

# ARMA

## NEWSLETTER OF THE ROMAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT CONFERENCE

VOL.4 NO.1

£2.25

JUNE 1992



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### EDITORIAL

April saw another highly successful ROME VIII, held in Newcastle and attended by a good cross-section of our readership. Those who were unable to come along for whatever reason will find a brief account of proceedings in this issue and the truly devoted can order a copy of the special supplement of **ARMA** produced for the occasion with the summaries of (most of!) the papers presented (contact me for further details). As usual, it is hoped that at least *some* of the papers will end up as articles in *JRMES*, but you never can tell.

There are a lot of reports in this issue, including Arjan Bosman's on the military finds from Velsbroek, which he presented as a note at the recent ROME VIII. On the 'strange but true' front, we have David Braund's account of a Roman helmet from Georgia (CIS not USA). There appears to be a competition developing to hunt out Roman military equipment in unusual corners of the planet. Even as you read this, **ARMA**'s sources are on the lookout...

Those who have been in receipt of a mangled copy of *JRMES* in times gone by will be relieved to know that I have now located a source for a particularly strong cardboard folder (somewhat akin to Chobham armour) in which to mail future issues, so let's hope these do the job. Now the question of mangled **ARMAs** is another matter altogether. Watch this space.

Keen-eyed British readers may have spied smart white vans with the red letters ROME VIII on the side: thank you for the publicity, Royal Mail Engineering!

Many will be saddened by the recent untimely death of Hugh Chapman. Before leaving the Museum of London to move on to the Society of Antiquaries, he was not only instrumental in getting the catalogue of London military equipment off the ground, but also published a number of important papers on items of equipment from the capital.

# ROME VIII, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, 11TH-12TH APRIL 1992

M.C. Bishop

After wandering across hill and dale in Continental Europe for several years, ROME VIII finally returned to Britain in April for the first time since 1986. However, from the strength of the Dutch representation, one might have thought it was being held in the Netherlands. The topics covered by papers were wide-ranging and the presentations for the most part stimulating.

The first session of papers on Saturday included Mike Dawson reviewing strategies for dealing with ironwork assemblages, Arjan Bosman describing some of the mass of military fittings from Velsen, David Marchant (very appositely, as it turned out) discussing the identification of hand-thrown stones, and Peter Connolly revealing some new insights into the types of *pilum* in use in Republican times. Ann Hyland looked at the range of bits available to military horsemen in the Roman period, whilst Jon Coulston reviewed the evidence for the types of Dacian *falx*. Finally, your editor considered the so-called apron.

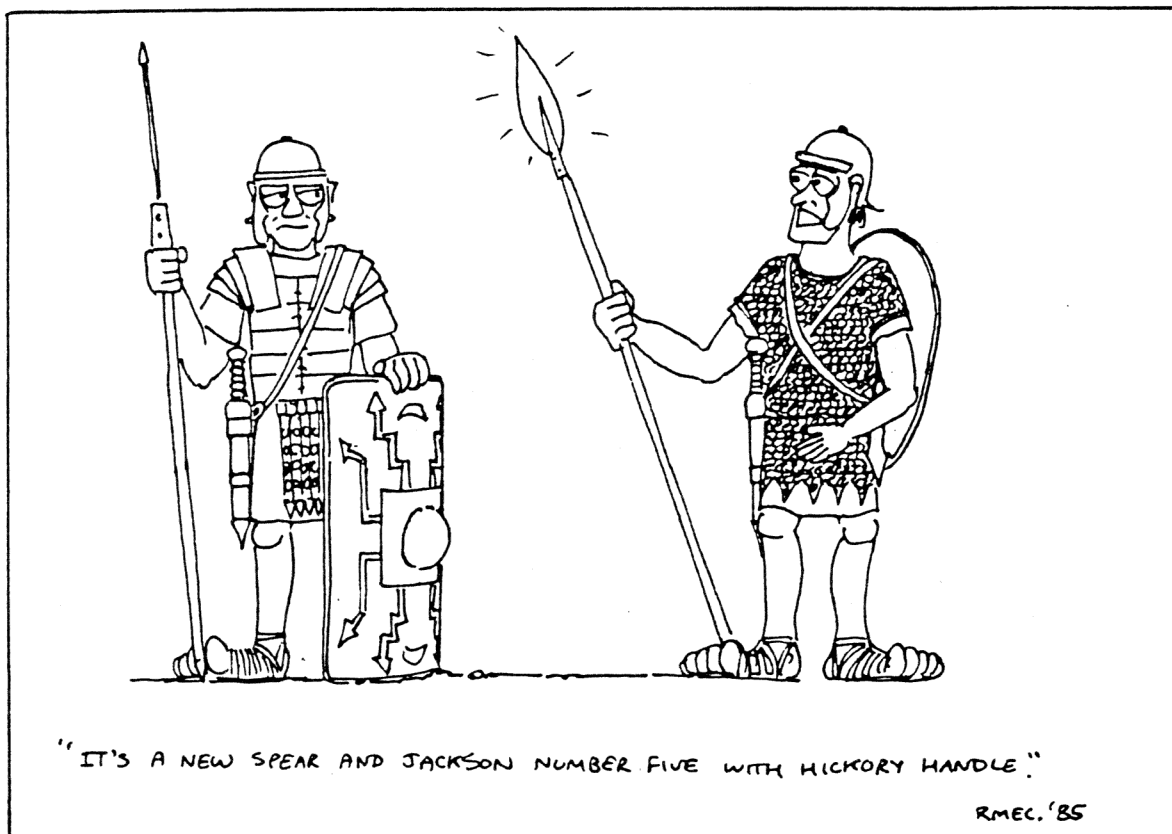
There then followed an opportunity to inspect some fine reconstruction arms and armour which the representatives of the Ermine Street Guard had brought with them. The afternoon was concluded with a reception in the Museum of Antiquities.

