



AD SIGNUM!

THE NEWSLETTER OF LEGIO IX HISPANA

Volume II—Nr. 2, April. 2020

Speaks He... the Tribune



by **Gaius Vorenus**
Tribune Legio IX

When I first started Roman reenacting, Marsh asked me to edit and contribute to a Legio IX handbook that would help new recruits and those unfamiliar with what we do understand why we do what we do. The first article was "*The Man Inside the Lorica*". It was a great article that discussed who the Romans were and how they lived and provoked thought about the impression you were going to do.

Marsh wanted to make this available on the web. However, it was picked to death by various individuals who were critical, but never offered constructive suggestions that would make it better; plainly, they didn't support his effort. Luckily, I got a copy because of working with him and I still have it. I have long supported it and think it was a great and honest effort to help give recruits and members things to think about.

Thinking of his effort, I asked myself, "What kind of people were the Romans?" Like us they were imperfect. However, we should think about our lives if living in their society and times. As

a teacher, I marvel at the students who judge previous generations by today's standards; rather ignorant.

The Roman Spirit

We marvel at the ancient Roman civilization's accomplishments. As for their military; the marines have it down; Semper Fi! I can see that same fighting spirit in the ancient Romans when they stood against Boudicca's hordes; a mere 15,000 Romans against a horde of, according to Tacitus, more than 200,000.

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They trusted in their training and leadership; most importantly - each other. That is the key element for any fighting unit and one for us as well.

As part of the unit leadership, we may not have made all of the right decisions, but they were and are made for the welfare of our unit and our members. True Romans did not abandon their comrades but proudly stood with them. I like to think that we share that same spirit.

Loyalty — a Roman Characteristic

Loyalty was also a strong characteristic of the Romans. Yes, they had civil wars, rebellions, etc. However, the true Roman spirit was to embrace being loyal to their comrades. We have been tested by some criticizing members of our unit from time to time and we've lost some acquaintances and opportunities because of it. I like to think we aspire to the same ideal as the Romans that loyalty is a key element of our relationships with our friends. When one of our members is attacked it is an attack on all. Sound familiar? We run our unit and will not be told by someone outside the unit who we can or can't include in our unit.

I am aware that there are some elitists who think they are better than others; so be it. We don't think that way; if you do, please join them and become a legend in your own mind. We are all partners in this process. As a teacher I advocate and believe in the theory of "teachable moments." You don't turn your back on someone because they make a mistake, say the wrong thing, or do the something wrong. You take the opportunity to educate them.

From time to time, stop and think about yourself as a Roman. They lived in much the same way as we do today. They faced civil unrest, divisive

politics, and plagues. Even as an advanced ancient civilization they were unable to break free of these shackles. Therefore, I encourage you to read about how they worked through these things and then ask yourself, "Am I acting as a true Roman?" The answer might surprise you!

Best regards,

GAIUS UORENUS

Tribune

COHORS III

CENTURIA CASSIUS MARTIALIS

Legio IX Commandments

- I. Thou shall not engage in actions that harm or embarrass the unit, bring shame to the unit, or let the unit down.
- II. Thou shall respect the rules and wishes of the planners and organizers of all events in which you participate as a member of Legio IX.
- III. Thou shall not appear in modern garb, or visible modern items, at a Legio IX event, encampment, or presentation after the official start time of said event.
- IV. Thou shall learn all other Legio IX members' ROMAN names and use them.
- V. Thou shall not publicly degrade other units or their members in a public setting or forum.
- VI. As a member of Legio IX, you shall always help other Roman reenactors in need if you are able to do so.

At events where you are representing Legio IX to the public, you shall use the utmost discretion when discussing anything modern in front of the public. For example, when asked about where to buy, or how to make, our kit, you can respond on the modern topic, but lengthy discussions on what sort of modern undergarments you are disguising under your tunic shall be forbidden.



Ramblings from Atop the Soapbox...

by **D.M VARIANVS**
Signifer Legio IX



Well, the coronavirus is sure screwing things up in the reenacting world. Seems like everything is cancelled right now. WWI, Ft. Frederick's Colonial Market Fair, MTA (ha-ha)... just everything. Our event we were going to have this coming weekend; we had to postpone it because we couldn't take the chance on some of our members getting sick or worse.

Moving Forward

The plan – right now – is to reschedule it in a bit when things have calmed down. In the meantime, you can practice your drill, sew a new tunica (Josh) using the pattern in *Ad Signum, Vol. 1 #1*, etc. If you

need to order some gear, now is the time to talk to Marcvs, our unit Quartermaster – he can guide you on what is correct for our impression **and** help you avoid wasting your money on junk. If you need to make gear, again, Marcvs can guide you and he does make really nice belts and such.

