

Coat Hangers??



In the porch either side of the door, hang the two objects shown. They are described in the room folder as 'coat hangers.' Have you ever tried to hang your coat on a pair of shoes? 'I'm not with you!' Shoes my good friend, shoes. 'Give over; pull the other one; it says they're coat hangers.' Not everything you read in room folders are correct. 'Yeah, but shoes?' Let me elucidate:

They are padukas, a traditional Indian type of footwear; a sort of sandal or flip-flop. The knob is not for hanging things on but it fits between the large and next toes. This obviously holds the shoe in place. Note that the knob on the right hand one is missing. They would have been ceremonial and made either in wood, ivory and sometimes silver and decorated to show the social class of the wearer. Wood used was either teak, ebony or sandalwood. Padukas are usually in the shape of footprints and have narrow curved stilts underneath to keep the sole off the ground. This has cultural significance. Shapes vary and the Charlecote ones are fish-shaped.



The pair shown left are in the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto and are similar to the Charlecote ones, being in the shape of fish. The fish is a symbol of fertility (is that why they are at the entrance to the house?). They are usually worn by mendicants or the saints of various Eastern faiths. Paduka also means footprints of divine figures that are worshipped symbolically in houses or temples built for the purpose.

For more complete information, type 'paduka' into the address bar on your PC or phone and read the Wikipedia details.

My thanks to Victoria Satterley, who has joined the Charlecote team to verify the information on the exhibits in the house. The padukas were the very first objects she checked on and the info we have is incorrect! This incorrect information is also on the National Trust Collections website. The future looks very interesting and I have asked Victoria to keep me up-to-date with any other misrepresentations. *Frank Storr*

Charlecote Extras No. 11.