On Sunday, Carol van Driel caused much consternation with some convincing evidence for the presence of women and children in Roman forts in some strength, and James Turner reconsidered Russell Robinson's reconstruction of the Newstead type of '*lorica segmentata*'. In a series of short communications, Ian Caruana showed pieces of third-century '*lorica segmentata*' from Carlisle, Carol van Driel outlined the finds of equipment from the ritual site at Empel, and Arjan Bosman described the finds from Velsbroek (for which, see p.5 of this issue). The papers were concluded by K. Czarnecka discussing the finds of Roman and native arms and armour from burials in Poland.

In the afternoon, those participants who did not have to rush off to catch trains or planes were bussed out to South Shields, where they saw *cohors V Gallorum* (a.k.a. *Quinta*) mount a stunning defence of the reconstructed gateway with hand-thrown stones (an activity similar to cricket, but with a more readily-apparent logic to it). Paul Bidwell, of Tyne and Wear Museums, very kindly led a brief tour of the monument for those unfamiliar with it. Refreshments were provided, including Roman-style food. Finally, the opportunity to mingle with members of *Quinta* found various trade negotiations under way between members of various reenactment groups.

Thanks are due to all who helped with the weekend (including Martha Andrews, Paul Bidwell, Jon Coulston, Alex Croom, Carol van Driel, Graeme Stobbs amongst others), but most particularly to Lindsay Allason-Jones for agreeing to organize the whole thing!

NEIL



Neil '86

## THE ROMAN ARMY ON COINS

Michael Pavkovic

I am currently preparing a study on the Roman military equipment depicted on a particular series of coins, viz. Hadrian's *exercitus* issue, which was struck to honour the various provincial armies. The issue dates to the period from A.D.134–8 and seems to represent the military side of Hadrian's celebration of the provinces.

The reverse of all of the coins is basically the same: the emperor appears either on horseback arriving at a camp or dismounted addressing the troops from a platform (known as *adventus* and *adlocutio* respectively). The emperor is often attended by a military officer, likely the *praefectus praetorio*, or a *lictor*. Invariably among the soldiers present are standard bearers. To date some thirteen armies and the praetorian cohorts are known in the series.

It is a generally accepted fact that coins are of somewhat limited use for the study of military equipment due to the small size of the images and, often, the wear of the coin (see, e.g., A. v. Domeszewski, *Die Fahnen im römischen Heere*, Wien 1885, 28f and M. Durry, *Les cohortes prétoriennes*, Paris 1938, 197). Yet the unique nature of the *exercitus* coins, showing a variety of recognizable provincial armies, offers an opportunity to address some important questions on the sources available to the mint master and die-cutters at Rome (such as an official *laterculus* which would have shown standards and insignia, official and private monuments, and the troops stationed in the capital).

I have worked through the major published collections (such as the *BMC*, *RIC*, and P. Strack's *Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1936) as well as the major numismatic journals and sale catalogues; my research indicates that the mint was left on its own to find depictions of the equipment of the various provincial armies. This led to a variety of accurate and inaccurate representations being shown on the coins, such as *signiferi* with large rectangular *scuta*.

It is my plan to put together a catalogue of the *exercitus* coins with an historical introduction and with commentary on the iconography of the coins. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who might know of examples in small local or private collections or odd publications; a cast of the coin or close-up photograph of the obverse and reverse would be of great use to me.

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Three new publications of relevance to **ARMA** have appeared recently. The first of these serves as a pictorial record of the strengths (and, it has to be said, weaknesses) of the Roman manifestation of the 'living history'/re-enactment movement of the past two decades. The photographs vary in

quality and the printers have had some difficulty in getting some of them the right way round, but some are truly excellent and (for those who crave it) there is colour on every page.

Peterson, D. *The Roman Legions Recreated in Colour Photographs*, Europa Militaria Spacial No.2, Windrow & Greene, London: 1992  
ISBN 1-872004-06-7 £12.95.(US \$19.95)

Dixon, K.R. and Southern, P. *The Roman Cavalry from the First to the Third Century A.D.*, Batsford, London: 1992  
ISBN 0-7134-6396-1 £30.00

Junkelmann, M. *Die Reiter Roms, 2. Der militärische Einsatz*, von Zabern, Mainz: 1991

## RÖMISCHES MILITÄR IM 1. JH. N.CHR. IN DER NORDWEST-SCHWEIZ

E. Deschler-Erb

Im Verlauf der Bearbeitung der Militaria des 1. Jh. n.Chr. aus Augusta Raurica stellte sich heraus, dass diese kaum allein nur in Zusammenhang mit dem frühkaiserzeitlichen Militärlager in der Kaiseraugster Unterstadt gesehen werden können (Deschler-Erb et al. 1991).

Dieses Material soll nun in Rahmen einer Dissertation, die die Militärgeschichte des 1. Jh. n.Chr. im Bereich der Nordwestschweiz zum Thema hat, behandelt werden. Wobei sich schon jetzt herausstellt, dass Augst wohl das Zentrum dieser Arbeit werden wird.

Im Verlauf dieser Arbeit soll vermehrt der Frage nachgegangen werden, ob Militaria in zivilen Siedlungen des 1. Jh. n.Chr. reguläres Militär anzeigen, oder ob man hier auch Veteranen und deren Ausrüstung nachweisen könnte. Auch wäre zu untersuchen, ob Militaria in ländlicher Besiedlung als Nachweis für die Herkunft der Landbesitzer dienen könnten.

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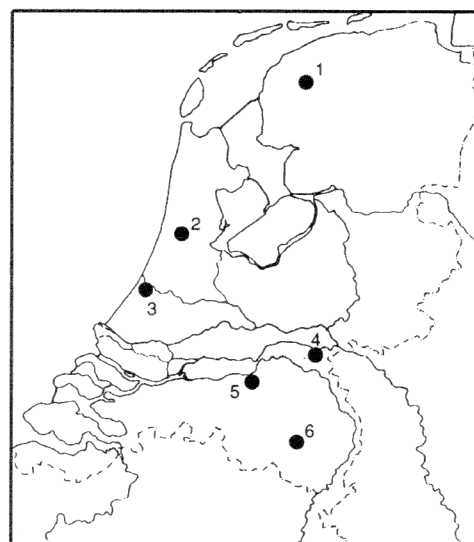
## A ROUND-UP OF MILITARY AFFAIRS: THE NETHERLANDS 1991

C. van Driel-Murray

Several discoveries, new and old, of military equipment can be reported this year: it is to be hoped that more detailed accounts will become available during 1992.

