soft enough to easily stitch through and I chose a closed seam with whipstitch from Table 2.7 of the Seam types found on leather jerkins (*Before the Mast*, pg.38.) “None of the cases has any decorative features and all are quite utilitarian in appearance.” (*Before the Mast*, pg. 159.) That simple description from *Before the Mast* describes the comb and case set that I have included for William. I fully expect to find the case set at the bottom of his bench chest where it will receive little use.



Before the Mast, pg. 160



Lots of nit combs, Mary Rose website