Frater

Frater is the Latin word for brother. To the Roman soldier, his comrades were his brothers – in Legio IX, it is the same. Our members work together and we are there for each other... It is well to stay in contact, whether by our e-mail group, FB, texts, our Group.Me app thing or even Mr. Bell's new device... If you have the time, call one of your brothers – they will be glad to hear from you.

J. M. VARIANUS

Signifer, Legio IX

PS: Citizens, please don't get all puffy and hyperventilate if something DOESN'T happen like we post here, it'll not be the end of the world, but we're sure gonna try to get these things done!!!





Roman Holidays in this Month:

The Romans celebrated many different holidays, just like we do. The festivals of ancient Rome included many customs which have been carried over into later holidays. The main significance of ancient Rome in relation to modern holidays is that many of these customs still continue today. These were on the old Roman calendar.

- **Magalesia**, April 4-10.
- **Fordicidia**, April 15. Honored Tellus, Goddess of Earth, and was observed by slaughtering pregnant cows, taking the unborn calves from the womb, and burning them in order to insure fertility for the growing corn.
- **Cerealia**, April 19. Celebrates the beginning of the six vegetative months.
- **Parilia**, April 21. Honored the pastoral goddess Pales, and was observed by driving sheep through burning straw. Also called Palilia.
- **Vinalia**, April 23. A festival celebrated by sampling new wine.
- **Robigalia**, April 25.
- **Floralia** (Floria) , April 28 to May 3.

*"WE ROMANS LAUGH AT THOSE
WHO SWING THEIR SWORDS, FOR
A SLASH RARELY KILLS, BUT A STAB IS
ALWAYS FATAL"*

Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus,
De re militari Book I





A Taste of Roman Britain

by Joshua Boyer — (*Junius Faustus*)
Legio IX Hispana

*"An army marches on it's
stomach"*
-Napoleon Bonaparte

In a Roman Military camp, the cooks, or "coqui" were some of the most important roles to fill. Their responsibilities were to make sure that the army itself was fed and ready for the next march or fight. They upheld these responsibilities with a vast and assorted menu, that ranged from different types of breads, fruit, meats, and when available, fresh vegetables. Below are some of the things that a common legionnaire could expect to find in his daily diet.

- ◎ ***Panis Militaris*** - translated, "military bread" Hard tack military bread made from emmer wheat flour, water, and salt. Not the tastiest thing around, but you wouldn't want to be hungry without it!
- ◎ ***Epitryum*** - Chopped pitted green and black olives with fennel, coriander, mint, and cumin. Consider this to be a type of trail mix for the legionnaire.
- ◎ ***Aper Ita Conditur*** - Pork or Wild Boar with Cumin in Wine. This was most likely a delicacy meal, only available when fresh meat and wine were in the immediate area.
- ◎ ***Ptisana*** - Barley soup, something common to equate it to today would most likely be a worse form of Cream of Wheat. very high calorie, but healthful, especially compared to other



Photo used with the kind permission of Paul Elliott from the Roman Recruit website.

typical Roman cuisine. Based with barley; this was left to soak in cold water for 24 hours, then chickpeas, lentils, and peas were added. Delicious

- ◎ ***Cucumeres*** - this was a cucumber, cut into pieces, then cooked into olive oil. Mostly used as a side dish.
- ◎ ***Globos sic facito*** - finally, some dessert! This was a type of fritter cooked with olive oil and honey! Easy and quick to make, these surely abound in camps when supply was in good standing!

While on campaign, the Romans ate a vast and varied diet in order to stay healthy and strong for the hard lives legionnaires led.

If this short articler piques your interest, more of these type of things can be found on the ***Romans in Britain*** website located at: www.romanobritain.org



Enlistment

Roman Legionary 58 BC – AD 69” by Ross Cowan – Osprey Warrior #71. Very little has been changed or modified (some few things). Why try and re-write something this good. Buy it, read it, know it, live it!