### Valkenburg De Woerd

The greave rescued in splinters from a pipe-trench in 1967 has at last emerged from the conservation lab, nicely



1. Leeuwarden
2. Velsen
3. Valkenburg
4. Nijmegen
5. Empel
6. Someren

restored and is in the process of being drawn. The decoration consists of snakes in relief and complex, lightly-incised designs which seem to include a Minerva, an eagle clutching thunderbolts, and military standards. A note for *JRMES* is in preparation.

### Sommeren

A curious discovery in a Bronze Age cemetery: an inhumation with a Roman flagon of Augustan date, accompanied by an iron razor, pointed iron knife, a huge pair of shears and a Roman sword, with traces of the sheath and a bronze chape. Such native burials with Roman swords (and shears) are beginning to form a familiar group in S. Netherlands, Belgium and parts of the Rhineland.

### Empel

Continuing excavations on a ritual site of the Batavi, with quantities of first century military metalwork coming from wells and the formerly marshy edges of a sand ridge. Most is still in the process of cleaning and restoration. There is a considerable quantity of horse gear, metal wagon fittings, remnants of sword sheaths, shield edgings and a few pieces of lorica segmentata. From one well, apparently filled with destruction refuse, comes an iron helmet (crushed, but apparently an almost exact parallel to the Nijmegen helmet of the Heddernheim type) and a Germanic shield umbo of a late type. A site with a rather similar find spectrum — discussed by Arjan Bosman on p.5 of this issue — has been located near to the Tiberian Roman harbour at Velsen, so we may not be dealing with an isolated phenomenon.

### Nijmegen

Excavations on the Kps Plateau, outside the main fort have uncovered the cavalry annexe with vast quantities of military metalwork. Horse gear includes headstalls and a complete set of bronze saddle horns. Most recently, two face helmets of the Chassenard type were found in a single pit. Incredibly, the smooth metal casques are entirely covered by textile ribbons, frills and a garland.

## Metal detecting

A hint for metal detecting fans: search the roofs. A workman found an early Roman fibula on the roof of a twelve-storey flat in Leeuwarden, which is well outside the *limes*. It is probable that the fibula arrived with the gravel spread on the roof, and may come from the Rhine fort Maurik where extensive gravel extraction took place at the time of the flat's construction. This is not the only roof-top find: a Bronze Age axe turned up on top of a flat in Lelystad, a new town in the IJsselmeer Polder (E. Kramer, 'Vondst van vroeg-Romeinse kapfibula op dak...' *Westerheem* XLI-1-1992, 27-9).

For the rest, Peter de Haas of the Gemina Project was rescued from unemployment by his hobby and has been appointed project director for the reconstruction of Roman military equipment and civilian clothing at Archeon, the newly set-up archaeological theme park at Alphen aan den Rijn (site of a Roman fort, incidentally). So at least the Roman reconstructions are in good hands. The theme park will include reconstructions of the fort at Valkenburg, a Roman theatre (with football hooligans posings as gladiators?) and one of the Roman barges found at Zwammerdam.

Jaap Morel, excavator of Velsen, indefatigable re-interpreter of posthole swarms in early Roman camps, with a gift for reconstruction drawings which made us reconsider all the evidence in a new light (e.g. the Vindolanda tent), has moved on: he is now director of the Maritime Museum of the North Sea Polders at Ketelhaven. Will we find Drusus' fleet on Dutch territory yet?

## VELSERBROEK B6, MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM A RITUAL SITE

A.V.A.J. Bosman

The site Velsbroek B6 is situated 25 kilometres to the west of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. It was discovered in 1989 in a section of the new 'Lange Sloot', one of the main modern ditches in the polder 'de Velsbroek'. W. Bosman discovered it in the course of making an inventory of archaeological sites in Velsen. Roman-native and one fragment of Samian pottery were recovered from a sand ridge appearing in the section. This material dates the site in the Roman period. In 1991 five trial excavation trenches were dug at this site in the expectation that a native farmstead or other traces of farming would be found, similar to features found to the north of the site. The finds from this trial excavation form the basis of this article. The excavation will continue throughout 1992, because three industrial buildings will be built on the site.

An important aspect is that the site is situated in a very diverse landscape, i.e., on the separation of the Older Dunes (sand) and eutrophic peat. The sand ridge on which the Roman finds occur is probably a gully deposit which has been eroded by wind. Frequent flooding caused a layered build-up of sand and humus on top of the sand ridge. On both flanks of the ridge this layer has been disturbed, probably by cattle. Finds were recovered both from the

layered sand and from the disturbed flanks. Except for a large antler fragment, no finds were found in the peat surrounding the site.

Only two features were recovered that can be related to the Roman layer (the sand). These features are two shallow 'postholes', only 20cm by 20cm, and situated near the edge of the ridge. No finds were found in association with them.

The metal is the most spectacular category among the finds. All of the metal was found by using a metal detector. The density of these finds is similar to that of metal finds in the military context of Velsen 1. The scatter of the metal objects seems at random across the sand ridge (Fig.1). They can be divided into three groups: military artefacts, coins and fibulae.

