

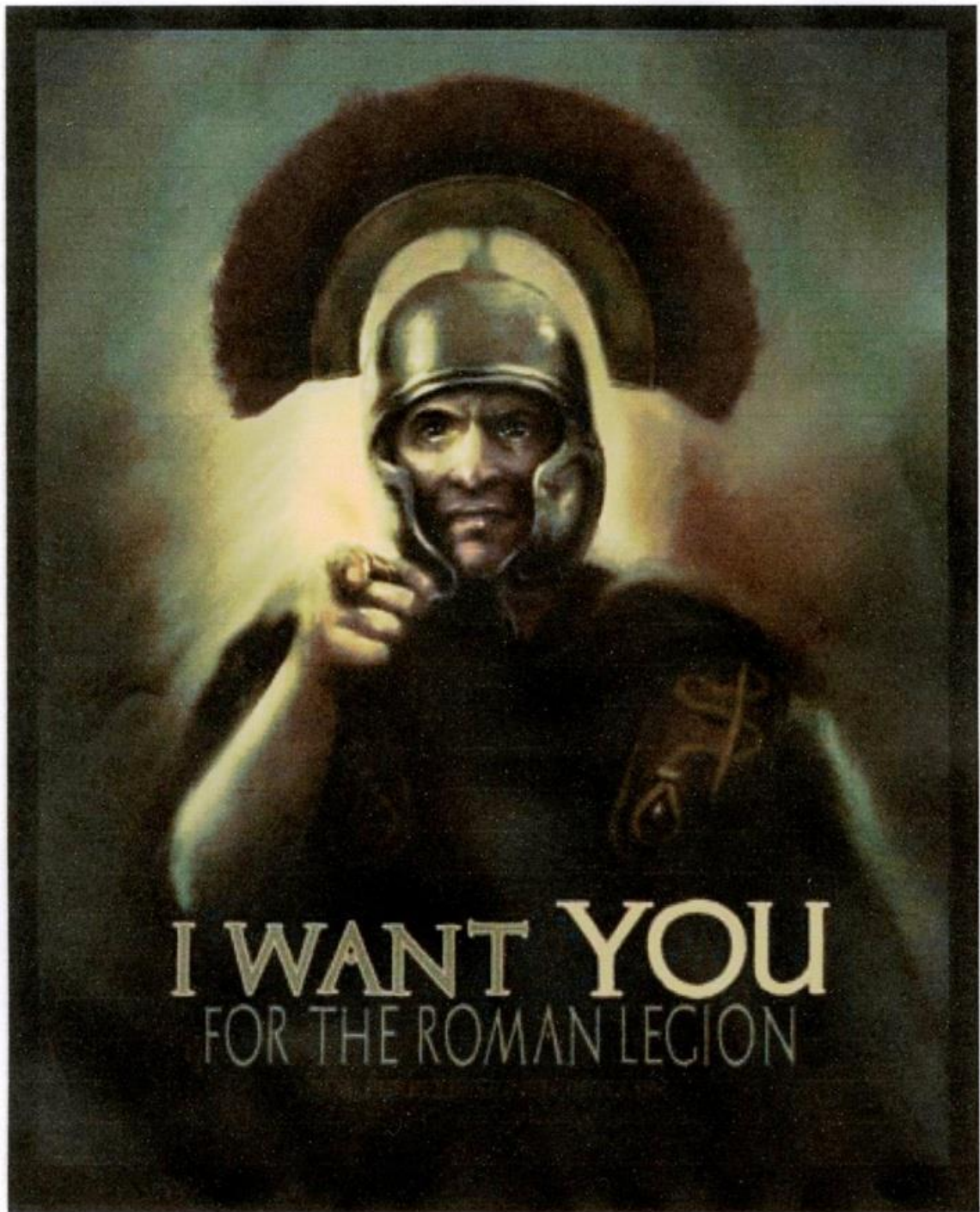
The Roman Army

For Junior Cert



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CHAPTER 1 YOUR EMPEROR NEEDS YOU!





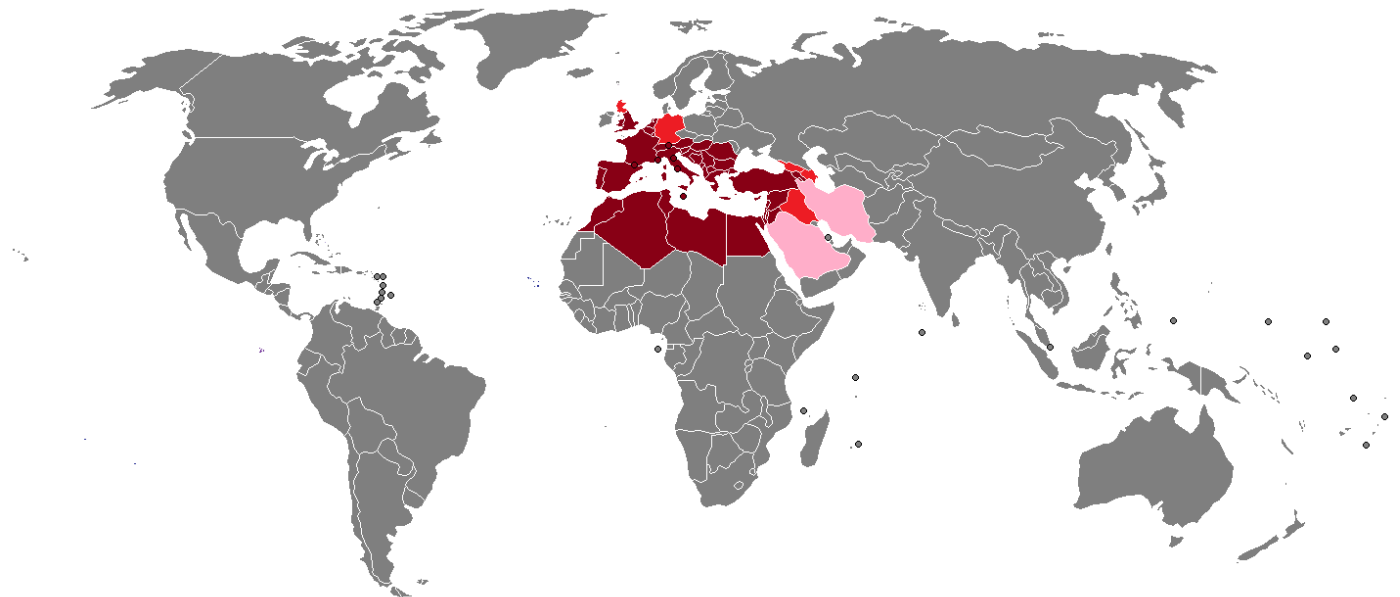
So who is he? His name is **Trajan** and he goes down in History as the Emperor under whom the empire of Rome reached its greatest extent.



Can you name the modern countries that were part of the empire?
(Answers over the page)

Modern countries that were once part of the Roman Empire:

Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Luxembourg, England, Wales, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Israel, Palestine, Monaco, Belgium Netherlands, Malta, Vatican City, Andorra, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, San Marino, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania, Macedonia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.



The dark red coloured areas were firmly under Roman control for many centuries. The bright red areas were partly under Roman control and the pink areas were under Roman control for a relatively short period of time.

Trajan has been emperor since 98 AD and is maintaining the Pax Romana. This is the generally accepted agreement that Rome will rule her subject nations fairly and in turn, they will not rebel. For the most part this holds, but Trajan's main trouble is with the Dacians in modern day Romania where he fought two campaigns before the enemy was subdued. To commemorate his campaigns, he commissioned a monumental column which is a great source of information about the Roman army at this time. (See Chapter V).



Soldiers holding up the heads of Dacians to show the Emperor on Trajan's Column. What does this piece of relief sculpture tell us about the army? Which figure is Trajan? Why this one?

Questions on Chapter 1

1. What was the name of the emperor under whom Rome reached its greatest extent?
2. Roughly when did he rule Rome?
3. What was the Pax Romana?
4. In what modern-day country did the Dacians live?
5. Research challenge: Find out five facts about Decabalus and Sarmazegathusa.

Chapter II JOINING THE ROMAN ARMY

This meant becoming a “**miles gregarius**” or a “soldier of the common herd”. Your nickname would be “Marius’s mule”.

REQUIREMENTS:

- You need to be 17 and a Roman citizen to become a legionary.
- You need a letter of recommendation from someone of high rank.
- You undergo a physical examination and have to be at least 5 ft 8 inches tall.
- You have to be single and can not marry while you are in the army (this is not usually enforced).
- You have to swear an oath to be loyal to the emperor, the “sacramentum”.

WHY JOIN?

- Life could be very tough outside the army, regular meals and shelter were attractive to many.
- A steady salary (300 denarii a year), but deductions for equipment and funeral club
- Chances to earn more money if you had a special skill, also bonuses and gifts from the emperor.
- Chance to use special skills and improve them (eg. medicine/ metalwork/
- Adventure and a chance to travel the world.
- Honour and personal glory.
- Great companionship.
- A secure old age with land and a pension.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Once you have shown that you are indeed a Roman citizen, of the correct height and in good physical condition, you have sent in your letter of application and passed your **probatio**, (interview), you must then take your oath or **sacramentum**.
- You now belong to the army and are assigned to a legion to join with another 7 men (your **contubernium**).
- You must serve for 20-25 years
- You are issued with your weapons and armour.
- You are entitled to pay of 300 denarii per year.
- A percentage of your pay goes to your pension and to the funeral club
- You may not marry
- You are certain of food, shelter, travel, companionship and a pension.....IF YOU SURVIVE!

Primary Source:

Pliny The Younger, Governor of Bithynia to the Emperor Trajan:

"The very excellent young man, Sempronius Caelianus, has discovered two slaves among the recruits and has sent them to me. But I delayed passing sentence on them till I had consulted you...concerning the proper punishment to be inflicted on them".

Trajan to Pliny:

"We must enquire whether those slaves enlisted themselves voluntarily or were chosen by officers (conscripted). If they were conscripted, the officer is guilty, if they presented themselves voluntarily, capital punishment must fall on their heads".

Questions

1. What does this exchange of letters between Pliny and Trajan tell us about recruiting policy in the Roman army?
2. What is capital punishment?
3. Why do you think a slave would enlist voluntarily?
4. Does it seem to you that this system is reasonable?



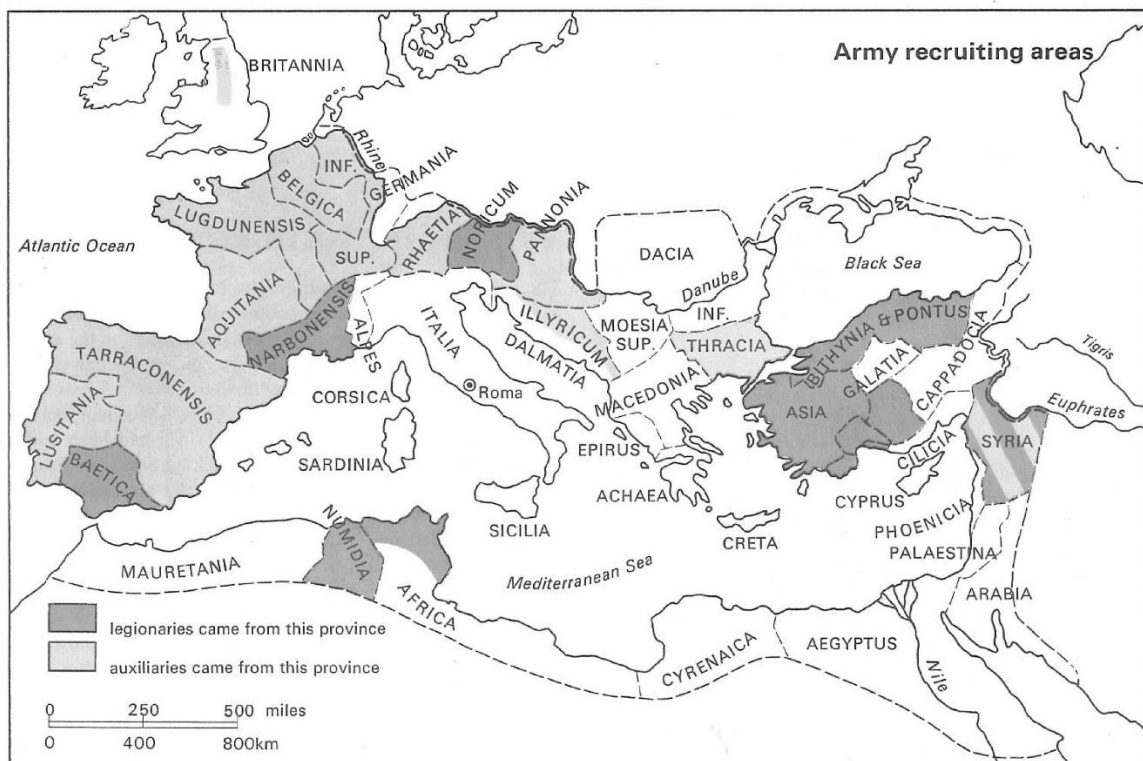
Primary Source: Vegetius on the ideal recruit for the army

“No one can doubt that the peasants are the most fit to carry arms for from childhood they have been exposed to all kinds of weather and have been brought up to the hardest labour. They are able to endure the greatest heat of the sun, are unacquainted with the use of baths, and are strangers to the other luxuries of life. They are simple, content with little, able to tolerate all kinds of fatigue, and prepared in some measure for a military life by their experience in country-work, in handling the spade, digging trenches and carrying burdens. The majority of our armies, then, should be recruited from the country. For it is certain that the less a man is acquainted with the sweet things in life, the less reason he has to be afraid of death.

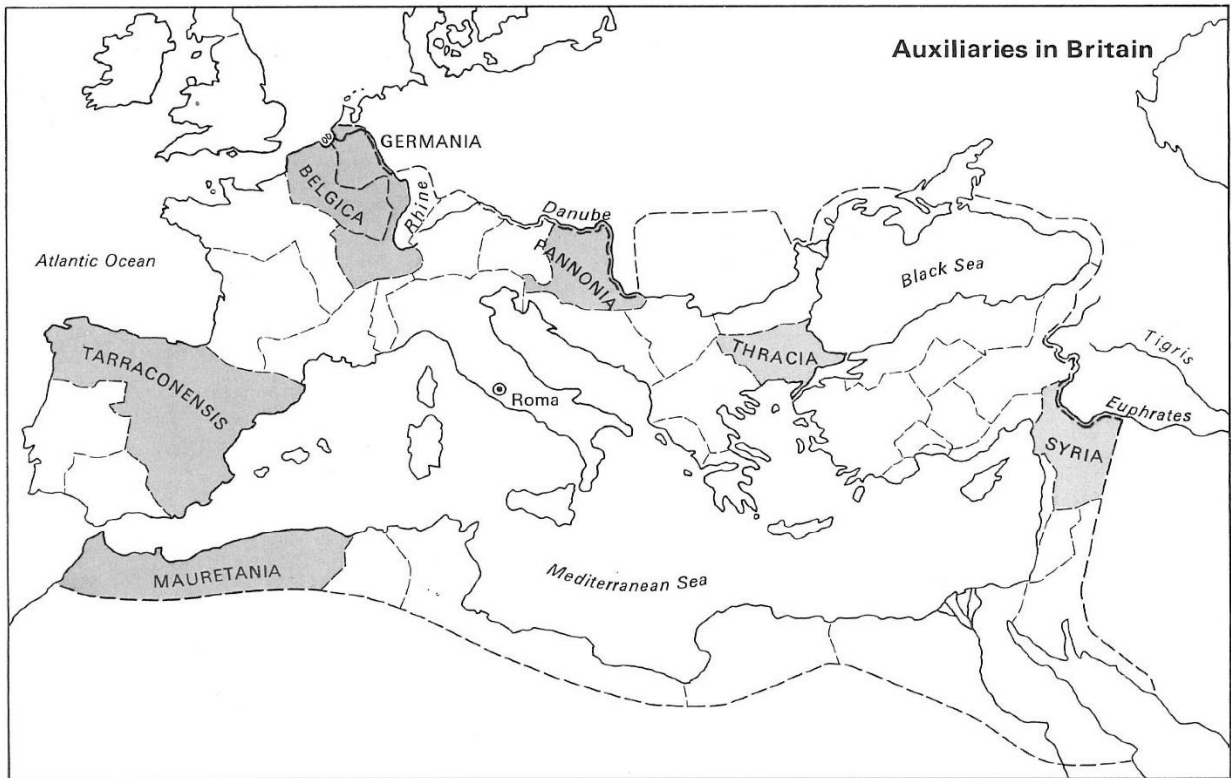
For experience assures us that there are in men, as well as in horses and dogs, certain signs by which their strong points may be discovered. The young soldier, therefore, ought to have a lively eye, should carry his head high, his chest should be broad, his shoulders muscular and brawny, his fingers long, his arms strong, his waist small, his shape easy, his legs and feet more firm than fleshy. When all these marks are found in a recruit, a little height may be dispensed with, since it is of much more importance that a soldier should be strong than tall.