by **Ross Cowan**

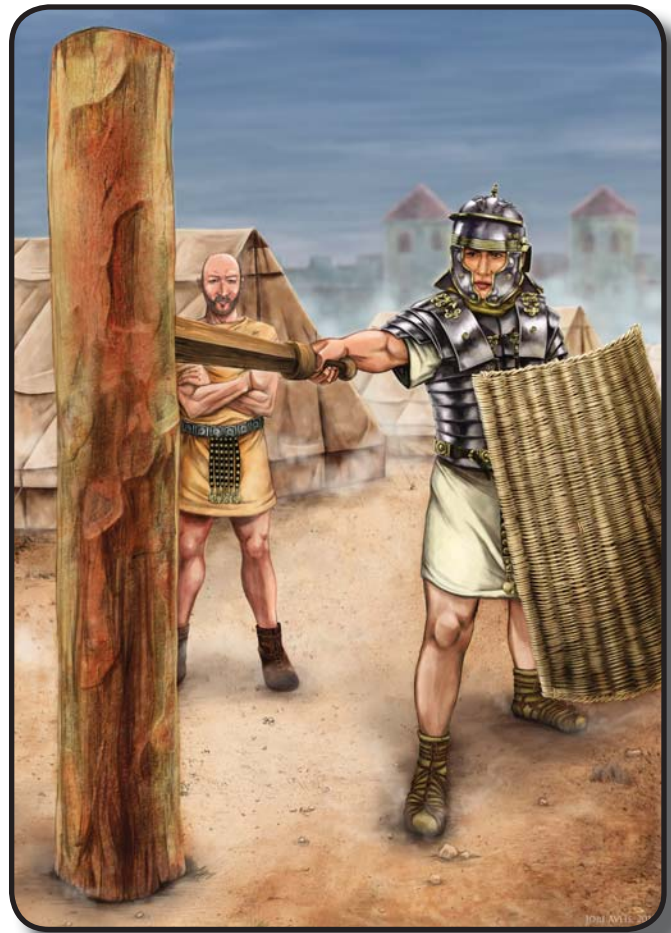
Five hundred thousand Roman citizens swore the military oath to me. (Augustus, 2Res Gestae, 3)

Age

Traditionally, all Roman male citizens between the ages of 17 and 46 were liable for military service (Aulus Gellius, 10.28.1). Most recruits to the legions though, were aged between 17 and 23, with the peak age of enlistment being 20, however, recruits as young as 13 and 14 are known and some men as old as 36, were even inducted (Scheidel 1996: 99ff).

Background

The majority of legionaries claimed their origin (*origo*) in a town or city, but few actually came from urban centers. Most cities were centers of agricultural trade and had substantial rural territories attached to them. Some parts of the Empire were particularly devoid of urbanization and in many cases the man's origins were simply made up, granted at enlistment along with Roman citizenship. Peasant farmers had been the backbone of the citizen militia of the Republic and the countryside remained the favored source of Roman recruits until the late Empire. Recruits with rural/agricultural backgrounds were preferred for their endurance and because they were unaffected by the sleazier distractions of city life:



They are nurtured under the open sky in a life of work, enduring the sun, careless of shade, unacquainted with bathhouses, simple-souled, content with a little, with limbs toughened to endure every kind of toil, and for whom wielding iron, digging a ditch and carrying a burden is what they are used to from the country. (Vegetius, Epitome, 1.3, after Milner 1996)

Indeed, Tacitus asserts that the mutiny of the Rhine legions in AD 14 was exacerbated by the presence of 'city-bred recruits swept from the capital [Rome] by the recent levy, familiar with licence and chafing at hardship, [who] began to influence the simple minds of the rest' (Tacitus, Annals, 1.31).



Height

The ideal height of the legionary was 6 Roman feet (1.77m; 5ft 9in.) and men of at least 5 Roman feet and 10 inches (1.72m; 5ft 7in.;;) were preferred in the first cohort (Vegetius, *Epitome*, 1.5). However, of course reality was a little different. Nero's **Legio I Italica** was notable for two reasons: its composition of Italian recruits and the fact that all the men were at *least* six Roman feet in height (Suetonius, *Nero*, 19). That this is worthy of note suggests that men of smaller stature were *regularly* accepted into the other legions. The skeletal remains of a soldier who died in Pompeii in AD 79 suggest that he was about 1.7m (5ft 7in.) tall, but a soldier from the fort at Velsen in Holland was 1.9m (c.6ft 2in.) — although he may have been a local recruit from the *Frisii*. Evidence from the 4th Century AD, shows that men of 1.65m (5ft 5in.) were admitted

into the elite units of the army, and this suggests that this height was actually the upper limit for the rural population from which the recruits were drawn (*Theodosian Code*, 7.13.3).

Conscription

Many legionaries, if not the majority, were conscripts and not necessarily educated to any great standard. The *dilectus* or levy was necessitated by the huge scale of the civil wars and the Augustan conquests (Brunt 1974). Volunteers were preferred, but the emperors were resigned to the necessity of conscription (Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.4).