Ten metal finds may be interpreted as military artefacts. Four of these are fragments of weapons:

1. (Fig.2) Find number 80. A complete iron *pilum* point of the socketed type. The *pilum* has a square point and round shank when seen in section.  
Length: 780mm; width (max.): 21mm.  
Lit: DENSEM, 1980, 30; the socketed type was developed during the Roman Republic. It is found in a variety of sizes in different sites: Renieblas (SCHULTEN, 1929, Taf.25,1-3), Augsburg-Oberhausen (HÜBENER, 1973, Taf.5,13), Saalburg (JACOBI, 1897, Fig.77,2), Corbridge (ALLASON-JONES & BISHOP, 1988, Fig.9).
2. (Fig.3) Find number 90. A complete iron point. The blunt point is square and the socket is round. The point was broken off during conservation. The socket is not closed completely. This item may, as a *pilum* shoe, have belonged to the same *pilum* as Find number 80. Normally these objects are described as *ballista* bolts.  
Length: 96mm; width: 18mm.  
Lit: RITTERLING, 1913, Taf.XVII,51-53a.
3. (Fig.4) Find number 118. A complete iron point. In the round socket a part of the wooden spearshaft was preserved (*Fraxinus exc.*, determination P. van Rijn, IPP). A wooden shaft was secured by an iron nail. This object may also be interpreted as a *pilum* shoe.  
Length: 74mm; width: 17mm.
4. (Fig.5) Find number 35. A silver nail. The nail has a round head and a round shaft when seen in section. The point is blunt. The nail is similar to those used to fit the loops on the scabbard of the dagger from Velsen 1.  
Length: 9mm; diameter: 4.5mm.  
Lit: MOREL & BOSMAN, 1989, Fig.9 (AD16-28).  
Two items can be determined as horse gear:
5. (Fig.6) Find number 76. A bronze strap-end. The top part consists of a vegetal motif ('swollen seed capsule'). This part is divided from the lower by a rectangular decoration. The lower part is square with a round knob on the bottom. On the surface some small traces of silvering are visible. On the other side: on top a nail and on the bottom behind the rectangular part a square plate folded to the inside. The top and middle part are hollow.  
Length: 54mm; width: 12.5mm; height: 7.5mm.
6. (Fig.7) Find number 89. A bronze junction loop. It has a broad D-shaped loop. In the plate two pairs of nail holes are present. On top they are surrounded by concentric circles. The pairs are separated by a rec-

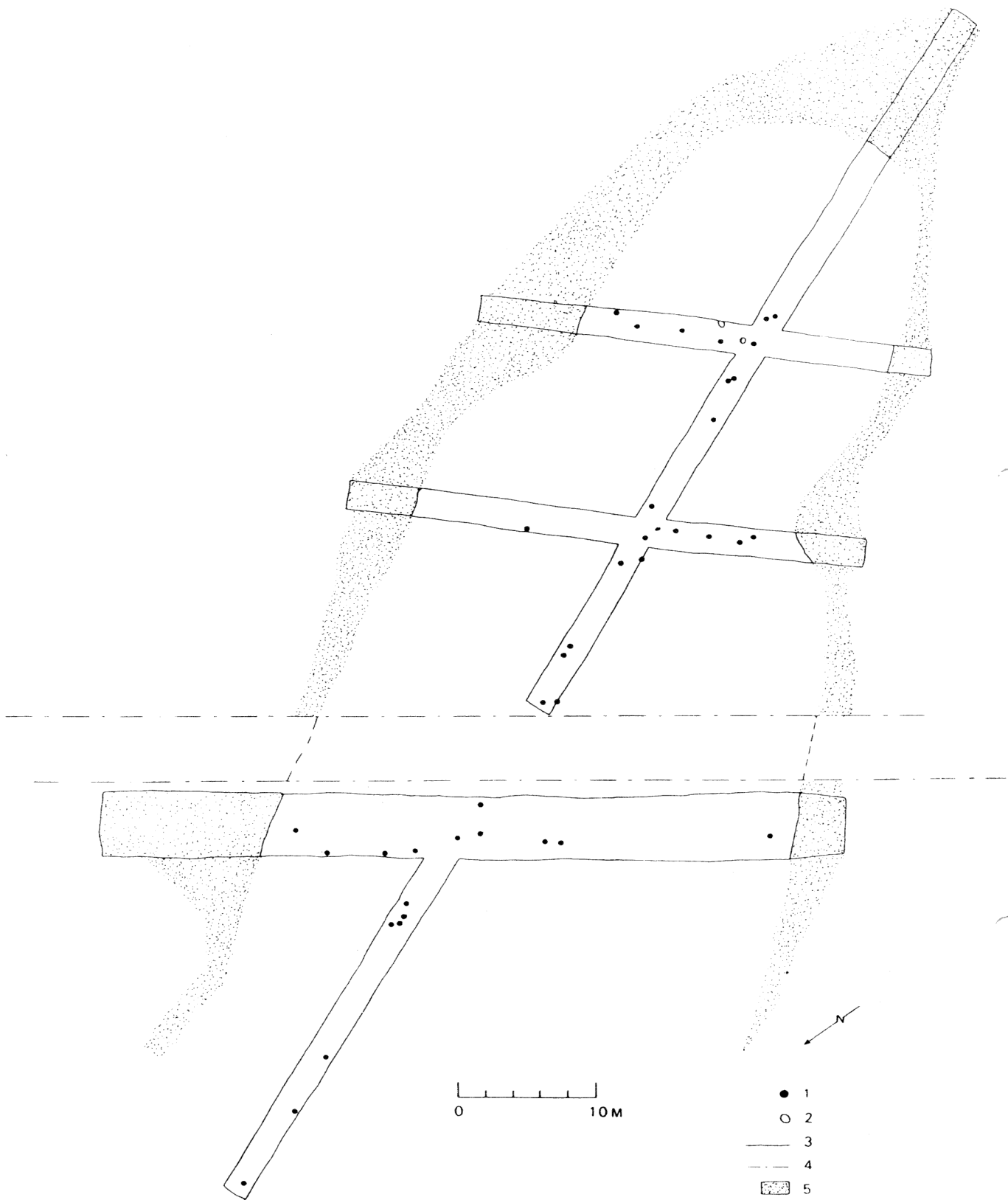


Fig.1: Velsbroek site plan

tangular decoration (as Find number 76). The surface may have been silvered. The reverse of the plate is worn.