In choosing recruits we should look at their trades. Fishermen, fowlers, confectioners, weavers, and in general all whose professions more properly belong to women should, in my opinion, by no means be admitted into the service. On the contrary, blacksmiths, carpenters, butchers, and huntsmen are the most proper to be taken into it.”

1. What qualities does Vegetius think are required in a good recruit?
2. Are these qualities the same as an army would look for today?
3. Which occupations does he think best suit an army recruit?
4. Is there anything in his piece that you disagree with? Why?
5. What does this piece tell us about the difference between life in the city and life in the countryside?



These are the recruiting areas for the Roman Army in Trajan's time.



From information gathered by archaeologists around the forts of Roman Britain, we know that the soldiers serving there came from these areas of the Empire. Why do you think they were stationed so far from home?

Questions on Chapter 2

1. List four requirements for someone to become a Roman legionary.
2. List three reasons why you might want to join up.
3. Explain the following terms: *sacramentum*; *probatio*.
4. Name three areas that Roman soldiers came from to serve in Britain.

CHAPTER III YOUR EQUIPMENT

“The legionary is little more than a beast of burden”

Josephus



You don't get your armour and weapons for free. A portion of your wage (300 **denarii** per year) goes towards your equipment.



- **The helmet.** This was a very well designed piece of kit. It is made of iron and has a reinforcement across the forehead, a reverse brim to protect the neck and removable cheek flaps. There is a place to attach a plume, but legionaries usually did not wear them. It is lightly padded inside. Roman soldiers generally looked for Gallic helmets as they thought they were the best. (Gaul – the Roman province roughly equal to France today).

- **The Tunic.** This cost about 6 denarii and is made of wool or linen to just above the knee. It is like a big t-shirt. They are often white or sometimes red because the red dye, madder, is cheap. If you are serving in Britain or Germany, you might wear trousers underneath.



- **Lorica Segmentata.** This is your protective armour and is designed much like a lobster, with bands of steel tied with leather straps. There are 34 separate pieces which need to be polished regularly. They are quite cheap to make and very effective as they combine protection and flexibility.



- **Sandals.** These are called **caligae**. They are made of leather with hobnails in the soles. In colder regions you could stuff rabbit fur inside for cosiness. Which ones are original Roman army sandals, which are replicas and which are for sale in the Blackrock Centre?



- **Belt.** This was called a **cingulum**. It had a very unusual design of strips of leather with metal studs hanging down the front. We aren't sure why it was designed like this. What do you think?



- **Shield.** This is the **scutum**. This is a curved rectangle of three thin layers of wood (oak – strong, or birch - flexible). It has a handle inside and a boss (a metal bulge) on the outside. The wood is covered with a layer of fabric or leather edged with brass. It goes from shoulder to knee ideally. It needs to be waxed regularly to stop it splitting.



- **Sword.** The most important weapon of the Roman legionary is his **gladius** or sword. This is made of high carbon steel and is designed for a short thrust into the enemy's guts. The design originated in Spain. The most important thing is the right balance. It is about 5cm wide and 50 cm long. It is double-edged but it is the sword's point that does the real work. It needs a good hand-grip, either bone or raw leather is best. It has a large pommel for a good grip when you are pulling the sword out to use again. It is usually kept in a scabbard made of leather and brass. It is slung over your side on a baldric (a leather strap).



- **Spear.** This is called the **pilum**. It was a very special design. It had a shaft of ash wood about 1.2m long. Set into this was a 30 cm length of thin, soft iron ending in a tiny triangular tip. As it is iron, not steel, it bends easily. It is designed to be used only once in battle. When it lands there is (literally) no point in throwing it back. If it hits a shield, it gets embedded and renders the shield useless until it is extracted. The tip is designed to buckle on impact.



- **Pugio.** This is a very useful short dagger, also attached to the belt.

Why do you think the Roman legionary wore no leg armour?



How many items can you name in this photograph of Roman legionaries?



Questions on Chapter 3

- 1.Explain two clever design features of the legionary's helmet
- 2.Why was a Roman soldier's tunic often red?
- 3.What was the lorica segmentata and why was it a good design?
- 4.What were caligae?
- 5.Do a sketch of a Roman scutum and explain how it was made.
- 6.What type of sword did a Roman legionary use? Where did it come from originally?
- 7.What was the pugio?

CHAPTER IV YOUR TRAINING REGIME

- **Marching:**

The great general Scipio Africanus said “What use is a soldier if he cannot walk?” You start by working up to 32k in 5 hours, then you move on to 64k in 12 hours. Then you start again, but in full armour and weapons. The general Marius had decided that soldiers had to carry their own gear (approximately 40 kilo). But then he was also the first general to say that they should earn a proper salary! As a result the legionaries were nicknamed “Marius’s mules”.

- **Combat:**

The training here was very like that of gladiators. The main method was sword practice against a wooden post. Instead of your proper weapons, you practiced with a wooden sword and wicker shield (considerably heavier than the real things). According to Vegetius “legionaries laugh at those who use the edge of the sword”. Why?



- **Pilum Practice:**

Again, the practice spear is heavier. Instead of a steel tip, there is a leather button on the end. You have to learn how to throw it and how to receive it.

- **Fitness:**

Climbing up ladders, leaping over vaulting horses all in full armour and carrying weapons.

- **Drill:**

It was vital for each legionary to fight as a unit with the other men. Each contubernium, century and cohort had to be able to move as one in response to a command. They had to change formation according to needs (for instance from a column into a line or a wedge), they had to know exactly what to do when a line was broken, how to fall back and let others move in, all in full armour.

- **Result?**

You are now part of a highly efficient killing machine, you know instinctively what to do and when and above all, you know that your side has way better equipment, training and discipline than the enemy when it comes to the fight.





Questions on Chapter IV

1. What distance were you expected to walk with full gear once you had settled in as a legionary?
2. Approximately what weight did you carry?
3. Why were legionaries called “Marius’s Mules”?
4. What built-in “flaw” did the Roman pilum have?
5. Why did the legionaries train with wicker shields and wooden swords?

DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH

- Why were Roman legionaries called “Marius’s mules”?
- Which two boys’ names do we get from the term for a Roman legionary “**miles gregarius**”? What does each name mean?
- What was the Latin word for the scabbard of a sword?
- What did the Emperor Vespasian do when he got a request for sandal money from a Roman legion who were doing a lot of marching?
- Find out one interesting fact about Pliny the Younger.
- What is the typical pack-weight and training regime in the Irish Army today?
- What is the original meaning of the word “salary”?

CHAPTER V TRAJAN'S COLUMN



WHAT IS TRAJAN'S COLUMN?

Trajan was the emperor at the time of Rome's greatest extent (98-117 A.D.) He fought against the Dacians, in modern day Romania and conquered them with difficulty as they fought very bravely and were hard to beat. Trajan's Column was built to commemorate his victories over the Dacian tribe.

The Column was built by Apollodorus of Damascus and it was placed in Trajan's Forum in Rome. It is about 38 m in height including the base and is made of 29 blocks of Carrara marble, each weighing about 40 tonnes. It dates from 113 AD.

It is most famous for its frieze in bas-relief (shallow carving) which is almost 200 m long, winding up the column 23 times. Originally the column was topped with an eagle, but later this was replaced with a statue of Trajan.

The relief sculpture shows Trajan's victory over the Dacians and is a hugely important source of information about the Roman Army. The carving shows us the weapons and armour of the soldiers, their building materials and techniques, their siege tactics and defensive tactics.

There are about 2,500 figures shown. Trajan appears himself 59 times, he is always shown as larger and grander than everyone else. There is not much attention paid to perspective as the designer was trying, above all, to tell a story, so you often get several perspectives in the same scene.

Take a look at some of the scenes shown on the column and see how it gives us a huge amount of information about how the army worked at the time.



This detail shows the “testudo” or tortoise formation which the army often used during a siege. (See more about it in Chapter 23). Below you can see a legion on the march.





Look at the amazing detail of the sculpture. You can see the column today in its original position in Trajan's forum in Rome. Or if you are in London, the V & A Museum has a great plaster-cast of the whole column divided into drums that you can see up close.

Questions on Chapter 5

1. What victory is commemorated by Trajan's Column?
2. Who designed it?
3. Why is it such an important source of information about the Roman army?

CHAPTER VI HOW THE ARMY WAS ORGANISED

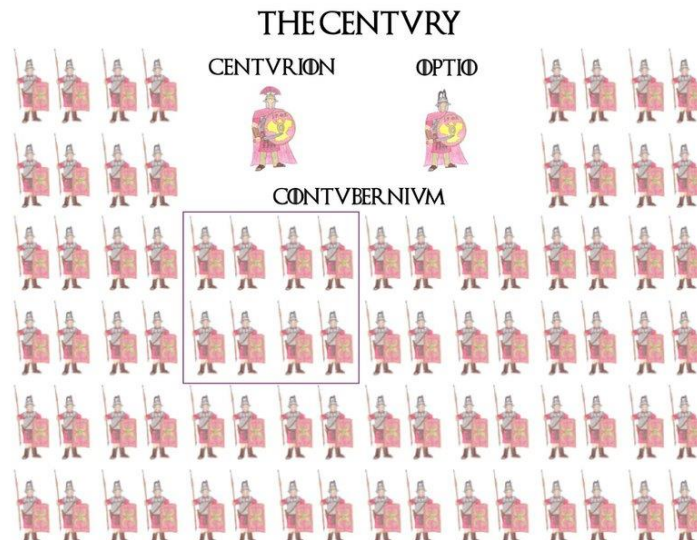
- **The Contubernium.**

This was your family in the army. You and your eight fellow legionaries shared a tent or a dormitory. You stuck together no matter what.



- **The Century.**

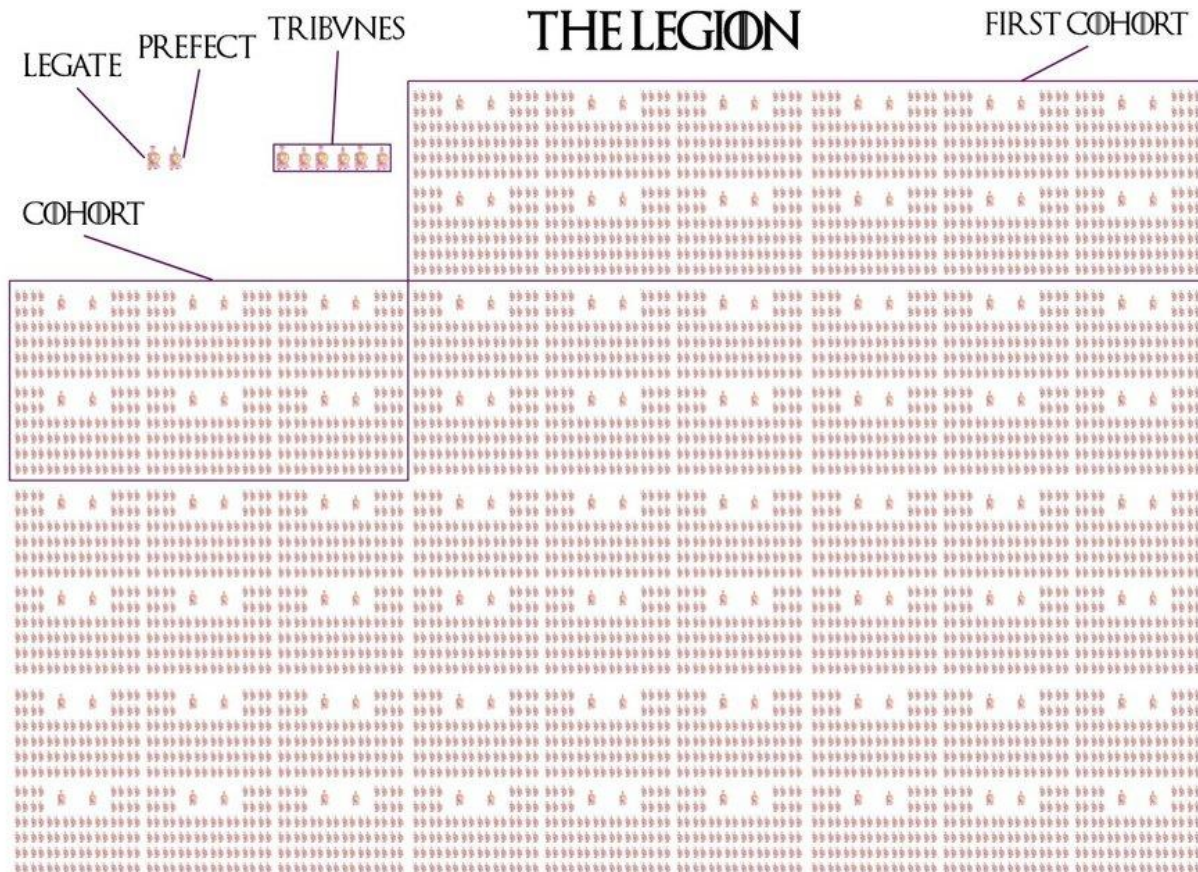
You would think that this should be a group of 100 men, and in the original Roman Army, it was. But they found this group to be too large to control easily and so the century was now 80 men. Ten contuberniums together. The century was led by one of the most important people in the life of a soldier- the centurion.



(See above: The centurion is head of the century, his second in command is the optio. There are ten contuberniums in the legion. Notice that the Roman V often corresponds to our U.

- **The Cohort.**

There are six centuries in a cohort. But the first cohort in a legion is always double in size.



- **The Legion**

This was the group of around 5,000 men (10 cohorts) that you belonged to. There were about 30 of these. It was the army that you would live with, fight with, and possibly die for. After the Emperor, it was your legion that you owed your loyalty to. Your legion had its own number, name and logo. Here are some examples:



This picture shows 15 examples of a **vexillum** from a Roman legion. This was their standard or banner and was almost a sacred item. It was carried by the **vexillarius** into battle, in front of the troops and as long as it was visible, the legion was alright. Lec stands for legion, then you have the number in Roman numerals. (If you don't know your Roman numerals, see them listed in Appendix 1 at the end). Then there is the name. Can you make sense of any of the names? Then, in the centre is the symbol or logo of your legion. Can you identify these? Legion logos also appear stamped onto tiles and bricks of walls and forts. See one below from Hadrians' Wall.



The Chain of Command:

So who was your boss? And who was his boss? Obviously, the Emperor is everyone's boss. Have a look below and see what the chain of command was in the Roman Legions.

1. The Legionary Legate

This man is in charge of a whole legion. He is not someone who started off as a common soldier, he is someone from a wealthy and influential family and often the governor of a province.

2. The Military Tribune

This is the Legate's second-in-command, there were usually 6 of them, often rising young politicians looking to make a name for themselves.

3. The Camp Prefect

This man is a professional soldier who really knows what he is doing. He has done his time as a centurion and usually as a primus pilus. He runs the camp and can discipline the centurions.

4. The Primus Pilus

The word pilus means spear, so the primus pilus means literally the "first spear". This is the leading centurion of the legion, skilled, experienced and much respected. Paul O'Connell would have been a primus pilus.





This man is not an ordinary legionary. Can you identify anything about his appearance that tells us this?

Questions on Chapter 6

1. What was a contubernium?
2. Why was a century 80 men and not 100?
3. What was the name of the group made up of 6 centuries?
4. Roughly how many men were in a legion?
5. What was a vexillum?
6. Who was the “primus pilus”?