A Diverse Army

A legionary recruit was supposed to be a Roman citizen, but the civil wars had resulted in the wide



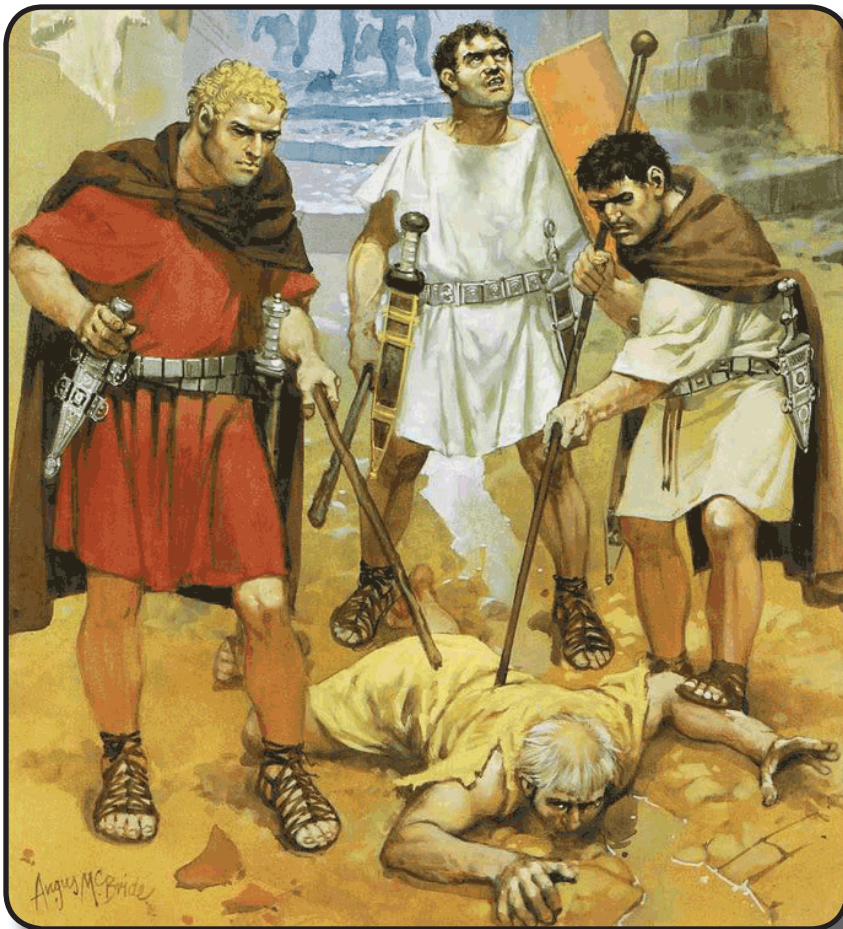
dispersion of the legions and the need for rival commanders to recruit from local sources. For example, in 52 BC, Julius Caesar raised **legio V Alaudae** from native Gauls; only later did he enfranchise them (Suetonius, *Caesar*, 24). The largest source of Roman citizens though, was still Italy itself! From 40 BC, this fundamental recruiting ground was denied to Mark Antony, yet his substantial force of legions, at least 23 at the time of Actium, still had to be maintained and so he was forced to exploit local sources of manpower – these being Syria, Galatia and Egypt. The real requirement for entry into the legions however, whether as a conscript or volunteer, was free birth, not Roman citizenship; citizenship could be granted at enlistment or at some point during service. The Galatian **legio XXII Deiotariana**, was not formed from Roman citizens – its soldiers were

subjects of, or mercenaries, serving the independent kingdom of Galatia, until its absorption into the Empire in 25 BC. Roman citizenship would have been granted at the time of transfer.

Recruiting Problems

In AD 23, the Emperor Tiberius bemoaned the lack of suitable Italian recruits coming forward to serve in the legions and announced his intention to tour the provinces, this in order to discharge the large number of eligible veterans and also to then replenish the legions by conscription (Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.4). That so many soldiers were eligible for discharge all at once, suggests they had been recruited in large-scale levies more than 20 years before. Similarly, in AD 65, the urgent need to replenish manpower in the Illyrian legions after

discharges attracted the attention of the Emperor Nero, suggesting that the veterans had been conscripted en-masse 25 years before (service had been extended; *Annals*, 13.40). If long-established units were maintained by voluntary recruitment, this should have meant a minimal number of annual discharges. In times of relative peace, a legion of 5,000 men probably suffered a decremental mortality rate of about 40% over a 25-year service period (indicative of the endemic diseases in the Roman world), and a further 15% through soldiers invalided out of service. Consequently, the legion would require somewhere around **280** recruits *annually* to maintain an





optimum strength (Scheidel 1996: 117-24). This level of recruitment can hardly have troubled the emperors – where they had problems though, was due the necessity of having to replenish much of a legion's strength at a **single stroke** every 20 or 25 years.