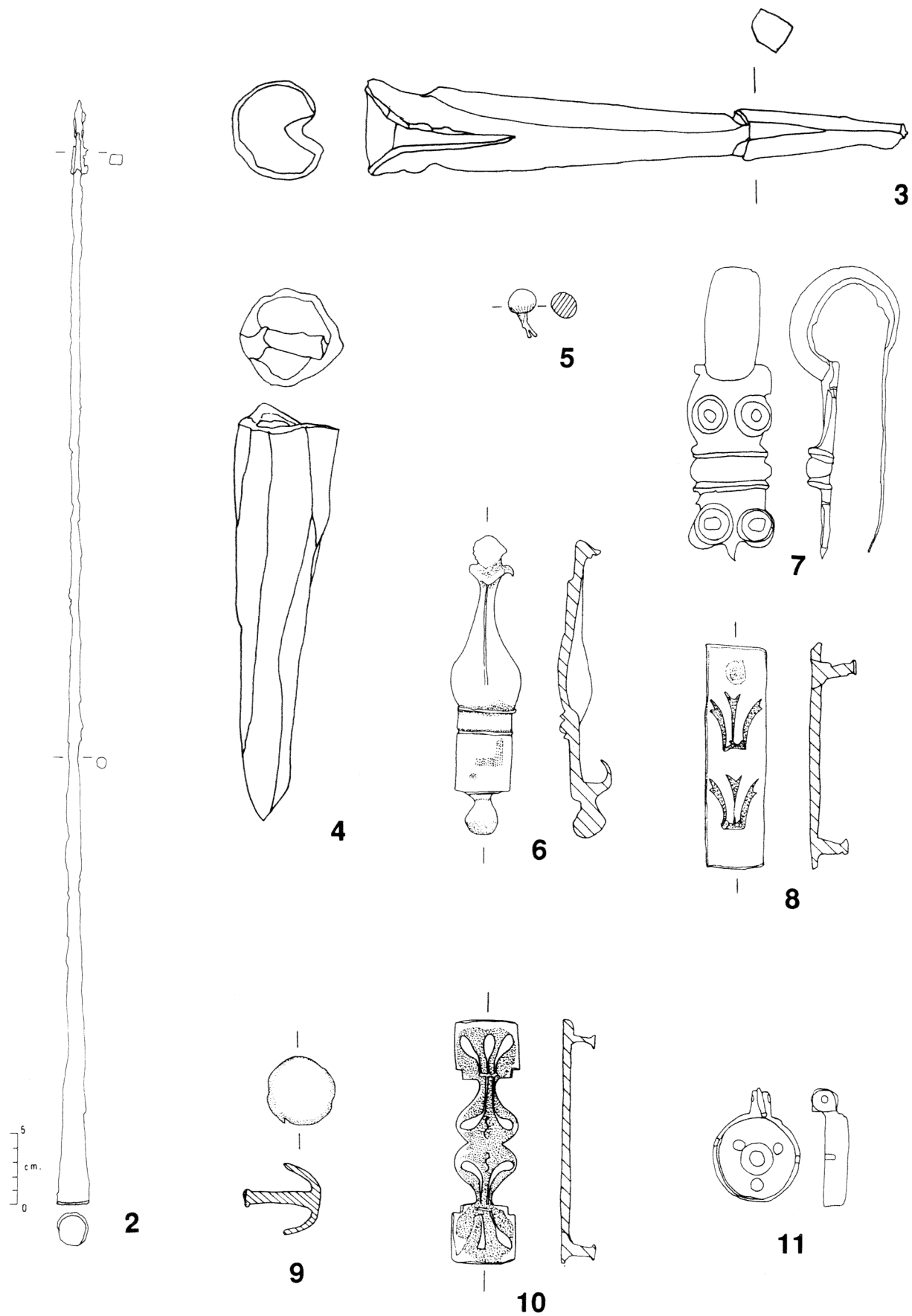
Length: 53mm; width: 15mm; height: 20mm.

Lit: FRERE & WILKES, 1989, Fig.72; BROWN, 1986,

Fig.28,195.

One possible apron fitting was found:

7. (Fig.8) Find number 119. A bronze rectangular plate with niello inlay and traces of a silvered surface. The inlay has the shape of two stylized acanthus leaves. At



*Figs.2-11: Finds from Velsbroek.*

the top end a nail is driven through the plate, the lower nail is part of the plate. Both nails are blunt.  
Length: 40mm; width: 10.5mm; height: 7mm.  
Lit: RITTERLING, 1913, Taf.XII,11.

Other belt fittings:

8. (Fig.9) Find number 68. A bronze fitting. The rectangular shaft is soldered inside the hollow round head. The point of the shaft is blunt.  
Length: 13mm; diameter: 13mm.  
Lit: OLDENSTEIN, 1976, Taf.46, No.459.
9. (Fig.10) Find number 87. A bronze belt fitting with a silvered surface and possible niello inlay. The shape of this item is similar to several horse harness fittings. On the reverse there are two nails, both with a blunt point.  
Length: 43mm; width: 11mm; height: 6mm.  
Lit: ULBERT, 1970, Taf.23,352; FRERE, 1972, Fig.32,39; BROWN, 1986, Fig.29,207; BISHOP, 1988, Fig.56, type 6g (with 10 other parallels).

Not a military item, but frequently found in military contexts:

10. (Fig.11) Find number 60. A bronze seal box. Only the box has been preserved. The lid is broken near the hinge. One round hole with a concentric circle is present on the bottom on the inside. Around this hole three other smaller holes appear. On the rear three points occur, perhaps indicating an alternative place for the three holes.  
Length: 21mm; height: 6mm.  
Lit: FRERE, 1972, Fig.34; RITTERLING, 1913, Taf.XVI,58-9; ULBERT, 1969, Taf.41,21-3.

In B6 five coins were found of which the oldest, a denarius, dates from 101 BC. The latest coin is a dupondius of the emperor Claudius from AD42. The coins can be dated in the period in which both fortresses in Velsen were occupied (AD16-50).

Of the 12 fibulae seven are similar to those found in the military context in Velsen (e.g. Aucissa and Eye-fibulae). Of the rest two are dated in the second century, the other three are dated in the second half of the second and the third century AD. Among the latter group is a silver Tutulus-fibula. A remarkable find is a miniature Eye-fibula. Miniature fibulae are known from several ritual sites in Northern Gaul (ROYMANS, 1990, 78).

