

## INTRODUCTION

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The Roman military equipment seminar of 1985 was generally intended to explore the issues raised by current research into the diversity of artefacts loosely covered by the term the accoutrements of war. The Roman army, like any other, did not simply concern itself with its uniform and weaponry; on the contrary, although such aspects currently receive the majority of attention, their equipment requirements covered a much wider spectrum, including areas such as supply, transport, building (and maintenance), training, and communication.<sup>1</sup>

The assemblage from Saalburg, Feldburg and Zugmantel is particularly illuminating, comprising axes, dolabrae, hammers, mattocks, chisels, files, bits, saws, turf cutters, and dividers, whilst other forts<sup>2</sup> have yielded weighing equipment, medical instruments, vehicle mounts, and so on.

Of the array of the army's requirements, only a small proportion of artefacts survives, however, and of these survivals we have a disproportionate number of certain types; and of these disproportionate survivals, research has covered but a few aspects. The reasons for this are straightforward, relating to tradition, survival, fashion, and individual interest, not to mention the intrinsic attractiveness of certain forms. In every sense, these research seminars have been organised, in some small measure, to begin to get the balance right - providing a platform for opinion and research. Clearly this will be a slow business, as the study of military artefacts is only a recent phenomenon and the financial support for it is slim indeed.

Despite the origins of interest in the Roman army, stretching back to the Renaissance and before, the contemporary archaeological situation is one of confusion. There is general agreement as to the date and occurrence of uniform fittings of the first and second centuries AD, although not necessarily to which type of unit they may have belonged. Works like those of Robinson,<sup>3</sup> Oldenstein,<sup>4</sup> and Bishop<sup>5</sup> go a long way to clarifying our knowledge of the uniform of the imperial armies, as well as highlighting the deficiencies by their omissions. As regards identification, and in some cases the chronological occurrence of the remaining accoutrements of war, Manning's BM catalogue<sup>6</sup> and a diversity of other works have derived typologies and catalogues for such diaspora as late Roman belt fittings,<sup>7</sup> spades, hoes, and mattocks,<sup>8</sup> cauldron chains,<sup>9</sup> nails,<sup>10</sup> medical equipment,<sup>11</sup> ballistae,<sup>12</sup> and clothes fasteners.<sup>13</sup>

Integral to such archaeological works has been the examination of surviving sculptural and other decorative artwork, which serve either to identify or reinforce identifications of individual, often unassociated, artefacts. No less integral to the process of recognition of loose items has been the analysis and re-analysis of larger assemblages, like those from Newstead and Corbridge.

Thus we have the initial problem of artefact study - the second level of development observed over the last century, that of the typology, has been largely sidestepped (Bishop, this volume). Clearly the typology has its place particularly in prehistoric study, when date ranges are wide and tools, pottery, and building types may indeed have developed along stylistically diagnostic lines. In Roman military equipment terms, however, the typology is the end product and should be seen as a developmental sequence, with the vagaries of fashion, economics, and military necessity reflected in its series. Of much more value is the corpus,<sup>14</sup> which seeks to display not only spatial distribution, but to relate artefacts to each other and their point of discovery.

The limitations of the corpus are those imposed largely by the archaeological past - interest in military artefacts arose first at the turn of the century, from the excavations of major sites such as Newstead<sup>15</sup> and through the work of individuals like von Domaszewski, Jacobi, and Ritterling. Most of the artefacts thus discovered, and for the succeeding decades until the late 1950s, were used illustratively, their contexts rarely precisely identified. Given this legacy, only the occasional typology was developed - like for instance the brooches from Camulodunum<sup>16</sup> - and with the quantity of coins and inscriptions discovered, artefacts took a second place. The revolution in archaeological techniques that occurred in the 1950s and '60s, with the need for fast efficient rescue digs dominating by the early seventies, saw the emphasis change. More and more sites were examined that could not be coin dated in every aspect but still yielded clear structural sequences. It was possible thence to put forward the corpus, combining information from artefacts with clear (often dated) contexts, with those from earlier collections to identify a development of types and other distributions; and to begin to use artefacts in a way that coins had been used previously.

Although the development of the corpus was a natural progression, there is now something of an impasse - work continues on the recognition of artefacts, but in spite of continuing work on the 1st and 2nd centuries AD,<sup>17</sup> the 3rd-5th centuries are largely ignored. Worse still, despite three papers

in 1986, there is still no agreement as to what precisely constitutes legionary or auxiliary uniform<sup>18</sup>. In 1982, Holder<sup>19</sup> observed that there was then a disparity between the two main types of evidence - documentary/epigraphic and archaeological - and this remains the same today.

The way forward is far from clear in the literature - the production of catalogues like those from South Shields<sup>20</sup> and Colchester<sup>21</sup> makes access to large bodies of artefacts a lot easier, but still the researcher must spend much time simply searching for and examining the context of individual artefacts before beginning any analysis. Even this process has its geographical limitations, for in many of the Balkan countries, in the Near East, and North Africa, the archaeological techniques current do not allow for the publication of artefacts which are identified with their precise location or context. The point here is to emphasise, through discussion, that not only is the identification of discovered artefacts an essential prerequisite, but so too is the detailed understanding of their context and the possible reason for deposition. Likewise, a close or relative or absolute date range for the artefact's occurrence, derived from other similar deposits and rigorous use of excavation data, is essential before any discussion of development or association may be attempted.

So if it proves possible to relate regiments to their bases in the first two centuries AD from inscriptions or documentary evidence, it follows that - given a greater insight into the use or function of discarded, lost, or destroyed artefacts - the way forward is clear. On the one hand, the continued search for the function, date range, and development of artefacts through individual analysis; on the other to make military equipment work! That is to say to use artefact assemblages to identify troops movements, garrison points (of particular interest after the reforms of Diocletian), fort functions, even building functions. In some areas, this type of analysis has already begun - Bishop, this volume, and the attempted correlation of arrows with the cohorts I Hamiorum.<sup>22</sup>

Hence, it is the pious hope of this editor that seminars such as this series will help researchers, in what is often considered a minor field, to think expansively and for other archaeologists to realise how useful the study of the minutiae of Roman military equipment can be.

#### NOTES

1. PIETSCH, 1983.

2. DAWSON, 1985, 140-1.
3. ROBINSON, 1975.
4. OLDENSTEIN, 1976.
5. BISHOP, forthcoming.
6. MANNING, 1985.
7. HAWKES & DUNNING, 1961; BULLINGER, 1969.
8. MANNING, 1969.
9. MANNING, 1983.
10. CLEERE, 1958; MANNING, 1976.
11. KUNZL, 1983.
12. BAATZ & GUDEA, 1974.
13. WILD, 1970.
14. BISHOP, forthcoming; OLDENSTEIN, 1976.
15. CURLE, 1911.
16. HAWKES & HULL, 1947.
17. WEBSTER, 1985.
18. MAXFIELD, 1986; BISHOP, 1986.
19. HOLDER, 1982.
20. ALLASON-JONES & MIKET, 1984.
21. CRUMMY, 1983.
22. DAVIES, 1977.

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