CHAPTER VII THE CENTURION



This man is your direct boss. He has worked his way up and, for you, is a “**dolore posteriori**”. (Look it up). He is in charge of your century, assigns duties and punishments and is the one who determines whether or not you have a good day. Notice the signs of his office: He wears a transverse crest on his helmet, he has phalerae or bravery medals on his chest, he has greaves (shin-pads)

and he carries a vine stick to symbolize his authority. His right-hand man is the **optio ad spem** who also carries a stick and hopes to become a centurion soon.



This is a gravestone of a Roman optio as it would have looked. The inscription reads:

“To the spirits of the dead

Caecilius Avitus

From Emerita Augusta (in Spain)

Optio of the twelfth legion

Served 15 years

Lived 34 years

Lies buried here.”

Here is the tombstone of a centurion who died at Colchester in England. How do you know from the photograph that he is not an ordinary legionary?



His inscription reads:

Marcus Favonius Facilis, son of Marcus of the Pollia tribe

Centurion of the twentieth legion

Verecundus and Novicius, his freedmen set up this tomb

Here he lies buried

The historian Tacitus on a mutiny

“...a centurion named Lucilius was killed by his troops at the start of the mutiny. This man had earned their hatred because of the punishments he handed out to his men. They had nicknamed him “cedo alteram” or “give me another” because every time he broke his vine stick on a soldier’s back, he called for another”.

1. Compare the gravestone of Marcus with the account of Tacitus. Do they give us similar or different impressions of what a centurion might have been like?



Questions on Chapter VII

1. How many men did the centurion have under his command?
2. How would you recognize a centurion?
3. Who was his right-hand man?
4. Why were the centurions often asked for advice by higher officers?

CHAPTER VIII IMMUNES

Within the legion there are different levels too. You begin as a poor, ordinary legionary, but if you are smart, you will try to join the Immunes as soon as possible. The Immunes all have special responsibilities with an easier life. They include clerks (secretaries), blacksmiths, carpenters, the cornicen or trumpeter, and carriers of standards (see Chapter V for these). You have no automatic rights as an immunis so if he wanted to, your centurion could set you to latrine duty, ditch-digging or any other horrible job, but generally you have a skill or responsibility which means you are let off the boring, tough and dirty jobs. One interesting immunis was the tessararius who decided on the camp password each morning and let everyone know what it was. A tessera is a little cube and the password was written on this.

A papyrus from Egypt of a duty list:

“Those to be freed from other duties...the wagon repairer, the tribune’s assistant and Curiatius and Aurelius, the bookkeeper and clerk”.



Wax tablets such as this were used by the clerks in the Roman Army. The solid wax was written on with the stylus and when it was finished with, the wax was scraped off, melted and reused.

“Now I can stand around doing nothing while other legionaries slave away all day cutting stones to build roads” Julius Apollinaris to his parents.

What kind of job do you think he might have got?



This is what the cornicen would have looked like, sounding the cornus or horn to summon soldiers into battle.

“A legion has builders, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, painters and all the other craftsmen who are needed to build the winter quarters, to make equipment, towers, fences and siege machinery, and who build and repair weapons, wagons and all kinds of artillery. There are workshops for shields, armour and bows, where they also make helmets, arrows, missiles and many other things. They are very concerned that whatever the army needs should always be available in the camp”. Vegetius

1. What was the name given to the types of worker mentioned in the extract?

Questions on Chapter 8

1. Who was the tesserarius?

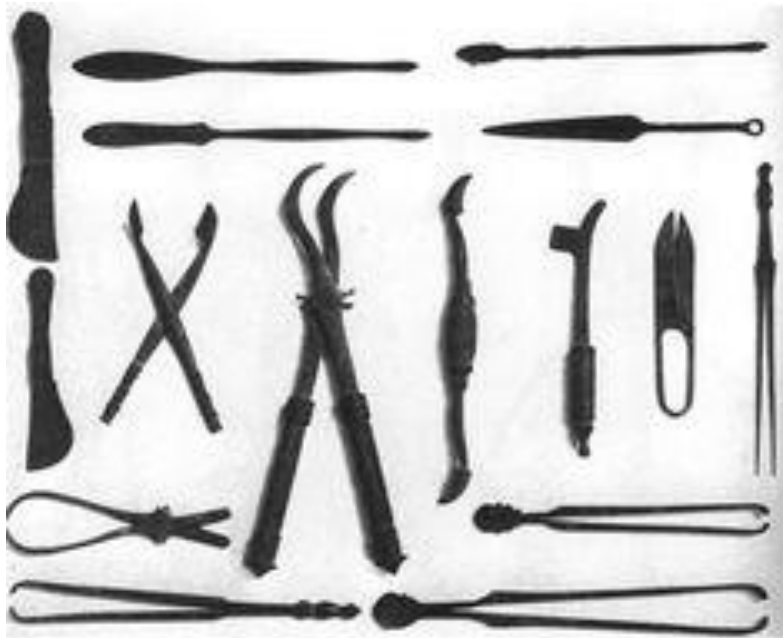
2. Why do you think a legate was never left in charge of a legion for too long?

3. In a modern army, what kind of jobs are the equivalent of the work the immunes did?

4. Where else in Roman life outside the army would you find tesserae?

Chapter IX Medicine In The Army

One of the most important of the immunes was the doctor, or medical officer, who was often Greek. He was helped out by medical orderlies. Most forts had hospitals. The main work was removing schrapnel and splinters, performing surgery to remove limbs and treating infections, usually with herbal remedies. Some archaeological remains tell us that Roman soldiers often recovered from very serious wounds. The doctors used herbs such as fennel for calming, willow for antiseptic and poppy juice as a painkiller. The only anaesthetic was alcohol.



Here are some Roman surgical instruments. Probably better not to think what they used them for. It is interesting that the method used by the Romans for extracting missiles from flesh did not change in 1,600 years and their amputation techniques were still in use in World War I. Interestingly the hospital in a fort was called the Valedutinarium which means “the goodbye room”!

Here are three extracts from Celsus on Medicine:

“A surgeon should be young, or at least youngish. He should have a strong and steady hand that never shakes and should be ready to use his left hand as well as his right. His sight should be sharp and clear and he should have courage. He should feel sorry enough for the patient to wish to cure him, but should not be driven by his cries into working too fast or into cutting out less than is necessary. He should carry on as if the cries of pain did not bother him at all.”

“Sometimes gangrene develops between the fingernails or toenails, or under the armpits or in the groin. Sometimes the arm or leg has to be amputated, but this is a risky business as patients often die from loss of blood or heart failure. However it does not matter whether the remedy is safe or not, as it is the only one. So between the good and bad parts, cut through the flesh with a scalpel down as far as the bone. But do not cut over a joint. It is better to cut off more of the good part than you need rather than risk any part of the bad flesh being left behind. When you get to the bone, pull the flesh back and cut all around it, exposing the bone. You must then cut through the bone with a small saw. Then you smooth down the end of the bone which has been cut and pull the skin back over it...then bandage a sponge soaked in vinegar onto it.”

“If nothing else will stop the flow of blood, the veins must be seized and tied off on either side of the wound, and if even this fails, then you must cauterize the veins with a hot iron”. Celsus

1. In the first extract, Celsus describes the qualities needed in a good surgeon. In your opinion, which of these still apply today? Which do not?

2. The first extract reveals one major difference between surgery in ancient Rome and surgery today, what is it?
3. In the second extract, Celsus describes how to amputate part of a limb. In what ways do you think this operation has changed today?
4. For his time, do you think his advice sounds sensible? Why?



Can you identify any of these herbs used by the Romans for healing?

Questions on Chapter 9

1. What were the commonest procedures carried out by medics in the Roman army?
2. Name two herbs used in Roman medicine.
3. What was used as an anaesthetic?
4. What does “Vale” mean in Latin?

CHAPTER X STANDARD BEARERS



These were really important **immunes**. They had a very special task and were regarded as superior to the ordinary legionaries. They were selected to be cool under pressure, dependable and very brave. They marched into battle at the head of the troops carrying the standard and relied on others around them for protection. Their other job was minding the savings of the other soldiers in the legion so they had to be trustworthy.

There were four main types of standard-bearer:

1. The **Signifer** who carried the legion's awards



2. The **Vexillarius** who carried the legion's banner or vexillum



3. The **Imaginifer** who carried the image of the emperor.



4. The **Aquilifer** - The most important standard-bearer, who carried the eagle, symbol of Rome.



Losing a standard in battle was seen as terrible disgrace, especially the eagle, symbol of Rome's power. You will notice that one of the distinctive features of the standard-bearers is their head-dress of a wild animal over their helmets and shoulders.

The standards often featured the letters: **SPQR**

1. Look at the still from the movie Centurion. Can you identify the standards in the photograph?
2. Look at the picture of Romans on the march. Can you name the standards? Can you spot another **immunis** in the photograph?
3. Find out what the letters SPQR stand for. Where can you see them today?
4. Find out what the **imago**, carried by the **imaginifer**, was.



PRIMARY SOURCE



This is the tomb of a Roman soldier found in York, England, where he was serving with the Ninth Legion. The inscription reads:

L. DVCCIVS.

L. VOL. RVFI

NVS. VIEN

SIGN. LEG. VIII

AN. XXIIX

H. S. E.

Lucius Duccius Rufinus
Son of Lucius of the Voltinia Tribe
From Vienne
Signifer of the Ninth Legion
Aged 28 years
Here lies buried

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LEC-I

ADIVTRIX | LEC-V

ALAVDAE | LEC-XV

APOLLINARIS | LEC-II

AVGVSTA | LEC-III-AVG
 |
| LEC-VIII

AVGVSTA | LEC-XI-CLAUDIA

P F | LEC-VII

C.P.FIDELIS | LEC-III

CYRENAICA | LEC-XXII

DEIOTARIANA |
| LEC-III

GALLICA | LEC-X

GEMINA | LEC-XVI

FLAVIA FIRMA | LEC-X

FRETENSIS | LEC-XII

FVLMINATA |

1. What was a vexillum?
2. What was an imago?
3. What qualities did a standard bearer need to have?
4. What was his other job in the army?
5. What sort of head-gear did he usually wear?
6. Which was the most important of the standards?

CHAPTER XI THE PRAETORIAN GUARD



This was a special, elite unit of troops who were the personal bodyguard of the emperor. There were about 10,000 of them. They were from the city of Rome or from Italy and were better paid and better equipped with shorter service than other soldiers. Their barracks was on the outskirts of the city. They sometimes acted as a police force in Rome. Their commander was never a noble in case he might be tempted to seize power for himself. In fact, the emperor Caligula was assassinated by his Praetorian Guards. Their symbol was a scorpion. Notice their distinctive crested helmets.

Primary Sources

This is an account written by Tacitus of the grievances of a mutinous soldier of 14 AD.

“Do the Praetorians, which have just got their two denarii per man, and who can go home after 16 years, face more dangers? We do not mock the guards of the capital, but we here amid barbarous tribes have to face the enemy from our tents”

What does this extract tell us about the state of mind of this soldier and about his attitude to the Praetorian Guard?



This is by Juvenal, who complains about how privileged the Praetorian guards are:

“An honest witness cannot touch these golden boys in armour, and that’s before I mention the other perks of their job.”

Questions on Chapter 11

- 1.What was the main purpose of the Praetorian Guard?
- 2.How would you know one if you saw one?
- 3.What was the attitude of the other troops to them?
- 4.What was their symbol?
- 5.Which emperor was assassinated by his Praetorian Guard?

CHAPTER XII AUXILIARIES – THE CAVALRY

(Auxilio is the Latin for I help)

These were the soldiers in the army who were not legionaries. There were several different types, of which the most important were the cavalry. Romans had no great tradition of horse-riding and so their cavalrymen, or **equites**, were usually not from Rome. They were divided into units called **alae** or wings of 500 or 1,000 men. The cavalryman had chainmail or scale armour, a light spear, a **spatha** or long sword, and a small round or oval shield. Look at the picture and see if you can see the ways in which his gear is different from that of the legionary? What are the reasons for this?



He had a saddle and a bridle but no stirrups. Why does his helmet not have the neck-guard?

Two types of auxiliary armour:



This is a reconstruction of a lorica hamata, very like medieval chainmail. What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of this type of armour would be compared to the lorica segmentata?



This is the lorica squamata, designed like overlapping fish-scales.



Cavalry training took place in the parade ground, outside the fort. It included mounting and dismounting, weapons training and drill. They did fitness training too. Stirrups had not been invented yet, so the four-horn saddle was the only thing keeping you on the horse. One writer claimed that the cavalryman should be able to vault onto the horse in full armour while the horse was moving! Cavalry was used for scouting, fighting on the flanks of the legions, softening up the enemy, delivering messages and especially, chasing down the fleeing enemy. They paraded splendidly, often in full-face masks, which made a great impression on locals.

ROMAN CAVALRY MASK FOUND IN SYRIA



An officer in the cavalry might earn 700 denarii a year, over twice what the legionary earned. One important duty of the cavalry was to head out as **exploratores**, or scouts. The backbone of the cavalry is usually the Celts who were expert horsemen. Chainmail or scale armour was usual, the helmet is different to that of the legionary, and the standard shield was smaller and flat, either round or oval. The **spatha** or cavalry sword was longer than the **gladius**. Why? Have a look at the Celtic four-horned saddle which they used. What is clever about the design?



Primary Source

This is the inscription on the grave of a Roman cavalryman at Gloucester in England.

Rufus Sita, Cavalryman

Sixth Cohort of Tracians

Aged 40 years

Served 22 years

His heirs set up this tomb

Here he lies buried

Find out how far Gloucester is from Thrace where Rufus Sita was born. (Interesting fact: There was a camel cavalry in the Roman army in Egypt!)



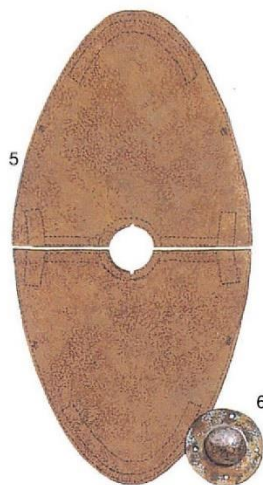
1. An iron cavalry helmet from Newstead, Scotland. The rivet holes show where a decorated bronze facing was fixed to it.



2. An iron cavalry helmet from Koblenz-Bubenheim, Germany. It has a bronze facing made to look like hair. The whole helmet was faced with bronze.

3. A simply decorated cavalry cheek-piece from Nijmegen, Netherlands.

4. A highly decorated cavalry cheek-piece found in the river Waal in the Netherlands.



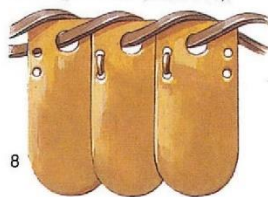
5. A reconstructed leather shield cover from Valkenburg in the Netherlands. It is about 1.28m long and 0.65m wide, covering a shield about 1.18m long and 0.55m wide.

6. Typical bronze shield boss.



7. Roman mail was made of alternate rows of punched or hammer-welded rings joined by rows of riveted rings.

8. Typical Roman scales. They were wired and laced together before being sewn onto a fabric undergarment: (scale 1:1).



9. Part of a scale shirt from Dura Europus in Syria. These scales were wired together and sewn directly to the fabric.



Cavalry weapons: scale 1:6

10 and 11. Two spear heads from Newstead in Scotland.

12. A spatha from Newstead in Scotland.

13. The chape from a spatha scabbard. Found at Rottweil.

14. Part of a hook fastener for holding the shoulder pieces to the chest of a mail shirt.

14a. The fastener reconstructed.

15. A Roman spur.



10



11



15

12



14a



14



13

Cavalry Armour and Weapons

Armour

The Roman cavalryman wore an iron helmet and a mail or scale shirt, but seldom any protection for the right arm or leg.

Helmets

Roman cavalry helmets were usually made of iron with a decorated bronze facing. Several very elaborate examples have been found in the last few years. These cover most of the head, leaving only the eyes, nose and mouth uncovered.

Cuirasses

The cuirass was made of mail or scale. It was normally short, only coming down to the hips, where it was split at the sides to allow the rider to sit astride his horse. It was double thickness on the upper back with two flaps coming forward, over the shoulders, to be held in place by a double hook on the chest.

Weapons

The Roman cavalry used a great variety of weapons. Arrian tells us that the cavalry practised with spears, javelins, darts and sling shot or stones. There were even whole regiments of horse archers.