The pottery is mainly Roman-native ware. Interesting differences can be distinguished when it is compared with similar material from both fortresses Velsen 1 and 2. The percentage of black and polished material seems higher in B6 than in the fortresses of Velsen. Also of importance is the occurrence of pedestals on the sherds from B6 which are absent in both Velsen 1 and 2. Thus this kind of material can be dated in the second half of the first and second century AD. Only four undatable fragments of Roman wheel-thrown ware were recovered.

Few bone fragments have been found. For the most part this group consists of cattle, although there is a relatively high percentage of horse bones.

We may conclude that B6 is an important site. Both the location of the site (a sand ridge in a swamp) and the number and composition of the finds (weapons, coins and fibulae) indicate that the site has been used as a ritual place, comparable to Empel, a Roman-Batavian ritual/temple site in the

south of the Netherlands (ROYMANS & DERKS, 1990). The finds from B6 are important because they show some aspects which are absent in both fortresses in Velsen, e.g. the complete weapons of which only small fragments survived in the military context. Also the dating of the finds indicate that the activities continued after the Romans abandoned the fortresses in Velsen. Who started the rituals (and when) is still not clear. Perhaps an answer will be found during the final research in 1992.

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# A ROMAN HELMET FROM KAKHETI (EASTERN GEORGIA, TRANS- CAUCASIA)

David Braund

In the course of extensive archaeological survey in Eastern Georgia, a Roman helmet was discovered by B. Maisuradze.<sup>1</sup> It was turned up, out of any context, on the site of a modern cemetery on the outskirts of the village of Kvemo Kedi, on the Shiraki plain, in Tsiteltsqaro region, on the north-eastern margin of the province of Kakheti, eastern Georgia (see map).

The helmet is badly damaged, but significant details of its form can be observed. It is beaten from a sheet of bronze: it is some 2mm thick. In the occiput area, three pronounced ridges are clearly visible. The substantial neckguard is set at eye-level, with two raised steps and a hole for a suspension-ring, which has not survived. There are ear-recesses on either side, and holes for rivets attaching the cheek pieces (these have not survived). On the front of the skull there are curved eyebrows pointing down to a brow reinforce.

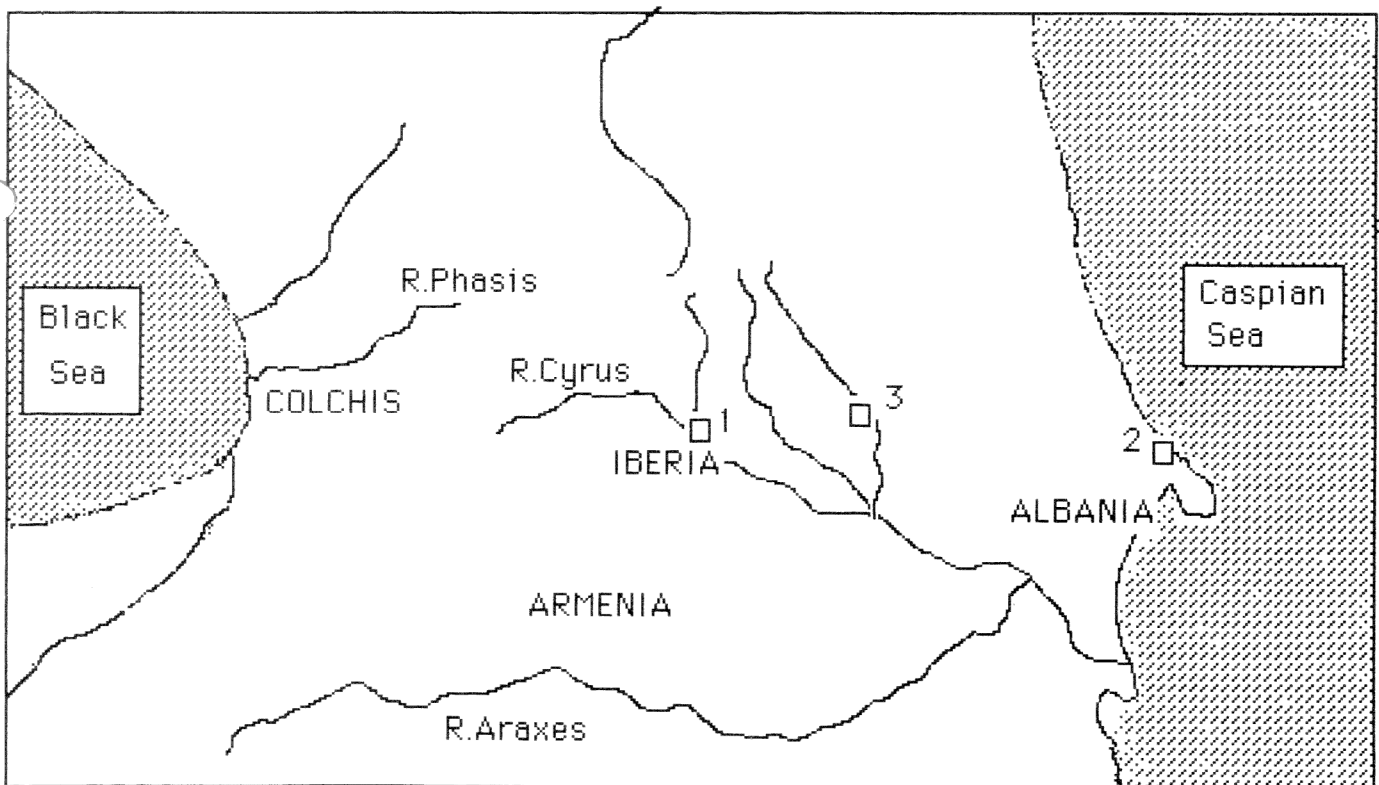
These details are enough to identify the helmet as of Imperial-Gallic type. Typologically, it is closest to Imperial-Gallic A in Robinson's classification, though with a rather higher, hemispherical bowl.<sup>2</sup> Given the lack of any context for the find, we rely upon type to date it. Accordingly, we may suppose that the helmet from Kakheti was produced in the final decades of the first century B.C. or in the early decades of the first century A.D.