Tiberius' complaint also reveals that by this time, Italy was no longer considered the major source of manpower for the Roman Army. While legions based in the west still drew substantially from Italy (although increasingly from local sources), the legions in the east, particularly in Egypt, recruited from provincial sources from their beginnings. An important inscription of Augustan

date from Egypt, records the names and origins of 36 legionaries from **III Cyrenaica** and **XXII Deiotariana** (ILS 2483).

The men specify origins in:

- *Asia Minor* (20 soldiers)
- *Egypt* (7)
- *Syria* (2)
- *Gallia Narbonensis* (2)
- *Castris* (2)
- *Cyrenaica* (1)
- *Cyprus* (1)
- *Italy* (1).

Only *three* of the legionaries originated in the west, and only **one** from Italy itself (Vercellae); perhaps these three men were the only Roman citizens at enlistment. The majority of recruits came from Asia Minor, and were made citizens and given Roman names on enlistment. The two legions were also receiving local Egyptian recruits, but most notable are the two legionaries born *castris* – “**in the camp.**” These men were the sons of soldiers and their presence indicates to a certain extent that, despite the official ban on marriages, the sons of legionaries were readily accepted into service (Dio, 60.24; Tacitus *Annals*, 14.27).





Training

We see no other explanation of the conquest of the world by the Roman People than their military training, camp discipline and practice in warfare. (Vegetius, Epitome, 1.1)

Legionary recruits trained daily for **four** grueling months. Training began with practicing the military steps, 'for nothing should be

officers using their staffs to beat any laggards.

Once the recruits could march in time and follow the commands relayed by the trumpets and standards, maneuvers were practiced endlessly. They practiced different formations: the hollow square, wedge, circle and of course, the testudo (the 'tortoise') a mobile formation entirely protected by a roof and walls of the men's shields... The soldiers were trained in overcoming obstacles, in charging and breaking off combat, in changing lines and relieving engaged units. The recruit was also taught to spring out of the line - this might prove useful in combat (Plutarch, Antony, 45).



Weapons Training

Weapons training was conducted with swords, javelins and shields made of wood and wicker but **twice** the weight of the

maintained more on the march or in battle, than that all soldiers keep ranks as they mov'' (Vegetius, Epitome, 1.9). Recruits were required to march 29km in five hours at the regular step, and 35km in five hours at the faster step, this while loaded with a pack of about 20.5kg (45lb) in weight. And this burden was merely for the recruit's acclimatization; add to this the weight of his arms and armor and the load went up substantially. Strict maintenance of the ranks was enforced during drill, the centurions and training

real thing. These training weapons were used first against 1.8m (6ft) practice posts over and over until the movements became second nature. The instructor emphasized covering the body effectively with the shield while using the sword point, instead of the edge, for this caused deeper wounds and was more efficient than slashing. Weapons; training might occur twice a day.

If possible, recruits were also taught to swim, so that rivers would not impede a campaigning army's advance. They were also given



cursory instruction in archery, the sling and riding, so that they had knowledge of all arms.

Training Continued

Drill was maintained when the recruit became a regular, and he was expected to complete **three** route marches every month. At the end of these marches soldiers built a fortified camp with ditches and earthen ramparts. This, an identical plan each time, with its orderly internal structure, was fundamental to Roman military practice (Vegetius, *Epitome*, 1.8-28, 2.5, 23-24).

The training that Roman soldiers underwent in advance of campaigns, and the daily weapons drill they

performed when marching towards the war-zone, was crucial. This was especially true in peacetime because units were often under-strength, sometimes half their optimum size. Many soldiers were detached on various duties across the province, providing garrisons and acting as police (*stationarii*), or employed in various building projects, tax collecting or performing bureaucratic tasks for the provincial administration. Endemic disease also resulted in a steady rate of attrition. Only when a legion was required to fight in a major war might the majority of its manpower ever be assembled together, and its sub-units perform the maneuvers they might carry out in battle (Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.81 ff).





Leeches and Maggots: (On Roman Military Medicine)

by Publivs Cornelivs Magnus
Medicvs, Leg. IX HSPA

There were no licensing boards and no formal requirements for entrance to the profession. Anyone could call himself a doctor. If his methods were successful, he attracted more patients, if not, he found himself another profession.

Medical training consisted mostly of apprentice work. Men trained as doctors by following around another doctor and learning what he knew and how he did things.