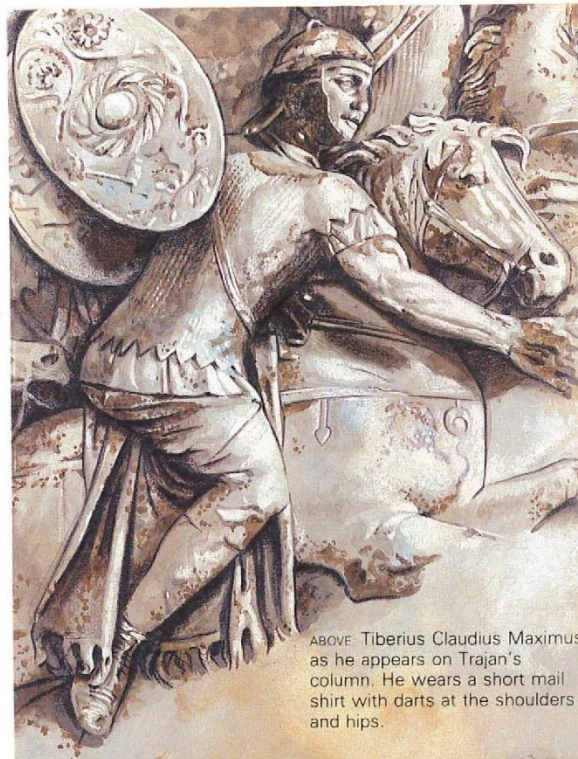
Spears and javelins

Most tombstones show cavalrymen fighting with heavy spears, which may be throwable. Maximus' tombstone shows him with two spears or javelins. The fact he has two, means one must be throwable.

The Jewish historian Josephus, says that the Roman cavalry in Syria carried a very long spear and a quiver with three or more large javelins.

Swords

The Roman cavalry used a long sword (spatha) which they wore on the right side, suspended either from a belt or from a baldric passing over the left shoulder. The blade length of these swords varies from 0.65m to over 0.8m.

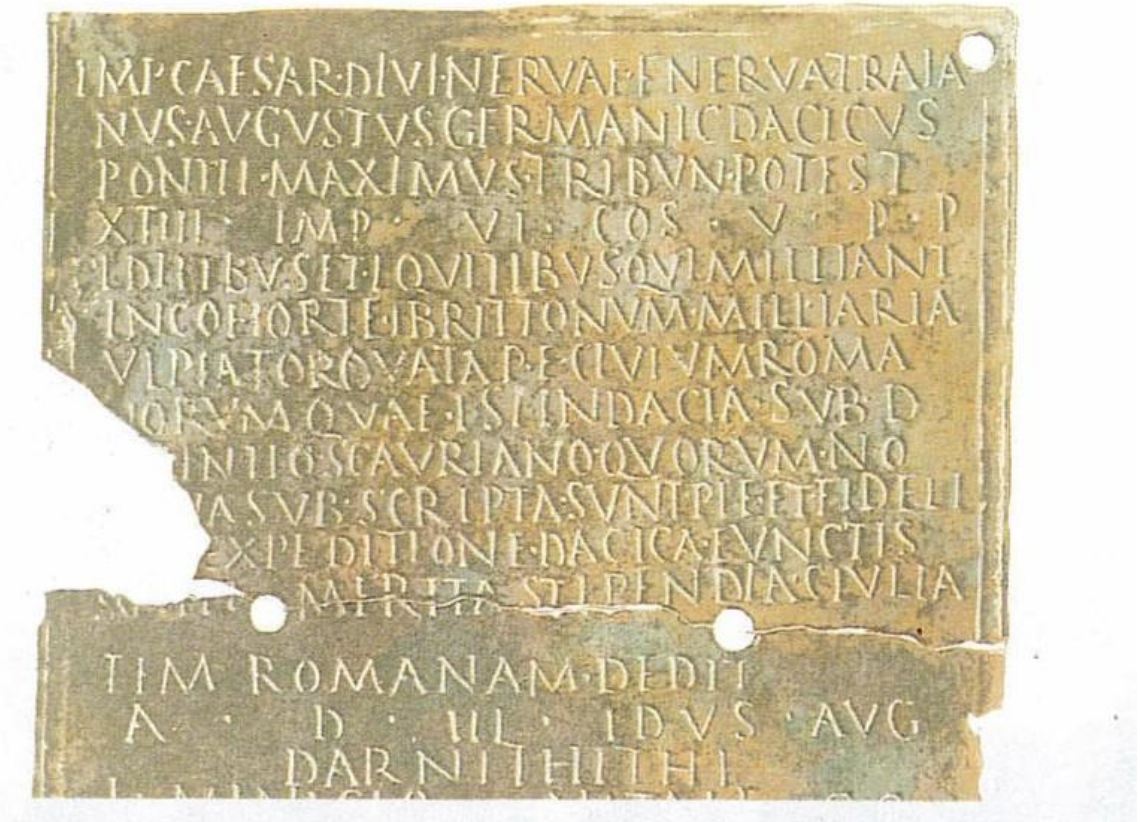


ABOVE Tiberius Claudius Maximus as he appears on Trajan's column. He wears a short mail shirt with darts at the shoulders and hips.



ABOVE part of a tombstone from Germany. The cut of the mail shirt is typical of the first century AD.

LEFT part of the tombstone of Flavius Bassus, late first century AD. He wears a helmet decorated to look like hair, and a short mail shirt. Note the saddle pommels.



This is a very interesting diploma. It was given by the Emperor Trajan to every member of a cohort of British cavalymen who fought against the Dacians. This one was found in Leicester.

Questions on Chapter 12

1. What does the word auxilio mean in English?
- 2 .Why do you think a cavalryman earned twice as much as an infantryman?
3. What were alae?
4. What was a cavalryman's spear called and in what way was it different to a legionary's sword?
5. Why do you think a cavalryman didn't wear the lorica segmentata?
6. Who were the exploratores?

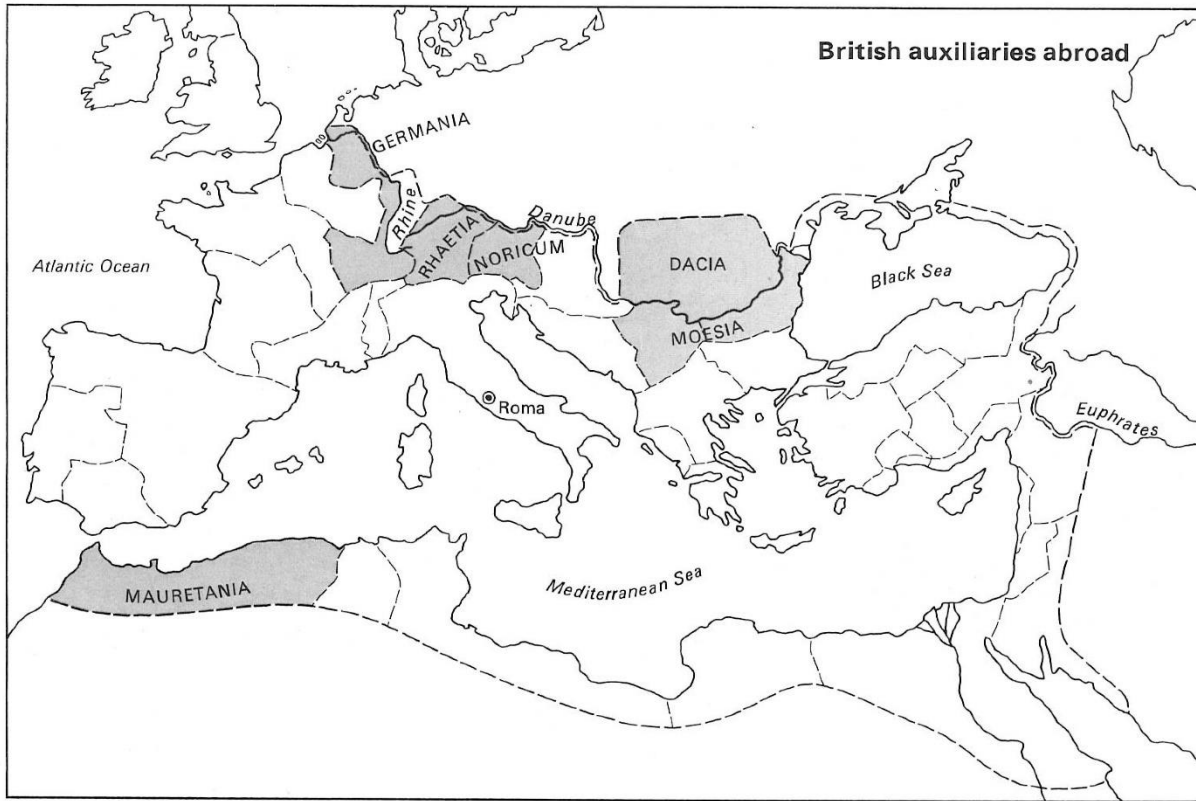
CHAPTER XIII AUXILIARIES - INFANTRY

The auxiliary infantry were the foot soldiers of the Roman army who were not Roman citizens. They were organized into cohorts of 500 or 1,000 men, each commanded by a Roman officer (a tribune or a prefect). Each cohort was divided into centuries, each commanded by a Roman centurion. Auxiliaries were usually posted away from their home place. Why? The auxiliary infantry was paid less, they were less well-armed and had different equipment. Their helmet had a ring at the top, they had chainmail or fish-scale armour and carried a long sword and an oval shield.



Being less heavily armed, auxiliaries could move faster than the legionaries, but they were also more likely to get wounded or killed. So why would you become an auxiliary? You did get fed and paid and the big prize was the honour of Roman citizenship when you retired. Here is the discharge diploma of Dasmenus Azalus, son of Festus





The shaded areas are places that we know British auxiliaries served in the Roman Army. Why were they not usually placed on Hadrian's Wall?

Questions on Chapter 13

1. Why were auxiliaries paid less than legionaries?
2. In what way was their shield different?
3. In what way was their sword different?
4. What might persuade you to join the Roman army as an auxiliary?

CHAPTER XIV OTHER AUXILIARIES

There were other skills that the Romans needed help with in their army. There were types of fighting which they were not so good at and so they recruited soldiers from other parts of their empire, often from tribes they had beaten in war. They often did the heavier work for about 80% of the pay. Usually you served with your fellow nationals, but in a different part of the empire than where you came from. Who were these specialists?

- **Archers**



The very best archers came from Syria. They used a short bow made of horn and steel with steel tipped arrows. Here is an archer's grave inscription found at Dessau in Germany:

"Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera from Sidon is buried here. He lived 62 years and was for 40 years a soldier in the cohort of archers"

The highly specialized Parthians were archers on horseback whose killer trick was to shoot facing backwards on their horses, this was called a “Parthian shot”. Find out what the phrase means now.



- **Balearic Slingers**



These men were from the Balearic Islands, off Spain. They were fantastically accurate using a sling made of leather and rope and shots of lead or stone.

- **Numerii**

These men were at the very bottom of the pile. Their name literally means “numbers”. They were unskilled, ill-equipped and had not a great deal of training. They were usually local tribesmen commanded by their own leaders and were sent first into battle to soften up the enemy. Here is a piece by Josephus which tells us that the Romans preferred if the auxiliaries were first in the firing line:

“Vespasian (the emperor), marched out of Ptolemais having ordered the lightly armed auxiliaries to march first with the archers, so that they might prevent any sudden attacks from the enemy, and search out any woods that looked as though they might contain ambushes”.

When the emperor Hadrian was reviewing the auxiliary troops in North Africa, he observed that their appearance and their weapons matched their low pay, but, he added, they compensated for their scruffiness by their enthusiasm. If an auxiliary unit fought outstandingly well, they could be awarded with Roman citizenship as a prize.

(Interesting fact: A courier on duty is recognized by a feather tied to his spear.)

Questions on Chapter 14

1. From which modern country did the best archers in the Roman army come?
2. What was the particular skill of the Parthians?
3. From where did the best slingers come?
4. Who were the numerii/?
5. Why did the Romans always send auxiliaries into battle ahead of the legionaries?

CHAPTER XV ON THE MARCH

The Roman Army was always on the march. One of the reasons for its success was that it could get to where trouble was very quickly. Some of the vital immunes in the army were the road engineers who made some of the key roads still used in Europe today. Forty kilometres a day was a typical march, fifty six in times of trouble. The army marched in column (that is a long, narrow line). The strongest legions were in the centre along with the the artillery and baggage. Cavalry scouts (exploratores) rode ahead to prevent surprise attacks. Each night the marching column would stop and build a temporary marching camp, then destroy it before they left. A marching camp followed exactly the same pattern as a permanent camp except it was made of turf and wooden stakes and accommodation was in leather tents instead of buildings.

1. *"In the summer months they must complete a march of 26 km in 5 hours at normal marching speed. When they march at the faster speed, they must cover a distance of 32 km in the same time. The young soldier must be given frequent practice in carrying loads up to 30 kilos while marching... because on difficult campaigns they will have to carry their rations as well as their weapons. This is not difficult if they get enough practice"*. Vegetius.

Why were Roman legionaries nick-named "Marius's mules"?

Do you think there is much difference between the training of these legionaries and modern soldiers?

Check these distances from school to see how far they were marching.

Josephus (a non-Roman) writes of the army in a temporary camp:

“At daybreak the men report to the centurions. The centurions go together to salute the tribunes and all the officers go to the legate. They receive the password as usual and any other orders. When it is time to break camp, the trumpet sounds. The men take down the tents immediately and pack everything. They quickly pile the baggage onto the mules and stand at the ready, like runners at a starting line waiting for the signal. Then they set fire to the camp to prevent it being any use to the enemy. The trumpet sounds for a third time to warn those who are slow to hurry so that no one is left out of his rank. The herald standing to the right of the general asks three times whether they are ready and they reply three times “Yes, we’re ready”

1. What is there in this extract that shows us the standards of discipline were high in the Roman Army?
2. Do you think Josephus admired them or not? Why?

“If a soldier requisitions your mule, just let it go without protesting. Otherwise you will suffer a beating and still lose your mule”.

Epictetus

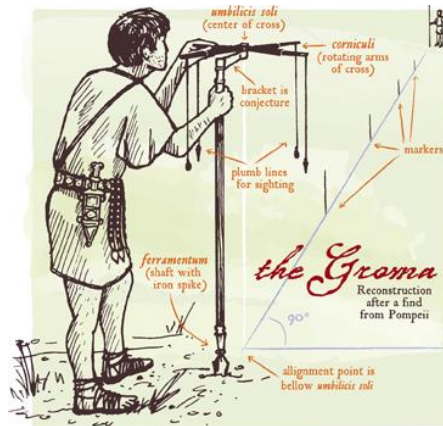
1. What can you tell about attitudes to the army from this extract?

Questions on Chapter XV

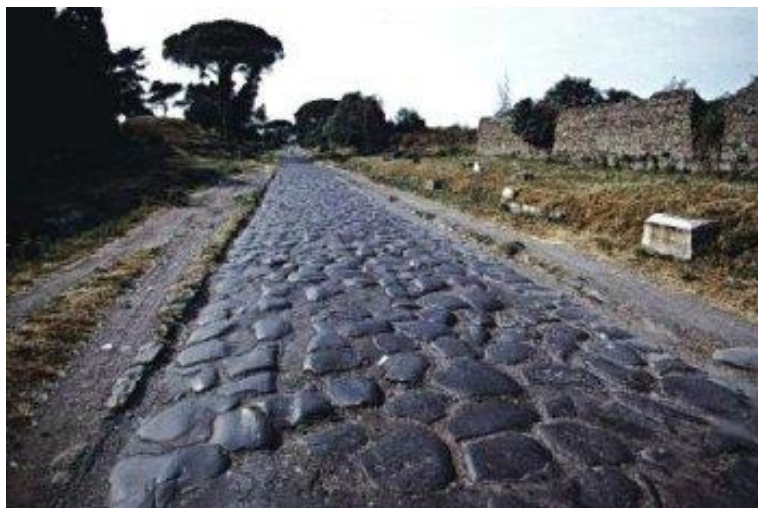
1. What was the typical distance of a Roman soldier’s march in a day?
2. What formation did they march in?
3. What was the difference between a marching camp and a proper fort?