The date and location are of particular interest. Archaeological work in Eastern Georgia has failed to reveal

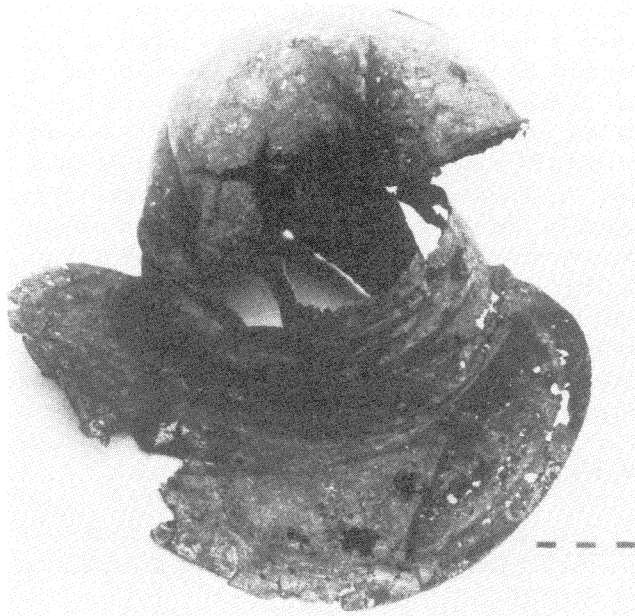
other Roman military equipment contemporary with this helmet or even later, despite epigraphic evidence of what may have been a Roman military presence at Mtskheta in A.D.75 and, a little later, of a Roman centurion near Baku.<sup>3</sup> To that extent, this helmet is a considerable curiosity. However, an isolated piece of military equipment can tell us little. We know nothing about the circumstances of its deposition, though an ancient burial under the modern cemetery seems marginally the most likely hypothesis.<sup>4</sup> It is also most likely that the helmet came into Kakheti from the south, particularly in view of recurrent Roman involvement in Armenia under the Julio-Claudians. Any more precise or firm hypothesis must await further discoveries in eastern Georgia.

## NOTES

1. I am grateful to B. Maisuradze and V. Licheli for illustrations, discussion and permission to publish on this find.
2. H.R. Robinson, *The Armour of Imperial Rome* (London 1975), 44–5, 51. For a plausible reconstruction of the fighting-technique employed by those who wore this type of helmet, see P. Connolly, 'The Roman fighting technique deduced from armour and weaponry', in V.A. Maxfield and M.J. Dobson (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies 1989* (Exeter 1991), 358–63.
3. The evidence is discussed in detail in D. Braund, 'Roman and native in Transcaucasia from Pompey to Suessianus', in V.A. Maxfield and M.J. Dobson (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies 1989* (Exeter 1991), 419–23. For the possibility, now, of some Roman military presence well to the east of the Caspian, see D. Braund, 'New "Latin" inscriptions in Central Asia:



Key to map: 1. Mtskheta; 2. Baku; 3. Find-spot of the helmet, on the right bank of the modern River Alazani



Legio XV Apollinaris and Mithras?', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 89, 1991, 188–90.

4. M.C. Bishop, 'O Fortuna: a sideways look at the archaeological record and Roman military equipment', in C. van Driel-Murray (ed.), *Roman Military Equipment: the Sources of Evidence*, BAR International Series S476 (Oxford 1988), 1–11 reviews the possible causes of deposition in a case such as this.

## A SHIELD BOSS FROM GRETA BRIDGE

*D.J. Marchant*

Readers of **ARMA** may be interested to learn of a hitherto unpublished Roman shield boss from the North Yorkshire site of Greta Bridge. This was discovered during excavations by Mr John Casey in the fort's vicus in 1973–74.<sup>1</sup> The boss is of iron, circular and domed, with a narrow (2cm) rim around the edge. Large parts of the rim are missing and the object has been only partially conserved. Only one iron rivet can be seen in the rim, though there must have been others. Internal Diameter: 9.5cm; External Diameter: 13.2cm; Height: 4.5cm. Nothing was found of the shield itself, which was presumably circular or oval. A few small fragments of wood adhere to the boss. A careful search was made for metal shield fittings, but none were found. The context of the find was a room in the rear (east) range of the timber-built mansio, situated to the east of the River Greta approximately 200 metres outside the north gate (Porta Praetoria) of the fort. Although the building had been stripped of its main contents during the course of a fire, which originated in the kitchen, next to the room in which

the boss was found; sufficient datable material was recovered to suggest that the accident took place in the second quarter of the 3rd century. This type of boss is a fairly common find on Roman military sites and seems to have been used right through the Roman occupation of Britain. Unfortunately, the garrison of Greta Bridge in the 3rd century is not known. Other shield bosses found in northern Britain include examples from Beckfoot,<sup>2</sup> Doncaster,<sup>3</sup> Newstead,<sup>4</sup> and Vindolanda.<sup>5</sup>