No Real Specialization

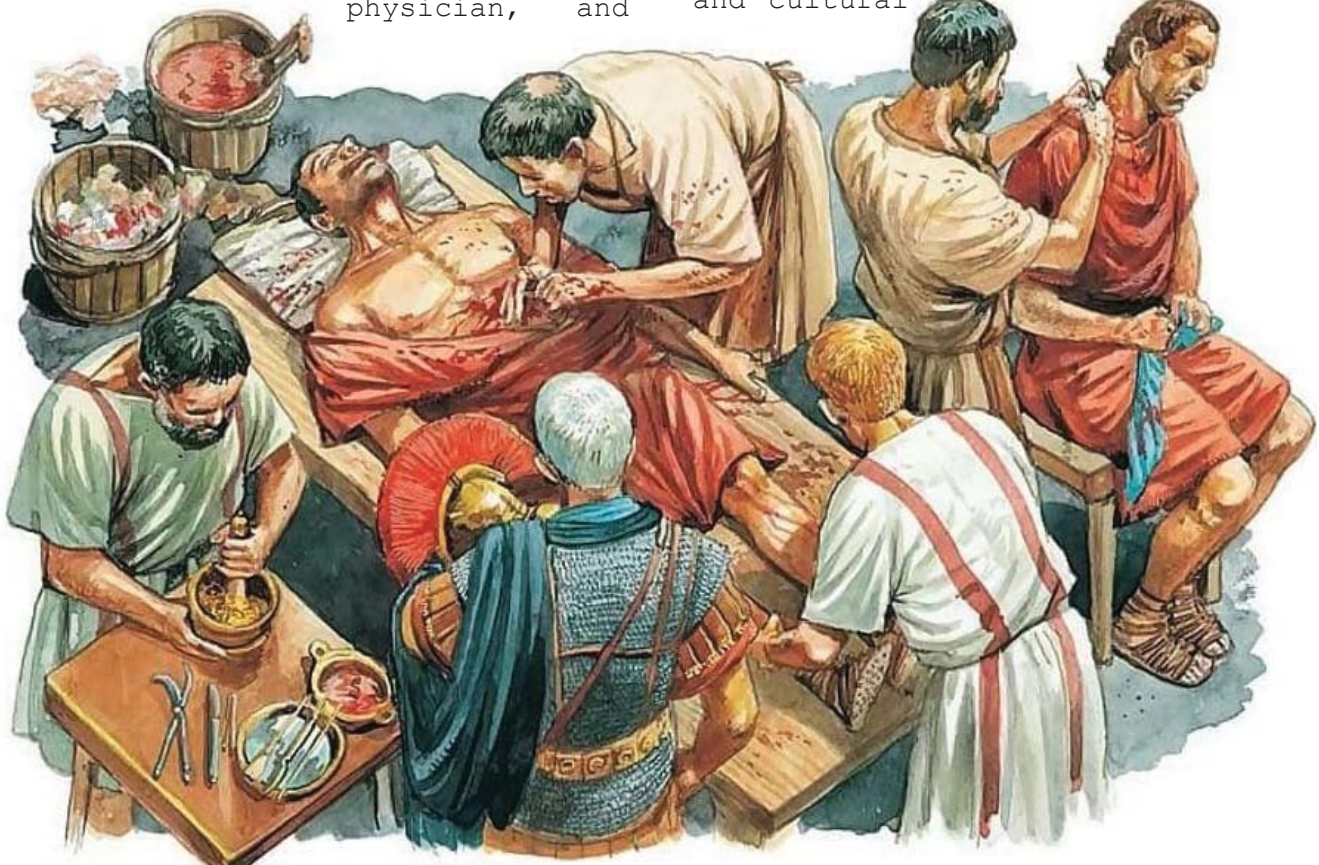
The earliest Roman practitioners combined several skills that are now spread among "specialists." In early days, a "medicus" would have to be pharmacist, physiologist, physician, and

surgeon. It didn't take long, however, before specialization began, and individuals, while maintaining the full range of skills, could concentrate their efforts on certain aspects of medicine.

An interesting sidelight: even though they knew nothing about "germ theory" and the spread of disease, Roman surgeons, drawing on the practices of the *impirici* handed down through the *methodici*, always boiled their surgical tools and vessels before starting an operation.

The Best Roman Virtue: Practicality

One of the most significant virtues of the Romans, responsible for the long lasting success of their civilization, was their practicality. This is best seen in their ability to adopt local customs, religions and cultural





mores, along with incorporating the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of foreign cultures under Roman dominion. Being great administrators, they soon saw the value of hygienic principles such as forbidding the burial of the dead within city limits, providing a minimum space of two feet between neighboring buildings, water transport via aqueducts, refuse and sewage disposal. The Cloaca Maxima, which was a sewer built by the Etruscan Tarquins in the sixth century BC was first used to drain the marsh close to the Roman Forum and went on to serve the City of Rome for centuries to follow.

Group Medicine, Hospitals and the Military

While private medical practice continued, the Romans were very instrumental in evolving group medicine in the form of hospitals. This was especially important to serve the needs of the military. Each

Roman legion, numbering from seven to eight thousand men, were divided into ten to twelve cohorts, and to each, Augustus Caesar assigned four doctors with a supervising legionary physician. In addition, the soldiers themselves were well versed in first aid.