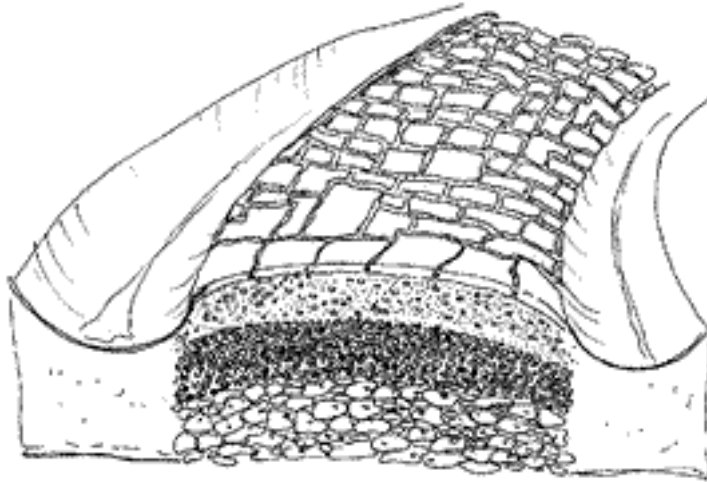
CHAPTER XVI ROMAN ROADS

Roman roads were really well built and many are in use today. They were measured out by **mensores** using a **groma** to establish straight lines and right angles.



“**All roads lead to Rome**” was a common saying. How did they make these amazing roads? First, all of the ground would be cleared, a big trench dug and filled with large stones. Then this would be filled in with rubble and sand. On top of this there was a layer of cement mixed with small tiles and then a layer of paving stones. There was a curve in the road from side to side (just as roads have today) to prevent flooding and drainage at the sides with kerbs at the edges.





The Roman generals realized that, even if you conquered a great empire, it could not be controlled unless you had swift access to all parts of it. So one of the most important jobs of the army was the construction of fine Roman roads across the whole empire, many of which are still in use today. Today, the main purpose of roads is for ordinary people to travel but for the Romans their main purpose was to ensure that the army could move fast to deal with any trouble and crucially, that supplies could be brought to them. By the time of Trajan, the roads of the whole empire were being measured in miles and marked with milestones. Here are a few examples of recorded journeys made by army couriers:

4AD: Special messenger from Lycia (Turkey) to Rome. 3,100 km in 36 days

68AD: Special messenger from Rome to Clunia (Central Spain). 2,000 km in 6 days

193AD: Imperial courier from Rome to Alexandria (Egypt). 3,500 km in 63 days.

How long do you think these journeys would take overland today?



A detail from Trajan's Column showing the army on the road.



Questions on Chapter XVI

1. What was a groma?
2. In what ways were Roman roads similar to ours?
3. Mention one main difference.

CHAPTER XVII HADRIAN'S WALL

One of the most amazing building projects ever undertaken by the Romans was Hadrian's Wall. Hadrian was Trajan's successor. Instead of expanding the empire, he decided to mark out its boundaries. The northernmost boundary was between England and Scotland.

The Romans had arrived in Britain led by Julius Caesar in 55BC. Up to then many Romans hadn't believed it existed. They were disappointed with the poverty and misery of the place and initially wondered if it was worth conquering at all. But later rulers did conquer large parts of it and settled there. (Find out which English towns were originally Roman).

The Emperor Hadrian arrived in AD122 and ordered a great wall to be built to mark the northern frontier of his empire. The wall runs about 120k from sea to sea.

It had three main defensive features, a big ditch to the north; the wide curtain wall with turrets, milecastles and forts; and a large earthwork (the **Vallum**) to the south. There were 17 forts on the wall and they were positioned about half a day's march apart.

Milecastles were placed at a distance of a Roman mile (.9 of a mile or 1.5 k) apart and were designed to hold up to 32 men. In between the milecastles were two evenly-spaced turrets set into the wall, they were designed to hold up to 8 men. Each turret was in sight of its neighbour.

Two of the most famous forts on Hadrian's Wall are Housesteads and Vindolanda. (See Chapter XX on Vindolanda).



Questions on Chapter XVII

1. Who was Hadrian?
2. Approximately when was the wall built?
3. Where is it?
4. What length is it?
5. How many forts were there on the wall?
6. What was there at intervals between the forts?
7. Name one of the forts on the wall.

CHAPTER XVIII CAMPS AND FORTS

The temporary camp was set up while the army was on the march from one place to another. It might be used for a couple of nights or, if it was in a good spot, it might eventually turn into a permanent fort. It was usually built of whatever materials came to hand, often turf and wood. Once the outer walls were set up, the men set up their tents made of animal skin inside. The layout of the temporary camp was the same as that of a permanent fort (next chapter). From finds of goatskins at Vindolanda, it has been calculated that about 40 complete skins were needed to make a tent. (See comitatus.net for an account of making a replica Roman army tent).

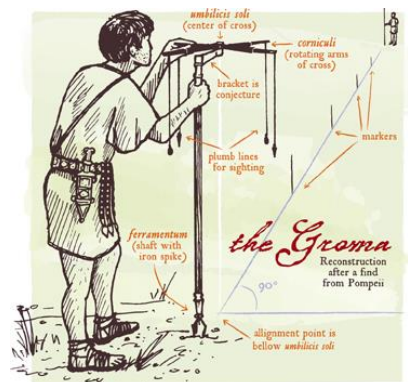


THE ROMAN FORT

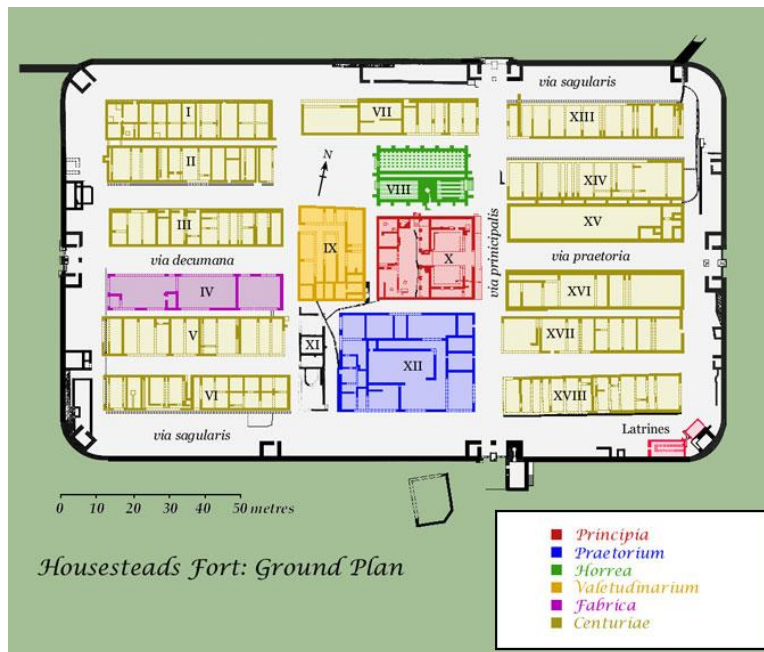
Every Roman camp and fort was laid out in the same way, whether it was a temporary one made of earth and wooden stakes or a permanent one made of stone. A typical camp or fort could hold anything from 1,000 to 5,000 men.

First the site was chosen with care by engineers. The fort had to be somewhere important, often at the frontier, near a road and with a steady supply of water and ideally building materials. They were often on high ground for defense.

The engineers used a **groma** to measure straight lines and right-angles. This was used in their road-building too.



Whether you were in Egypt or Britain, the Roman fort was a standard design throughout the Empire. It is a rectangle with rounded corners, a bit like a playing card. See the plan and the aerial view of Housesteads Fort in Northern England. It is one of the best examples.



Principia = HQ; Praetorium = home of the camp prefect; Horrea = grain storage warehouse; Valetudinarium = hospital (literally “goodbye room”; Fabrica = workshop; Centuriae = barracks.

The fort had two main roads that intersected in the middle. The building started with the defensive ditch around the fort and the rampart where the wall would be built on top. Depending on the location and importance, the wall would be a wooden palisade or made of stone. Then the inside buildings would be constructed with

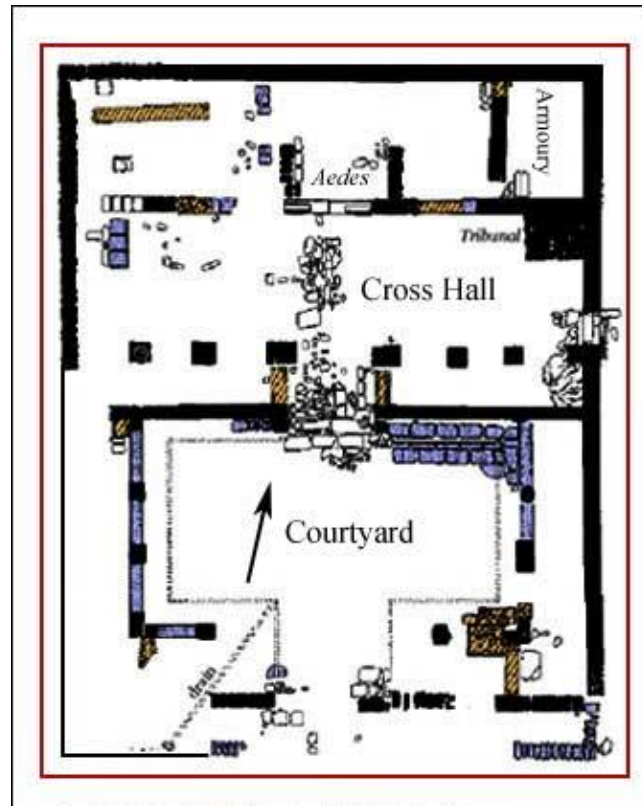
timber frames, wattle and daub and plaster. Perhaps later this would be replaced with stone. A standard camp covered 55 acres.

The two most important buildings were in the centre, check them on the plan: the **principia** and the **praetorium**, the camp headquarters and the commander's house. The granary or horrea was usually close to these for protection. The walls had a gate at the centre of each guarded by watchtowers. Other buildings included the barracks where each century slept, the workshop for the making and repairing of weapons, armour...etc. and the hospital. Most forts had their own bath house where the soldiers could relax. This was usually outside the walls of the fort.

THE PRINCIPIA (HQ)

Look at the pictures on the next page. You can see the ground plan of the principia at Housesteads fort and a reconstruction of what it would have looked like. What went on here? At the front is a wide courtyard and then the cross hall where the general would have met his centurions and given them their orders. There was usually a statue of the Emperor in this hall. Behind this long hall were three rooms, the **sacellum** or sacred room where the legion's standards were kept, the office where the clerks kept their records, and a strong room where pay, savings and valuable armour were kept.



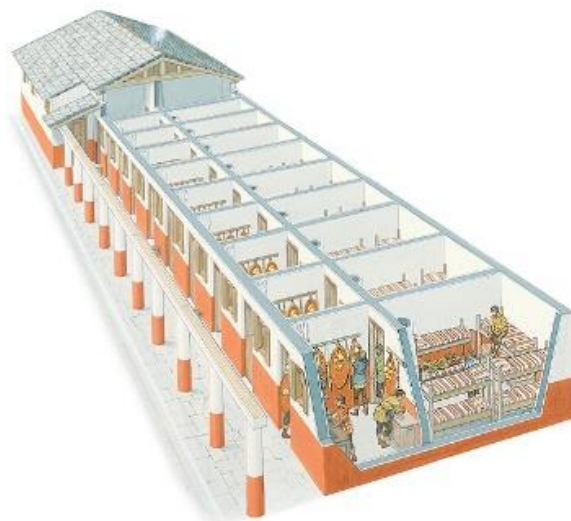


THE PRAETORIUM



This was where the camp commander lived. As you can see it was large and quite luxurious. It was very similar to a typical Roman domus in Pompeii. It could take up to ten per cent of the whole fort's ground space. The camp commander could have his family with him here and his servants. Some praetoria even had their own set of baths.

THE BARRACKS



These were long, narrow buildings with one big room at the end, probably the centurion's living quarters. The rest of the building was divided into pairs of rooms, one pair of rooms for each contubernium. It is likely that one room was for sleeping and the other for equipment. They may have cooked in one of the rooms, or outside.



This is what a barracks room may have looked like

THE HORREA

This was a vital building in the fort, where the food supplies were kept. It was always closely guarded and records were kept of the meat, grain, vegetables and wine there. The horrea was built on a raised floor to keep the foods from getting damp and rotting.



This is the **horrea** at Housesteads

The Workshops

Every fort had its own workshops or **fabrica** for the manufacture and repair of tools, weapons, wagons, buildings...etc. These workshops seem to have varied from fort to fort.

The Valetudinarium

What a nice name for a hospital – the goodbye room! The Romans seem to have understood that some patients were best kept isolated in their own rooms as the remains of the buildings are divided into small areas.

OUTSIDE THE FORT:

The Bath House

This was usually outside the fort. It was the main place for legionaries to go and relax. It was a more basic version of the big public baths in Roman towns. It had a hot, warm and cold room, plunge pools and areas to exercise in, to relax and play betting games. It also contained the fort's toilets.



The reconstructed baths at Segedunum



Go to the loo for a good chat!

The Vicus

Roman soldiers got paid a steady salary which was unusual in the Roman world. This meant that where they were based, there was money. So wherever a Roman fort was built, a **vicus** or village, grew up beside it. What might you find in a vicus?

First of all, legionaries were not supposed to be married, but many of them did, in fact, have partners and children. These would often follow the army and set up home near the fort where the soldier was based. Secondly, where there was a fort, there was pay. So it was a good spot to set up a shop, a **thermopolium**, a bath-house, or even a small theatre so that the off-duty soldiers could relax, have fun and, of course, spend their money! This is a hoard of coins found at the Roman fort at Colchester in England. Why do they look blue?



Questions on Chapter XVIII

1. What were the army tents made of?
2. How many men to a tent?
3. Name three criteria you would use to decide on the location for a fort.
4. How might you recognize a Roman fort from the air?
5. Name the two most important buildings in a Roman fort and say what they were used for.
6. was a vicus? Name two buildings you might find there.

CHAPTER XIX EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE FORT

There was a lot to do in the fort, apart from training, route marches and drill. Legionaries had to help with the stores, cleaning and repairing equipment and various chores. Everyone had to do their stint on sentry duty. You could be given extra duties as punishment. One record of the men at a camp in Egypt shows that one man had to do barrack duty for eight days, another had to clean the centurion's boots for three days. But there was leisure time too. Legionaries could relax in the baths, play board games and gambling games, write letters home or read their mail. One letter to a soldier at Vindolanda on Hadrian's wall reads:

"I have sent you some pairs of socks, two pairs of sandals made in Sattia and two pairs of underpants. Say hello to my friends and to your contubernium. I pray that you and they may enjoy a long life and the best of luck"

Most forts had a vicus or village which had grown up beside it. "Camp followers" including the unofficial wives and children of some of the soldiers lived there. There would likely be a thermopolium there where soldiers could go for a drink or some food.

WHAT DID YOU EAT?

Legionaries mainly lived on grains, corn ground into porridge or wheat ground to flour and made into bread. They ate a lot of soups made with vegetables and certainly ate some meat, usually pork. They drank water or a cheap wine called **acetum**. Depending on where they were, they could supplement their plain food with nicer food bought in the vicus or by hunting and fishing.

WORSHIP

Mars was the Roman god of war and Minerva was often associated with victory. Some forts were associated with particular gods, sometimes local gods, but Jupiter was the supreme god. Around the start of January every year, an old altar to **Jupiter Optimus Maximus**, (Jupiter Best and Greatest), was buried in the parade ground and a new one put up.

There was often a **mithraeum** or shrine to Mithras, a Persian god who was worshipped a lot in the Roman army. He usually stands for the struggle between good and evil, light and dark. This cult had strange and dangerous initiation rites which included tests of strength and bravery. You could make a sacrifice there for protection.



Mithras, always shown in a Persian style hat, killing a bull.

LEISURE TIME

Probably the most popular thing to do with your time off was to go to the baths. This was like a mini version of any typical Roman bath house, such as those in Pompeii. There would have been toilets, a cold room with a cold pool, a warm room with a warm pool and a hot room with a hot pool. There would also have been a changing area. Here you could bathe and hang out with your mates. From the huge numbers of dice and knucklebones found in the baths, we know that a lot of gambling games took place here. You could also visit the vicus outside the fort. You might even have a girlfriend and children living there. Here you might find a thermopolium (a wine and fast food place), various **tabernae** (shops) and other facilities. From the finds at Vindolanda, we know that the legionaries also spent time writing home. There is some evidence from there and from Housesteads that the soldiers went hunting for game to add to their rations.