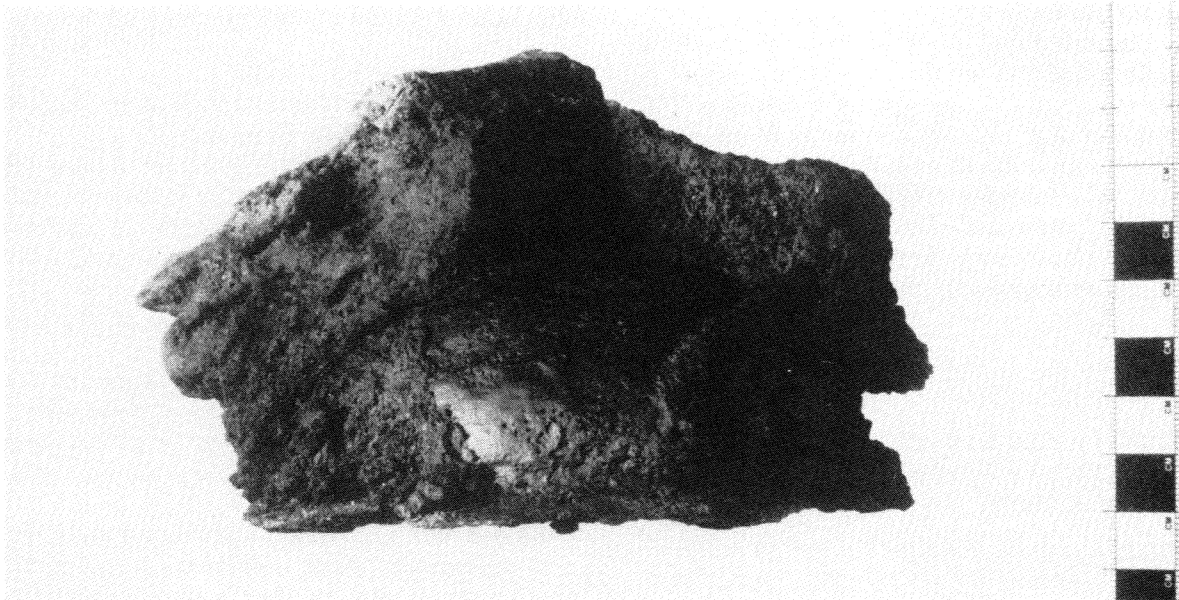
## NOTES

1. My thanks to John Casey of the Department of Archaeology, University of Durham, for access to and permission to publish this find.
2. R. Hogg, 'A Roman cemetery site at Beckfoot, Cumberland', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* XLIX, 1949, 32–7
3. P. Buckland, 'A first century shield from Doncaster, Yorkshire', *Britannia* IX, 1978, Fig.4, No.2.
4. J. Curle, *A Roman Frontier Post and its People: the Roman Fort at Newstead, Melrose*, (Glasgow 1911), Pl.XXXIV,3.
5. P. Bidwell, *The Roman Fort at Vindolanda*, (London 1985), 132, Fig.47,1.

## AN ENAMELLED BELT PLATE FROM SOUTH SHIELDS

*A.T. Croom*

A complete enamelled belt plate in good condition has been found in recent excavations at South Shields Roman



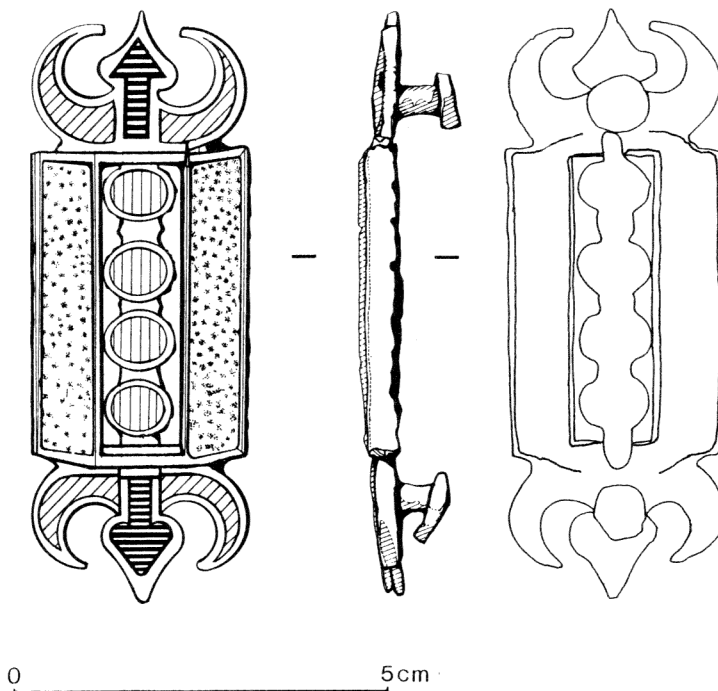
*Shield boss from Greta Bridge*

Fort. It was found covered in organic material, in construction layers of the courtyard house built in the southern corner of the fort in the late third or early fourth century.

It is a rectangular openwork plate with terminals consisting of an arrow flanked by two inward-curving horns. A separate central bar has four ovals connected by bead-shaped bars. The side panels contain yellow enamel speckled with black, the arrow dark blue, and the horns red enamel. One roundel of the central bar contains traces of dark blue, but the rest of the enamel in the roundels is now discoloured green.

On the underside the terminals are solid and the two side bars slightly hollow, to form lips along the outer edge and round the central opening. Small slots are cut into this lip at either end to take the terminals of the central bar, but it is not clear how this was held in place. Two large, disc-headed shanks project from the terminals.

If such belt plates were set on a belt (presumably by the slot-and-hole method) with their long axes vertical, the belt in this example would have been at least 80mm wide, and approximately 4mm thick. Since the plate itself has an overall breadth of 10mm, it would have been part of a heavy



*The South Shields belt plate. Scale 1:1 (drawn by I. Hagan).*

and bulky, but impressive belt.

Five other belt plates, of two different designs, have previously been found at the fort,<sup>1</sup> as well as a couple of central bar fragments from the present excavations. This latest example is of a third, slightly smaller design. Close parallels for the plate come from Ravenglass<sup>2</sup> and Zugmantel.<sup>3</sup> Both these examples have yellow and black enamel side panels, blue arrows and yellow or yellow-green horns (possibly discoloured enamel in the Zugmantel example). Both examples are fragmentary and neither has a surviving central bar.

## NOTES

1. ALLASON-JONES & MIKET, 1984, 3.10, 3.11.
2. POTTER, 1979, Fig.26, found in a late Roman phase.
3. ORL 8, Taf.X, Fig.48.

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- ALLASON-JONES & MIKET 1984: L. Allason-Jones and R. Miket, *The Catalogue of Small Finds from South Shields Roman Fort*, Newcastle upon Tyne
- ORL: *Der Obergermanisch-Raetische Limes des Römerreiches*
- POTTER 1979: T.W. Potter, *Romans in North-West England*, Kendal

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