Army hospitals called *valetudinaria* were used to receive the soldiers. The remains of these hospitals are to be found throughout the Roman Empire. One located on the old Roman road to Cologne, called *Novaesium* was typical. It contained forty sick wards, administration buildings, large kitchens, and a well - stocked apothecary shop.

Injuries in War (Trauma Cases)

It was war injuries, of course, that really advanced Roman surgery. If you were lucky, your military unit would have a good medicus/chirurgus who could patch you up before you





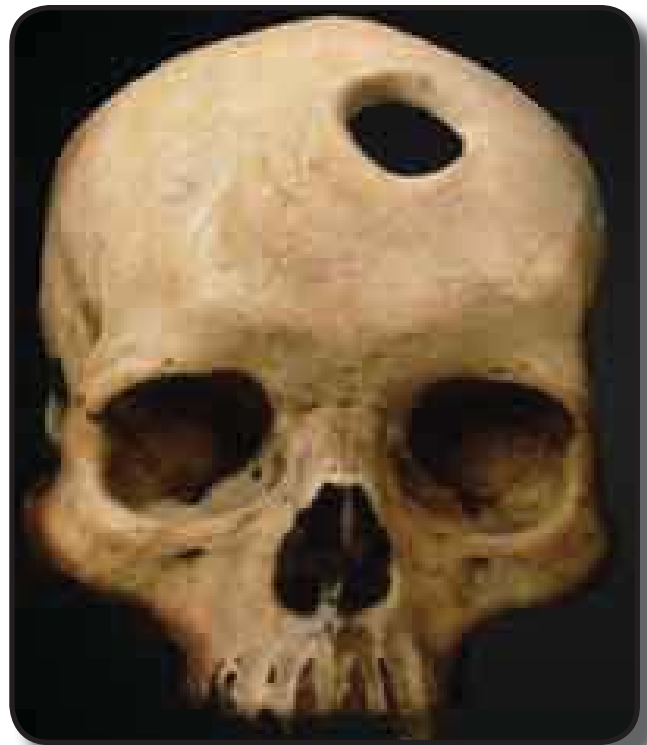
bled to death, and if you were really lucky he might retire to the same colonia that you were pensioned off to. (*Chirurgus* was really a corruption of the Greek word for surgeon, which transliterates into English as "*cheirourgos*". The pure Latin phrase for surgeon was actually "*medicus vulnerarius*", which means, literally, "wound doctor") Roman military surgeons were, in fact, only rivaled by specialist arena surgeons, who repaired valuable gladiators.

Serious Trauma

If there is one procedure done in ancient times that most awes (or horrifies) modern observers, and among the surgical procedures, it is trephination – cutting holes in the skull to relieve pain and pressure – that most often steals the spotlight. The process was well known, having been explicated early on by Hippocrates himself. (You can see ancient Roman trephined skulls at the Museo Preistorico ed Etnografico Luigi Pigorini on Piazza Marconi in Rome). Other skull procedures were also developed, particularly those concerned with the reduction of depressed cranial fractures – if your skull was pounded in, it could be fixed.

One of the most common problems was a head injury where the skull was fractured and a piece of bone had broken away and was pressing on the brain. Depending on which part of the head was injured, the symptoms would have ranged from persistent headaches to fits and mood swings.

The process of trepanning was meant to cure this complaint. This involved opening the wound and removing the offending section of bone. As there was no anesthetic the operation would have been painful to say the least. Bodies uncovered showing signs of this operation and also had evidence of new bone had grown over the gap left by the operation. There was no



doubt trepanning was an effective operation, which is why it was so popular.

Leeches and Maggots...

Yes, I know, I didn't cover the leeches and maggots this time. I'm leaving you wanting more for the next issue.





Guidelines for Submission of Material to Ad Signum

We encourage, in fact, absolutely need, contributions of material to this publication if it is to continue. This includes, but is not limited to, articles, letters, fiction writing, practical tips, reports on events, historical research, original or duplicated art work and photographs. Just about anything to do with the Roman Army, The Roman Empire, and its enemies and Allies and/or the Ancient World can be used (try to go light on Greek stuff).

The editing, design, layout and pre-press production of *Ad Signum* is done by Decimvs and Marcvs, who have been using desktop publishing software since the olden days (right after Caesar died), in this case both PC and Mac platforms Adobe InDesign and Photoshop, MS Word is used for much of the editing and Adobe Illustrator and CorelDraw are the primary applications used to produce this publication. This allows for a lot of different options in submitting material.