Roman Dice

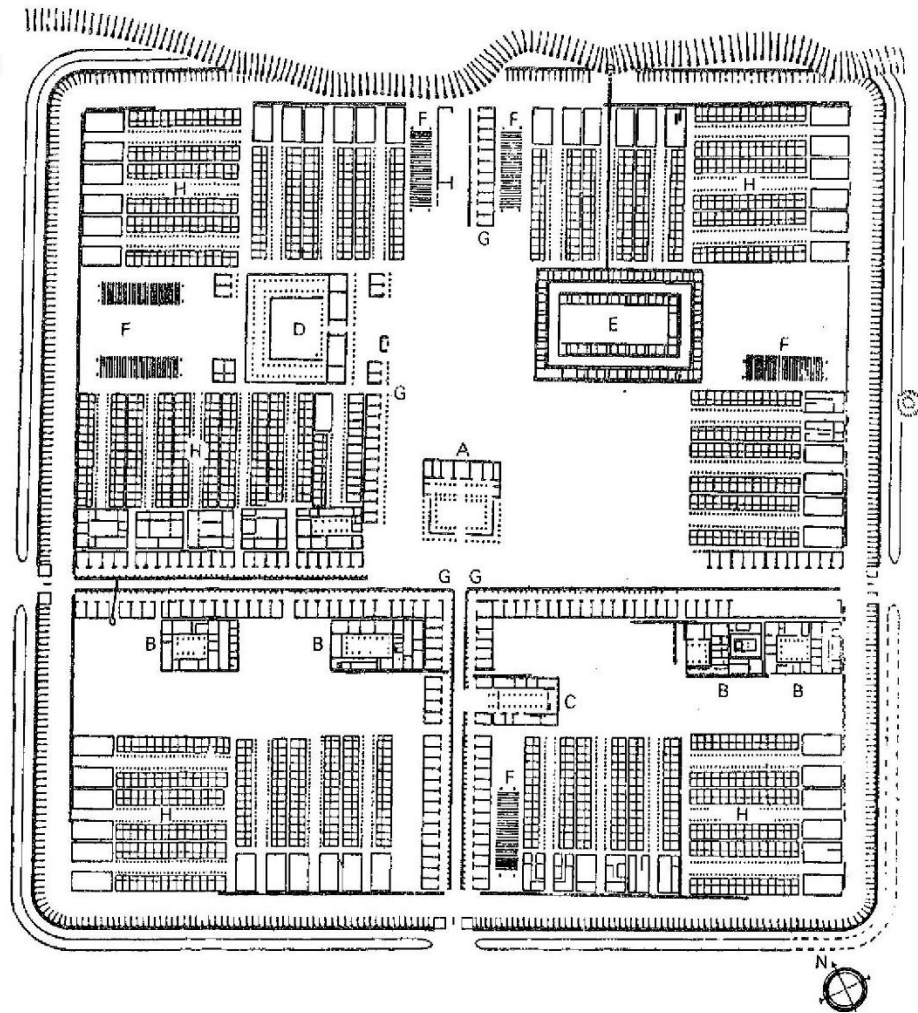
Questions on Chapter XIX

1. What were three things you might do in your leisure time as a Roman legionary?
2. What was a thermopolium?
3. Who was Mithras?
4. How would you recognize a picture of him?

5. Look at the map of the Roman fort at Inchtuthill below and answer the questions.

Key:

- A Headquarters building
- B Tribunes' house
- C Drill hall
- D Workshop
- E Hospital
- F Granaries
- G Store rooms arranged in rows
- H Barrack blocks. Each block holds one century. Eight men share a pair of rooms. The centurion has a suite of rooms at the end of the block.



1. Can you pick out three things on this map that identify this as a Roman fort?
2. Have a look at the plan of Housesteads on page 68. Can you pick out three major differences between the two forts?
3. Can you pick out anything unusual about this fort?

CHAPTER XX VINDOLANDA – A ROMAN FORT



This is one of the finest Roman forts on Hadrian's Wall. It was probably first built about 85 AD shortly after the Romans had defeated the Picts at the battle of Mons Graupius. It was built to guard the Stanegate, the great supply road running from east to west. Traces of the earliest timber fort still survive 5m below ground level. The fort remained in use till the end of Roman rule in Britain, about 400 AD. In the centre of the fort lies the principia, the HQ, probably the best example of a principia in Britain.



The spacious praetorium is next door, it was excavated in 1998. The fort also has a fine bath house and a large latrine.

But what has made Vindolanda famous is a find which is truly remarkable. These are a collection of ink and waxed writing tablets containing a vast wealth of information. They are tiny, thin sheets of wood, incredibly delicate. Infra-red photography is needed to decipher the script. So far, there are over 1,400 of them. They cover every detail of camp life including supplies, complaints, duties, invitations, lists and accounts. The best known one is the birthday invitation from Claudia Severa to Sulpicia Lepidina from around 100 AD.



“Claudia Severa to her Lepidina greetings. On 11 September, sister, for the day of the celebration of my birthday, I give you a warm invitation to make sure that you come to us, to make the day more enjoyable for me by your arrival, if you are present (?). Give my greetings to your Cerialis. My Aelius and my little son send him (?) their greetings. I shall expect you sister. Farewell, sister my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper, and hail”.

To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa.

The recipient of this invitation, Sulpicia Lepidina, was the wife of Flavius Cerealis, prefect of the Ninth Cohort of Batavians stationed at Vindolanda. The birthday-girl, Claudia Severa, was wife of Aelius Brocchus, the commander of a neighbouring garrison called Briga. It is the earliest known example of writing in Latin by a woman.

Others include a complaint about the state of the local roads and a mention of the “Brittunculi” or “wretched little Britons”, ie. the local people. The survival of these tablets was made possible by the unique environmental conditions on the site. This means that other materials survived incredibly well here too, particularly items made of leather and wood, and even some textiles.

Have a look at these finds from Roman Britain. What can you tell about life on the frontier from these artefacts?



A Pair of Ladies' Ear-rings



A Toddler's Shoe

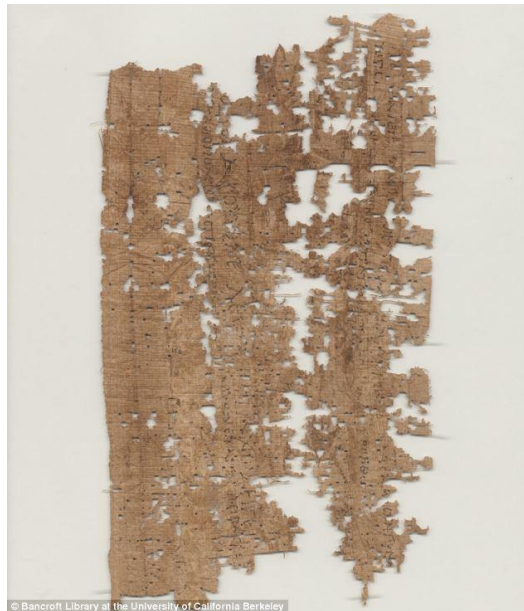


A Lady's Sandal

Questions on Chapter XX

1. What was the Stanegate?
2. What are the Vindolanda writing tablets made of?
3. What does the word "Britunculii" mean?
4. Which is the most famous of the tablets?

Life in the army certainly was not all fun. Here are two primary sources, one expressing an individual's problems and the other an account by Tacitus of a serious mutiny of the army in Germany during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius.



This is the remains of a letter, discovered about 100 years ago in Egypt, but studied and translated only recently with the help of infra-red photography. It is from a legionary called Aurelius Polion who was stationed in modern day Hungary (Roman Pannonia). He was writing home to his mother, a bread-seller in Egypt.

"I pray that you are in good health night and day, and I always make obeisance before all the gods on your behalf. I do not cease writing to you, but you do not have me in mind.....I am worried about you because although you received letters from me often, you never wrote back to me so that I may know how you ..." (Part of the letter hasn't survived).....While away in Pannonia I sent (letters) to you, but you treat me as a stranger."

1. What evidence suggests that his letter did arrive home?
2. Is there any difference between this letter and one a soldier might send home today?

“The private soldier, Percennius, then made a public speech: “You will never be brave enough to demand better conditions if you are not prepared to ask – or threaten – the emperor Tiberius who is new and still unsure of himself. Old men, mutilated by wounds, are serving their thirtieth or fortieth year. And, even after discharge, your service is still not finished; for you stay on as a reserve, still in a tent – the same drudgery under another name! And if you manage to survive all these hazards, even then you are dragged off to a remote country and “settled” in some waterlogged swamp or untilled mountainside. Truly the army is a harsh, unrewarding profession! Body and soul are reckoned to be worth two and a half sesterces a day. There will never be improvement until service is based on a contract as follows: pay – four sesterces a day; length of service – sixteen years; a bonus in cash to be paid before leaving the army. After all, Praetorians receive eight sesterces a day and after sixteen years they go home.”

Tacitus

1. Why does Percennius think now is a good time to mutiny?
2. List three of the main grievances the soldiers have.
3. Do you think their grievances sound valid?
4. Which unit of the army do the legionaries resent?
5. Find out how much a sesterce was worth.

CHAPTER XXI WHO WANTS TO KILL YOU?

As Rome was the biggest empire in the known world, obviously, it had made plenty of enemies. No one likes being beaten and controlled by another nation. Here are some of the main enemies faced by Rome.

The Gauls

If you have read the Asterix stories, these should be familiar to you. The Gauls were especially troublesome to Julius Caesar who eventually defeated them. Like the other northern Europeans, they were tall and fair. They were very fierce in battle and favoured the long, two-bladed iron sword.



The Picts

These were the tribes in Scotland and Northern Britain. They were much taller and fairer than the Romans and they painted themselves with woad, a blueish clay when they fought. It was discovered only recently that woad has antiseptic properties. They were excellent at what we would call guerilla warfare. That is launching surprise attacks and then disappearing without trace. Famously, they had defeated the Ninth Legion of the Roman Army.



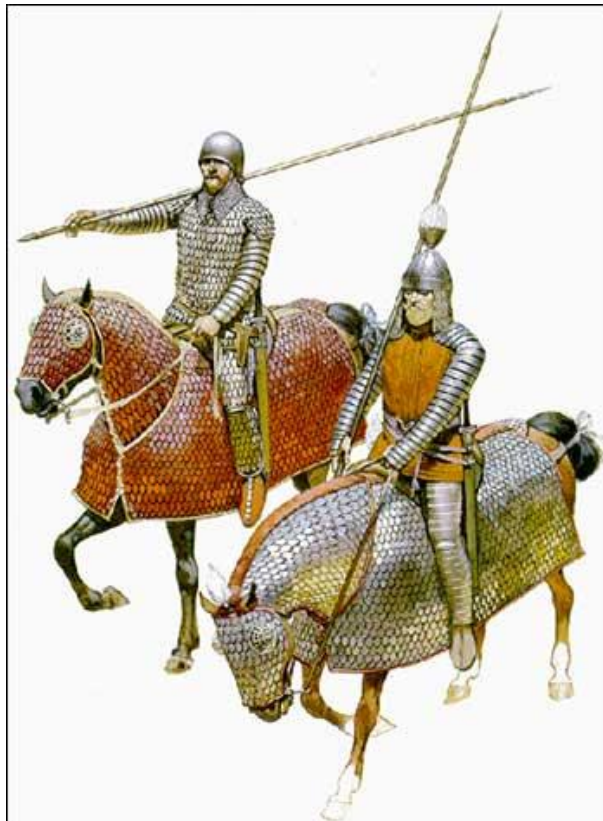
The Germanii

There were many Germanic tribes, some of whom were quite loyal to the Romans. But some were not. The main problem here was the terrain where they often chose to fight – boggy forest, where it was difficult for the Romans to use their preferred methods. The Roman approach of “divide and conquer” often worked here, where different German tribes were encouraged to fight each other, instead of the Romans. Once defeated, the Romans were very keen to enlist the Germans in their own army as they were great fighters.

The Parthians

Famously, the Parthians (from modern day Syria), had inflicted a terrible defeat on the legions of a Roman general called Crassus in 53 BC. 20,000 legionaries were slaughtered. The Parthians were superb horsemen, riding Turkoman horses known for their stamina. They had an extraordinary unit of cavalry called Cataphracts who were terrifying. They were super-heavy cavalry, armoured from head to foot with even the horses protected with a blanket of chainmail. They carried a kontos, a sword on the end of a 10 foot pole to skewer their enemies. The butt-end of the kontos had a sharp point too, to finish you off. The Parthians were best known for their archers on horseback. They were astonishingly skillful, and used very flexible composite bows made of horn and fibre glued together with a huge range. Their hallmark was the “Parthian Shot” (see previous chapter on auxiliaries in the Roman Army).

Parthian Cataphracts





Cataphracts on Trajan's Column

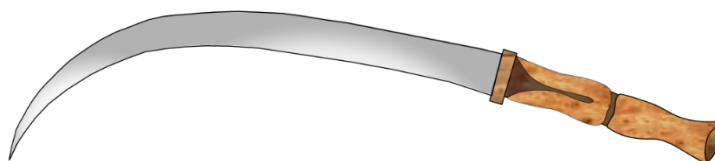
The Dacians

At the time of Trajan, the biggest conquest was that of the Dacians (in modern day Romania). These people were very warlike and did not take kindly to the idea of being controlled by Rome. They constantly raided the Roman province of Pannonia (between the Danube and the Alps). Trajan decided that they had to be subdued. Up to now, the Dacians were quite splintered by civil war, but a new leader called Decebalus united them under powerful control.

The Dacians' main allies were the neighbouring Sarmatians who were famous for their heavy-armed cavalry. (See below).



As for the Dacians, their favoured weapon was the falx (below), a heavy bill-hook, but they also used swords, bows and battle-axes.



There is archaeological evidence that on the site of the campaign, double metal braces were added to the helmets of the legionaries by the blacksmiths in the army. What does this tell us?



Trajan gathered ten legions to take on the Dacians across the River Danube. This was because they were very dangerous, (they had already destroyed a Roman legion called The Larks. Also, the Carpathian Mountains were a very difficult region to attack, well suited for defence. The army of Trajan defeated the Dacians, with difficulty. Their tasks included building a tow path along part of the Danube River and the construction of two huge pontoon bridges (floating on anchored boats), across the river. The lasting monument of the event is Trajan's Column (see Chapter V).



This detail from Trajan's Column shows the god of the River Danube looking on as Trajan's army sets out over the pontoon bridge.

Questions on Chapter XXI

1. Which enemies of the Romans lived in present day France?
2. Who were the Picts?
3. Who were the Cataphracts?
4. Which of the Romans' enemies would you least like to have faced? Why?
5. Who was Decabalus?
6. What was a falx?

CHAPTER XXII ARTILLERY

Up to the time of the ancient Greeks, the power of a weapon was restricted by how strongly a man could pull back a bow. But the Greeks of Sicily invented a method whereby a winch could be used with rope made of cattle sinews to draw back the weapon massively to give it huge strength and distance. These catapults could be used to fire arrows/bolts or stones with much more force and range.

On first witnessing one of these weapons in action, Plutarch tells us that the Spartan king Agesilaus shouted “By Heracles! A man’s courage in battle is no use anymore!” What do you think he meant? How did these machines work? They used a spring torsion system where animal sinew was wound to a fiercely tight spring (this is called torsion), and then released suddenly to produce a vast amount of energy and speed.

Here is a piece written by Heron around the time of Trajan:

“ You must use sinews, either from the shoulder or back and from all animals except pigs...the more exercised sinews of an animal have more elasticity, for example, the sinews from the legs of a deer or the neck of a bull...”

There were different types of catapult, depending on your target, whether or not you had to transport them and the job you wanted them to do.

CATAPULTA -This was a shooter of bolts or arrows.

SCORPION - A smaller version of the catapult.

BALLISTA – A stone-thrower.

CARROBALLISTA – An upgraded catapult from the time of Trajan.

Archaeology tells us that the Roman army had far more arrow shooters than stone throwers. Why do you think this is so?



The effect of a bolt shot from one of these machines could be devastating. Have a look at the photograph of the spine of a Briton found at Maiden Castle in Dorset. This man was killed by a bolt which was fired uphill and entered around his belly-button, severing his spine completely. (See below)



Here is Josephus's account of the artillery of the Emperor Vespasian in action (about 69 AD) in Jerusalem.

"...his artillery numbered about 150 machines...to fire at the defenders on the wall. The catapults fired bolts whistling through the air. The stone-throwers shot stones weighing one talent (26kilo), fire was launched and a mass of arrows. This made it impossible for the Jews to man the wall, or even the area behind it that was strafed by the missiles".

As for the range of shooting, it seems to have been up to 300 metres but more usually 150-200 metres. According to Vegetius, each legion had 55 carroballistae.



Roman bolt-heads from Germany

The biggest machine was the ballista, or stone-thrower. This would generally have been used only during a long siege as it was enormous. It threw boulders up to 78 kilo in weight. Sometimes the enemy would build a triple ditch around a city to keep the ballistas away. The BBC commissioned engineers to make one of these massive ballistas to see if it would work. You can check it out on Youtube.



What about the shot? Josephus tells us that during the siege of Jerusalem, the Jews could see the stones coming as they were cut from white stone. When the Romans realized this, they started to paint the stones black. (Ballista ammunition below, found in Iran).



Later on the Romans used a big catapult called an onager or “wild ass” as it had such a kick when it fired.



An Onager

So how and when were these machines used? Their use during a siege was to batter the enemy into submission and to damage the walls and fortifications (see the Jews above). Sometimes the machines were mounted on top of siege towers for extra height. What about during a pitched battle? Common sense tells us that they would have been stationed as high up as possible, probably just behind the infantry, and maybe on the wings. They seem to have been used first as a good means of “softening up” the enemy before any Roman was endangered by close combat. Have a look at the opening scene of *Gladiator*, where the Emperor Marcus Aurelius is trying to subdue the Germans. It gives a good idea of how the system worked, although the Romans would never have chosen to fight in such a location. Why not?

Questions on Chapter XXII

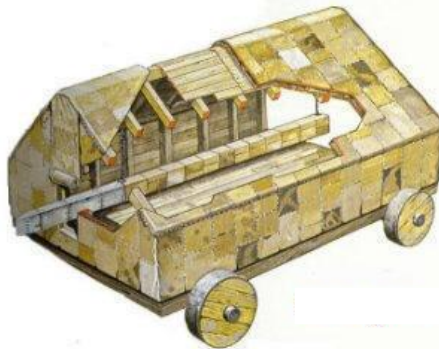
1. What material was used to give artillery its springiness?
2. What is torsion?
3. What was a Scorpion?
4. What was the difference between a catapulta and a ballista?
5. What was an Onager?
6. What type of weapon is this in the photograph? How do you know?



CHAPTER XXIII A ROMAN SIEGE

This was when the Roman army had to take an enemy town or fort by surrounding it. Much of siege warfare was psychological – showing the enemy that you were never going to give up and that you were determined to take the citadel at any cost. The Roman army always tried to arrive at a citadel very fast to take the enemy by surprise and to prevent them from building up their fortifications. The Romans started to assemble their siege weapons on site, protected by screens made of wicker and hide while trying to cut off the enemy's water and food supplies. You already know the kind of artillery they had. (See previous chapter). Sometimes the enemy surrendered very quickly to avoid terrible hardship and often severe punishment.

The main siege weapons used by the Romans, apart from the ballistas, catapultas...etc were: Battering rams of wood and metal which were often housed in little huts on wheels so that the men inside could get close enough to enemy walls.



Battering Ram

One of the advantages the besieged enemy usually had was height. Most citadels were on high ground. To counter this, the Romans built siege towers up to 25m tall with drawbridges to gain a height advantage, these were covered (usually with animal hides), and moved on wheels.



Often artillery was mounted on these siege towers for added effectiveness.



The Latin word “**testudo**” means tortoise. A favourite siege tactic of the Romans was the “Testudo” or tortoise where 27 men lined up and locked shields over their heads and at the sides. There are stories of this being tested in training by a chariot driving over it to see if it was strong enough!



Testudo

“The heavy armed troops form a square...they face outwards with their shields and weapons in the ready position. The others, densely packed in the square, raise their shields to cover their heads and interlock them. Nothing can be seen now except shields and all of the men are protected against missiles. This roof of shields is so amazingly strong that men can walk on it, indeed even horses and chariots can be driven over it.” Dio Cassius

1. What is Dio Cassius describing here?
2. As a defensive formation, why was it so effective?
3. In what circumstances do you think it would have been used most?

Another important tactic was sapping which was digging under the enemy walls to undermine them so that they would collapse. This tactic has remained crucial in siege warfare right up to today. Finds made in 2009 at Dura Europus in Syria show that the enemy asphyxiated about 20 Roman sappers who were digging a tunnel with fumes from bitumen and sulphur.

If the siege went on for a long time after an offer of surrender, there was no mercy shown. Famously, at the siege of Uxellodunum, against the Gauls, Julius Caesar, instead of killing the defenders, cut their hands off. Why do you think he did this?



WHAT DID THE DEFENDERS DO?

They generally did not have the advanced siege weaponry of the Romans. First they had to secure their water and food supplies and their defences, which sometimes included spikes buried just under the ground to stop cavalry advancing. They fired burning arrows at the Roman siege equipment. They dropped rocks/ burning oil/water/sand on top of the besiegers. Sometimes they broke out of their walls to attack the Roman besiegers in the open. This is called a “sally”. Depending on materials to hand, they could also fill big sacks with seaweed or damp hay or straw to defend themselves against burning arrows. As a defense against assault by a battering ram, a sack filled with straw could be let down at the point of impact to soften the effect of the ram.



Questions on Chapter XXIII

1. What is a siege?
2. Describe a Roman battering ram?
3. Why do you think it is called a “ram”?
4. How were Roman siege towers usually protected from missiles?
5. What was the “testudo”?
6. Why was it so effective?
7. What did sappers do?
8. Mention three ways defenders might try to hold off a siege by the Roman army.

CHAPTER XXIV A PITCHED BATTLE

In the lead up, the Romans would have done their best to starve out the enemy, destroying villages and crops. But eventually it would be clear that the only way was a decisive battle. On the day, the army would be up at dawn. They would see a red flag outside the Principia as a signal that there would be a battle today. At headquarters, the legates, military tribunes and senior centurions would wait for the emperor or legate. There he would listen to their advice.

Each contubernium would wait together for orders from their centurion, then they would march off to join their cohort and legion. Prayers were said at the camp altar as the Emperor or legate sacrificed to Jupiter. Oil and perfume were poured on the sacred fire and an ox would be sacrificed. Its guts would then be examined by the **haruspex** for signs and omens. A battle would go ahead, only if the omens were good.

The Emperor would then make an encouraging speech and then the trumpets would ring out three times as they were all asked if they were ready for war.

As they marched out for battle they formed a line for battle. At the very front are the numeri, sent in to soften up the enemy. (More dispensable than legionaries). Catapultae could be used at this stage to throw the enemy into disarray. Then come the auxiliaries to slow the enemy down further. As the enemy approaches, they are fired at by more artillery, Syrian archers and Balearic slingers.

Once they break through the auxiliaries the enemy must face the lines of legionaries, who first fire their javelins at the same time as the carroballistae arrows are fired from further back. Next, the legionaries draw their swords and run forwards following the standards, calling on Jupiter. As men are wounded they are brought out by medical orderlies and treated. As each line of legionaries gives way, another is in place behind it.

Meanwhile at each side the **alae** or cavalry wings are engaging with the enemy cavalry. They can also be sent to chase enemy soldiers who are running away in realisation that the Roman lines will not give in. It was rare for the Roman army to lose a pitched battle. They were so organised, so drilled, so well-equipped that the enemy generally didn't have a chance.

Battle statistics from the ancient world are seriously unreliable. Here are some examples:

Plutarch says that in the battle of Artaxata in 68 BC, the Armenians lost 100,000 of their infantry and all of their cavalry while the Romans suffered 100 wounded and 5 dead!

Strabo says that in an expedition to Arabia, the Romans lost two men but the enemy lost 10,000!



Questions on Chapter XXIV

1. What was a legionary's first sign that a battle would be fought that day?
2. What had to be done by the haruspex before a battle could commence?
3. Which groups in the army would swing into action before the legionaries marched in towards the enemy lines?
4. Why were the Romans generally victorious in battle?

CHAPTER XXV PUNISHMENTS

Like most armies, the Roman army had a very strict system of punishment for anyone who broke the rules. The main enforcer was the Centurion who kept a close eye on his eighty men for any insubordination. In the early days of the Roman Army, there was a punishment called **decimatio** or decimation. This was for very serious mutiny or disobedience. It involved the execution of every tenth man in the legion. By the time of Trajan, this was long gone. However, for any major infringement or neglect of duty, death was still the punishment.

Minor punishments included **castigato**, usually a whipping (or just a thwack), with the centurion's vine wood stick.

Another common penalty was having some of your pay deducted.

Getting extra duties, usually the ones no one wanted to do, was a very common punishment. This would be things such as cleaning out the latrines, night sentry duty and so on. Some centurions took bribes to let legionaries off such punishments.

More serious offences might result in losing rank or long-service privileges. Another severe punishment was a flogging by the whole unit (you got this for falling asleep on sentry duty). Your fellow soldiers would beat you to death if you were found asleep while a battle was on.

If a whole unit misbehaved, their rations were reduced and were of poorer quality (sometimes they got barley instead of wheat and got no meat). They could also be told to sleep in tents outside the fort.

If a whole legion let down the army, for instance by losing its standards, it would be disbanded in disgrace.

Read the following passage from *The Annals of Imperial Rome* by Tacitus, which describes the arrival of a new governor, Corbulo, in Germany.

“When Corbulo established control in the district he revived traditional standards of discipline. His Roman soldiers were enthusiastic looters but slack and reluctant workers. Falling out on the march, and fighting without orders, was prohibited. Guard and sentry duty - all tasks day and night - were performed carrying weapons. One soldier is said to have been executed for digging at the earthwork without his sword, another for wearing his dagger only. These stories are exaggerated, and perhaps invented. But Corbulo's strictness inspired them; and a man credited with such severity over details must have been vigilant and, for serious offences, ruthless.”

1. Based on your reading of this passage, give two examples of poor discipline by the legionaries.
2. On the evidence of this passage, do you think Corbulo was a good leader? Why?

Questions on Chapter XXV

1. What was decimation?
2. What was castigato?
3. For what could you receive the death penalty?
4. How might you be punished for falling asleep on sentry duty?
5. Mention three other possible punishments you could receive in the Roman army.
6. What happened if an entire legion disgraced themselves?

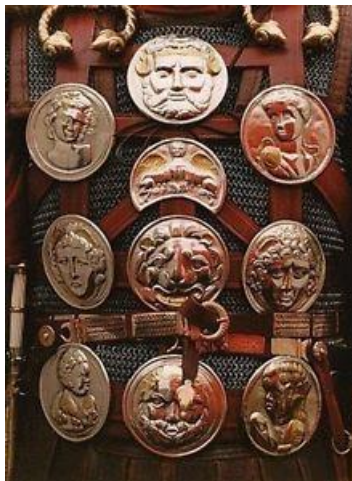
CHAPTER XXVI REWARDS

In the Roman Army, they believed in rewarding outstanding behavior, especially bravery. Awards were often given in the immediate aftermath of a battle, or they could be given during the Triumph (see Chapter XXVII). There were ways in which you could be rewarded individually or as a legion. These were the most common types of award.

For an individual act of bravery, the most common awards were the **phalerae** or medals which could be attached to your armour. They were like big medals. There were also **armillae**, which were bracelets and **torques** which were neck bands. A centurion was often awarded a **hasta pura**, a little commemorative spear, after a good victory.

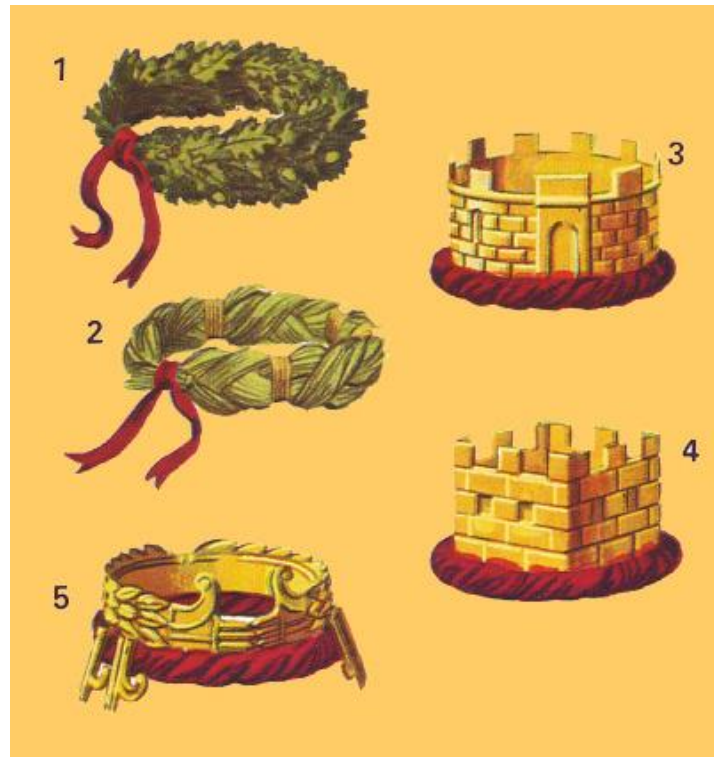


As you can see the phalerae were bigger than modern army medals.



The phalerae could also be awarded to a whole legion, in which case they were carried by the standard-bearer.

If you were an officer, you could win a corona or crown for an outstanding act of courage. There were different crowns for different types of brave acts.



Can you guess what each one of these was awarded for?

1. The **Corona Civica** which was awarded to a man who had saved the life of a fellow Roman soldier or citizen.
2. The **Corona Obsidionalis** was the rarest award, it was presented to a commander whose actions had saved an entire legion or army. It was made from the local grasses and plants from the area of the battle or siege.
3. The **Corona Muralis** which was awarded (often posthumously!) to the first man over the wall in a siege
4. The **Corona Vallaris** was awarded to a general who managed to break a siege.
5. The **Corona Navalis** was, as you can see, a naval crown awarded for the capture of an enemy ship.

“After the battle, the general assembles the troops, and calls forward those he considers to have displayed particular bravery. He first praises the courageous deeds of each man and of anything else in their past record which deserves commendation”. Polybius.

Do you think much has changed in this aspect of military life today?

Questions on Chapter XXVI



1. What do you call these awards?
2. What were armillae?
3. What were torques?
4. What might a centurion be awarded after a great victory?
5. If a legion won phalerae, where would they be placed?
6. What kind of crown did you win if you were first over the wall in a siege?
7. What was the corona civica awarded for?
8. Why was the corona obsidianalis the rarest award of all?

CHAPTER XXVII THE TRIUMPH

This was an old tradition which had evolved into a really huge, elaborate celebration by the time of Trajan. The closest event to it now would be the triumphal return of a victorious sports team or star to their city combined with a St Patrick's Day parade. (See if you can find one of these on youtube).

For a triumph to be celebrated, there were certain criteria: At least 5,000 enemies had to have been killed in battle. The battle had to be a final one in a campaign. It had to be an important campaign.

In earlier days any general could celebrate a triumph, but now, only the Emperor was allowed to do this. It was a great event which soldiers really looked forward to, many of them might never have even seen Rome.

Rome would be prepared with loads of flowers and banners around the city. Outside the city, the Emperor would assemble the troops and award them their honours and share of the booty.

Massive floats of booty and captives would be prepared for the parade. Huge scenes of the victories and models of the captured city would be painted.

The legions would muster at the **Campus Martius** to enter the city through the **Porta Triumphalis** (used only for this purpose).

The Emperor, in a special chariot, would be welcomed here by the Senate. He would wear the purple robe of Jupiter and his face was painted red. A slave stood holding a laurel wreath over his head whispering "Remember, you are only a man".

The procession wound around the city finishing at the Temple of Jupiter with sacrifices of the Triumphator's crown and some white oxen to the god.

Included in the procession are trumpeters, enemy captives, and, of course, the army, singing songs of triumph and rude songs about the Emperor (he couldn't punish them on this day!)