The following is a list of our submission guidelines and policies. These will give you an idea of how to best prepare stuff before you send it, and what will happen to it after we get it.

Written Material

General: It is the policy of *Ad Signum* to proofread all articles or letters and edit them for length, accuracy, grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity and taste where necessary. We appreciate receiving material that is as finished as possible, however, do not worry about getting everything perfect—just get it done, and we will take care of the polishing! If you are concerned that

our editing might affect something important or sensitive, we will be glad to e-mail you a galley proof of your article if requested.

Electronic Format

The following are the preferred media and software for the transferal of articles written with word processing, in order of preference:

1. In M.S. Word: **doc** or **docx** format
2. In any other software
3. An e-mail with formatting.
4. Text files written in notepad or wordpad or whatever.
5. In any other software that we can import or access.

Articles may be E-mailed to us, through one of our emails listed.

Paper Format

The following is the preferred format for articles submitted on paper (in order of preference):

1. Typed, double-spaced using upper and lower case style (not all capital letters)
2. Neatly hand printed.
3. Cuneform writing on clay tablets.
4. Written in legible handwriting

Artwork

Photocopies of line drawings will work fine. Pen and ink (with black ink) drawings work best; pencil sketches don't reproduce as well. Artwork will be returned on request.

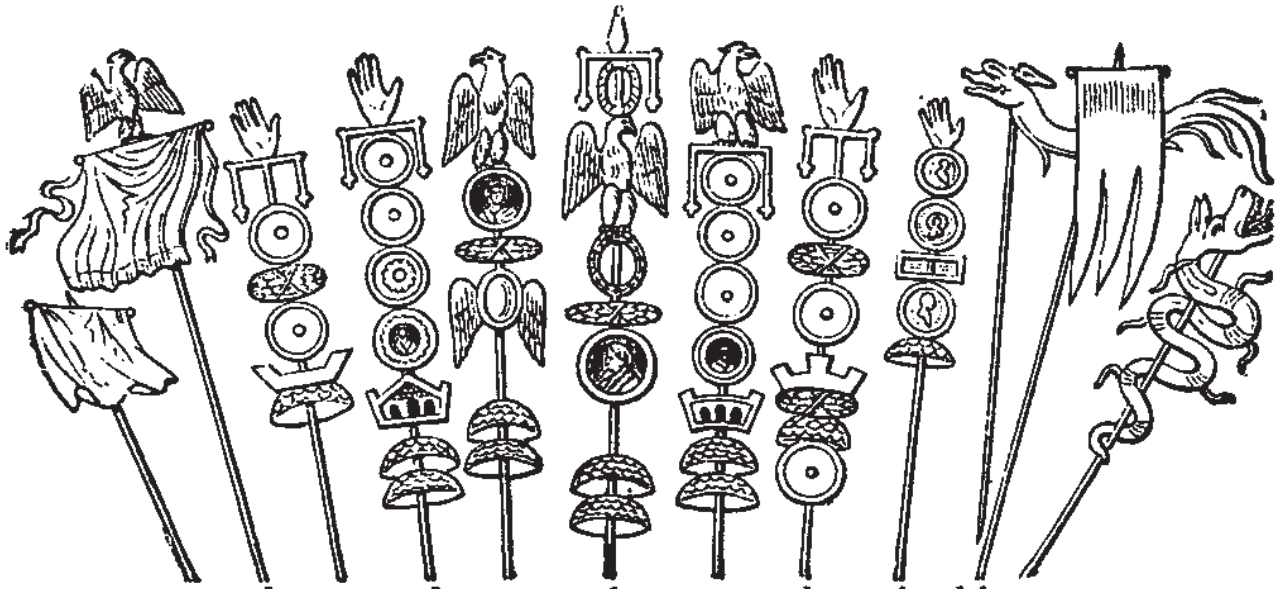
Photographs

Preferably something scanned and/or from a digital camera. We prefer NOT to get photos that we have to scan, but will do it **if** we have to, but you'll likely be cleaning the latrines next week.



Upcoming Events

- April 4-5, 2020: **Private Event:** Boyd's MD **GE-CANCELLED** due to COVID 19 🙄
- September 5 & 6, 2020: **Virginia Scottish Games:** Great Meadow, The Plains, Va
- September 26 & 27 2020: **Timeline event:** Hancock, MD
- *More to come...*



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The Fine Print...

AD SIGNUM! is the Official Newsletter of **Legio IX Hispana**. *Ad Signum* is (supposed to be) published monthly. Please submit any articles you'd like published to the editor, Marsh Wise at varianus@reenactor.net (sorry, electronic format only), as text file or M.S. Word document or really, most electronic format. The Legio IX website is <https://www.legioix.org/>