Then there was a huge party, which might go on for days. This would likely include games in the arena. The poor captives were led off to their deaths.

“The concluding pomp and ceremony was at the Temple of Jupiter and when they got there, they stood still... until somebody brought news that the enemy general was dead. This was Simon...who had been led among the captives and tormented by those who drew him along by a rope about his head to a proper place in the Forum...when he met his end, everyone sent up a great shout of joy” Josephus.

Afterwards, the victorious emperor often built a grand, marble monument to his victory. The most famous of these are the monumental arches (such as The Arch of Constantine; The Arch of Titus and the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome). He might also, like Trajan, build a tall column of marble with relief sculptures around it showing his victories. (See Chapter V).



The Arch of Titus, built to commemorate the successful siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This event is still remembered in a Jewish ceremony in Jerusalem today at the Wailing Wall.



The Arch of Septimius Severus



The Arch of Constantine

Questions on Chapter XXVII

1. Which of these arches do you think was the earliest? Why?
2. Research challenge: Find out 5 interesting facts about one of these emperors of Rome.
3. What were the criteria for holding a triumph?
4. Describe how the emperor proceeded during the triumph.
5. Name two emperors who built monumental arches in Rome to commemorate their victories.
6. Where in Dublin can you see a triumphal arch based on the ancient Roman ones?



The most famous triumphal arch, the Arc de Triomphe of Napoleon, built in the style of a Roman triumphal arch. Why did he choose to do this do you think?

CHAPTER XXVIII RETIREMENT

How did it all end? Well, at worst you would get killed. At least you knew that you would get a proper burial and a decent tombstone.

You could get a **Missa ignominiosa** which was a dishonourable discharge. This was not good, you were not allowed to live in Rome ever again and your parting gift was probably a whipping.

A **Missa Causaria** was when you had to leave because of illness or injury. Depending on how long you had served, you would be entitled to a pension.

A **Missa Honesta** was the best one. This meant that you had served your full time in the army and were entitled to full pension benefits and privileges. However, it was not necessarily easy to return to civilian life after 25 years of service. Sometimes the Emperor built a **colonia** or town on the frontier of the empire offering the retired legionaries a house and a piece of land to retire to. This often worked out very well as you could retire with a lot of your old friends and it was great for the Emperor who had a town full of experienced soldiers if the natives got restless.

What about the auxiliaries? When they retired, they were automatically entitled to Roman citizenship, as were their children. They received a special bronze tablet recording this fact. Do your own research to find the names of some well-known towns which were once **colonia** for the retired legionaries.



Questions on Chapter XXVIII

1. What was a *missa ignominiosa*?
2. What was a *missa honesta*?
3. Explain what a *colonia* was.
4. What did an auxiliary receive after 25 years of service?



This is an aerial view of Timgad, a *colonia* of the Roman army in present-day Algeria.

5. Why would this location have been chosen for a *colonia*?
6. Can you identify any structure in the photograph?
7. What can you tell about the Romans from this picture?

GLOSSARY

A

Acetum cheap wine often drunk by soldiers

Ala (Alae – pl.) wing of the cavalry

Apollodorus designer of Trajan's Column

Aquila the Roman eagle

Aquilifer the guy who carried the Roman eagle into battle

Armillae bracelets awarded for bravery

B

Balearic slingers soldiers from the Balearic Islands who specialized in sling shot warfare

Ballista stone-throwing Roman artillery

C

Calligae army sandals

Campus Martius Field of Mars army parade area in Rome

Castigato punishment beating

Cataphract heavily armoured cavalryman on a heavily armoured horse

Catapulta big catapult for shooting bolts or arrows

Century Unit of 80 men in the army

Cheiroballista updated version of the ballista

Cingulum army belt

Cohort unit of about 480 men in the army

Contubernium unit of 8 men in the army

Cornicen horn player

D

Dacia modern day Romania

Decabalus King of the Dacians

Decimation the killing of 1 in 10 in a military unit

Denarii unit of payment in ancient Rome

E

Exploratores scouting unit

F

Falx Dacian curved sword

G

Gaul modern day France

Gladius legionary sword

Greaves shin protectors worn by officers in the army

H

Hadrian emperor of Rome who built the wall in N. England

Haruspex examiner of animals' guts to foresee the future

I

Imago image of the Emperor (carried by the imaginifer)

Immunis soldier with special duties

J

Jupiter king of the gods, often sacrificed to before battle

L

Legate commander of a legion

Lorica segmentata legionary armour of strips of metal

Lorica squamata fish-scale armour

Lorica hamata chainmail armour

M

Marius general who reformed the army

Mensores similar to today's engineers or quantity surveyors

Military Tribune a senior officer in the legion

Missa honesta honourable discharge

Missa ignominiosa dishonorable discharge

Mithras Persian god worshipped by Roman soldiers

P

Papilio animal hide tent, sleeps 8

Parthia powerful kingdom (modern day Syria)

Pax Romana the "Roman Peace" Rome ruled and everyone accepted it in return for peace

Phalerae medals for bravery

Pict warlike tribe in Caledonia (modern day Scotland)

Pilum legionary's spear

Praetorium general's living quarters

Prefect in charge of day to day running of the camp

Primus Pilus chief centurion in a legion

Principia camp headquarters

Probatio test for becoming a legionary

Pugio dagger

S

Sacellum shrine in the principia for storing standards...etc

Sacramentum oath taken by a new legionary soldier

Salary payment of wages in salt

Sally an attempt by a besieged army to break out and attack the besiegers

Sarmatians tribe from the shores of the Black Sea

Sarmazegathusa capital of the Dacian tribe

Scorpion small catapult

Scutum shield

Signifer standard bearer

Spatha cavalry sword

SPQR “For the Senate and People of Rome”

Stanegate main Roman road from east to west of N. Britain

T

Tesserarius immunitis who carried the tessera or little block with the password for the day

Testudo tortoise formation of soldiers for protection

Torque award for bravery

Trajan Emperor of Rome in the early 1st century AD when Rome was at its greatest extent

V

Vindolanda important Roman fort on Hadrian’s Wall

Vexillum legion flag, carried by the vexillarius

Vitis vine-wood stick

Appendix 1: Roman Numerals

ROMAN NUMERALS

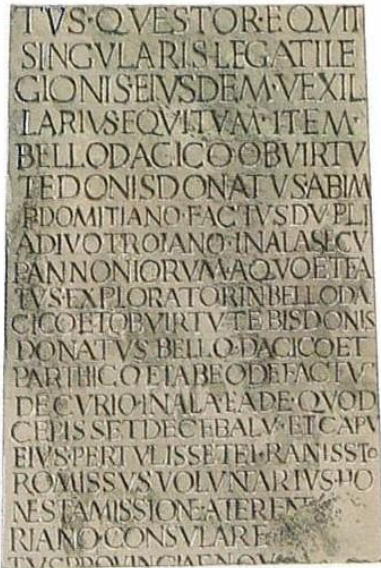
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	
<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>		
XIV	XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII		
<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>35</i>		
XIX	XX	XXV	XXX	XXXV		
<i>40</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>70</i>	
XL	XLV	L	LX	LXV	LXX	
<i>75</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>125</i>		
LXXV	LXXX	XC	C	CXXV		
<i>150</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>500</i>	
CL	CC	CCL	CCC	CD	D	
<i>600</i>	<i>700</i>	<i>800</i>	<i>900</i>	<i>1000</i>		
DC	DCC	DCCC	CM	M		

Appendix 2: What we learn about the Roman Army from gravestones.

One of the best sources of information about life in the Roman world is grave inscriptions. Because they were carved in stone, they have lasted better than most other types of script. Because each letter cost money, we can tell what the dead person or his/her family regarded as the most important things they wanted to say on the grave. Also, they often include touching, personal information about their feelings which makes the Romans seem not at all unlike us in many ways. In the text you already came across a few grave inscriptions, here are a few more with a piece at the end to help you to decipher the Latin ones. It is easier than it looks!

“Titus Flaminius, son of Titus, from Faventia, aged 45, of 22 years’ service, a soldier of the Fourteenth Legion Gemina. I did my service and now I am here. Read this whether you are more or less lucky than I. The gods do not allow you the wine-grape and water once you have entered the Underworld. Live a good life while your star allows you to be alive”

1. What kind of inscription is this? How can you tell?
2. Make a list of the information we know about Flaminius from the inscription.
3. What else can we infer from the inscription?



Maximus' tombstone

On the left is the lower half of the tombstone of Tiberius Claudius Maximus. It is written in abbreviated Latin.

The full text would read:

Factus duplicarius a divo Troiano in ala secunda Pannoniorum, a quo et factus explorator in bello Dacico et ob virtutem bis donis donatus bello Dacico et Parthico, et ab eodem factus decurio in ala eadem, quod cepisset Decebalum et caput eius pertulisset ei Rannistoro. Missus voluntarius honesta missione a Terentio Scauriano, consulare exercitus provinciae novae . . .

A brief translation

In short it says that Trajan made him a duplicarius in the second Pannonian cavalry regiment and then a scout (explorator). He was decorated twice in Trajan's Dacian and Parthian wars. He was promoted to decurion in the same cavalry regiment, because he captured Decebalus (cepisset Decebalum) and brought his head (caput) to Trajan at Rannistorum. He was honourably discharged by Terentius Scaurianus. Scaurianus is known to have been the Roman governor of Mesopotamia.

1. Where was Pannonia?
2. Who was Decabalus?
3. Where is Mesopotamia?

The tombstone of an *optio* of the Twentieth Legion was found at Chester. His name was Caecilius Avitus and his home town was Emerita Augusta (modern Merida) in Spain. In his right hand he holds his staff, and from his right hip hangs a sword. In his left hand he is carrying a bag, with another bag or wallet on his belt. They probably contained money and documents belonging to the men in his cohort.

Here is a translation of the inscription on the tombstone:

TO THE SPIRITS OF THE DEPARTED
CAECILIUS AVITUS
FROM EMERITA AUGUSTA (IN SPAIN)
OPTIO OF THE TWENTIETH LEGION
SERVED 15 YEARS
LIVED 34 YEARS
LIES BURIED HERE



Now for a few originals. These are in Latin, but with a little help, you should be able to have a go at working them out. Here are a few guidelines:

The first name is usually shortened eg. M. for Marcus; Sex. for Sextus; T. for Titus.

Roman citizens usually had three names.

The second name usually ends in IVS (remember V is our U)

AN(NORVM) followed by the number is age at death

STIP(ENDIA) followed by a number is years of service

LEG(IO) is the legion he belonged to or EQ(V)ES if he was a cavalryman

F(ILIVUS) means son of...

MIL(ES) means a soldier

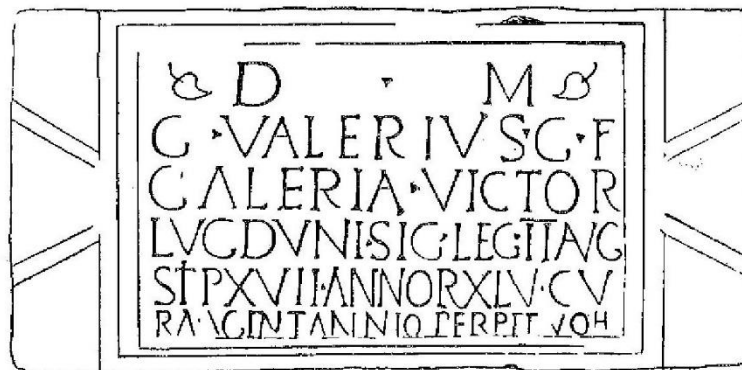
FRATER means brother

H.S.E. ("hic situs est") means "Here He Lies"

D.M. means "To the Manes" who were spirits of the dead

HEREDES means heirs.

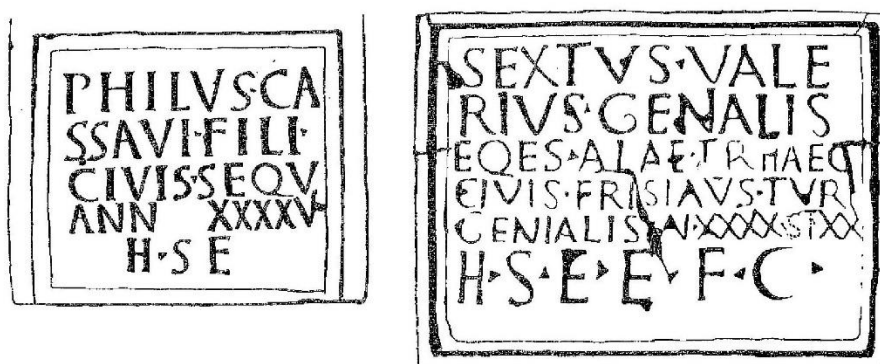
Tombstone found at Caerleon



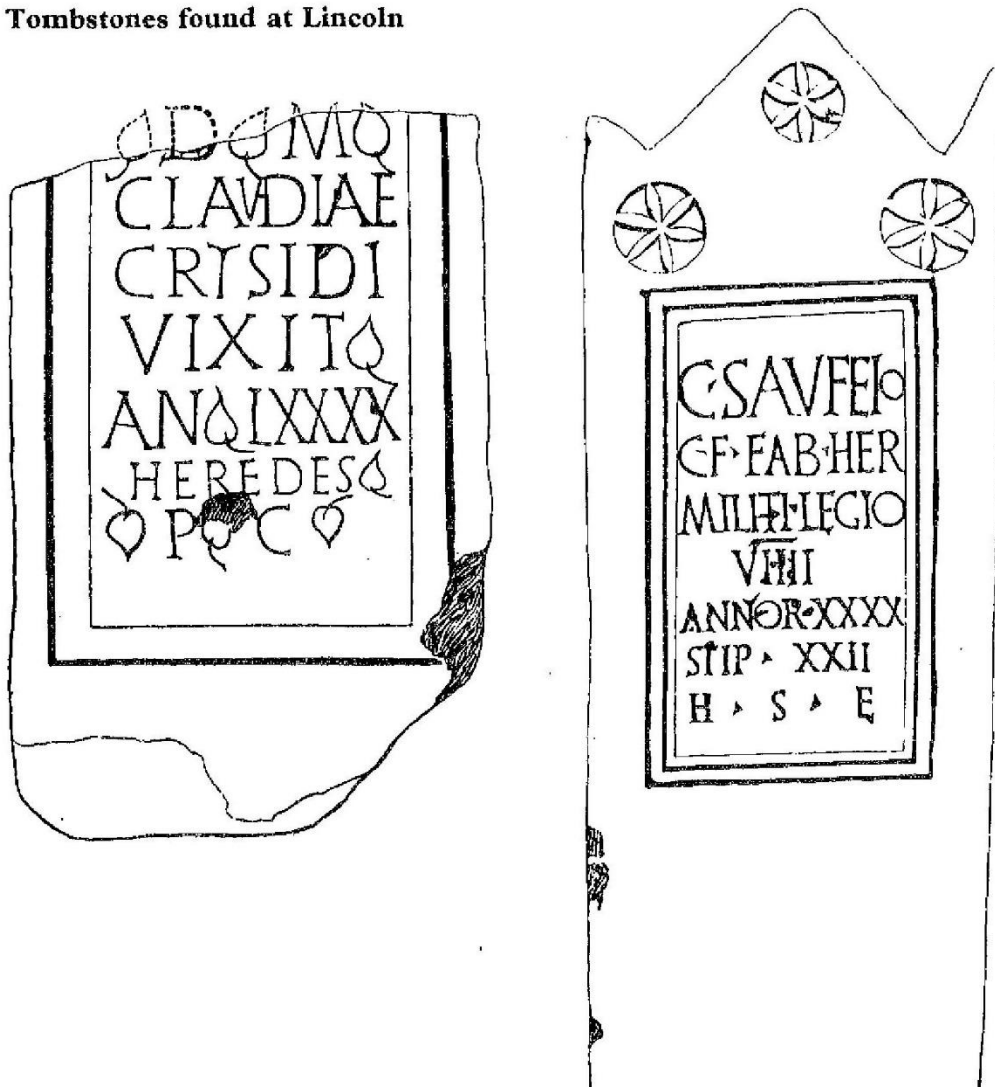
Tombstones found at Wroxeter



Tombstones found at Cirencester



Tombstones found at Lincoln



(Some other words that might help here are Lugdunum which is the original name for London; civis means town; genialis means good fun).