



# AD SIGNUM!

THE NEWSLETTER OF LEGIO IX HISPANA

Volume III—Nr. 1, November. 2022

## Speaks He... the Prefect

by **Gaius Vorenius**  
*Prefect Legio IX*



**B**elonging to a reenactment group, regardless of the historical time period, is like being in a herd of cats.

There are diverse opinions about EVERYTHING, but one thing is constant: RECRUITMENT. This is essential to the development of the unit and its continued existence.

Recruitment is everyone's responsibility. We do our best at events, but it doesn't stop there. Most people join a reenactment group because they like the time period and want to be with their friends.

### We Need You

Please think about what YOU can do to help us get members.

Our focus has been in three areas; the military (our main focus); civilian and Celts. This offers the opportunity to offer a more complete representation of Roman culture and those that were subject to Rome's influence. This provides a lot of flexibility for involvement on a number of levels.

The military is the most expensive; the civilian is less expensive, allowing for impressions of merchants, craftsmen, artisans; Celts (a generic name for barbarians) is a bit more expensive because of weapons, but the cost is much less than Roman Legionary impression. The Celt also allows for allied (friendly auxiliaries) or combatants. Uniting these impressions is a real challenge, but doable if members of the unit are willing to assist, or recruit individuals willing to do it.

We all have busy schedules and commitments that may impact our time but think about time that you might be able to make to help our unit. We need people that can step forward and start developing leadership roles.

Best regards,

**GAIUS VORENIUS**

Prefect

COHORS IIII

CENTURIA CASSIUS MARTIALIS



# Ramblings from Atop the Soapbox...

by **D.M VARIANvs**

*Signifer Legio IX*

**T**his has again been awhile between publications due to various craptastic things happening (Covid, work, life, other's apathy) – Go ahead, dock my pay.



In this fine issue, you'll find some information on our camp set-up at events. Prefect Gaius Vorenus put his heart into this – it actually coming from a 72 page doc he wrote on the subject.

## Footwear

I have an article on footwear – including how to make your farby “Eeendeeyun” caligae much better looking and much less painful to wear. While the ones Marcus ordered from Daniyal Steel Crafts need very little work to be good, other than fitting, others, like Deepeka and the common internet vendors from the sub-continent DO need work. Reenactors buy what they see other reenactors wearing – not doing much research. While the article I have is not perfect, it can lead you to a beginning understanding of what they should be.

## Stuff for the future and some thoughts

Next issue, I'd like to discuss belts and daggers. Reenactors always want to look like an “old salt” right from the git-go. They buy what they think will make them look that way, not understanding it's kind of a process. Better to just have a plain belt until you can get the right thing.

In our email group, I had posted a link to a website that not only shows reproductions they've made, but also they have added really good photos of

the real artifacts (belt plates, buckles, bulla... just tons of stuff), allowing one to see just what they should look like. For example, Deepeka and the other companies from India (and even makers here in Amurica) cast the concentric ring plates, often almost ¼” thick, thus making the belt feel like a diver's weight belt. Almost all of those plates were originally stamped out of sheet-like metal – brass or silver. If you'd like to see this website, go here: <http://legio-iiii-scythica.com/index.php/en/> and look in their reconstruction links. Lots of things to see. Sometimes just knowing what the real thing looked like is a big help.

## Medicvs

Our Medicvs, **Pvblivs Cornelivs Magnvs** has been working hard upon his promised article on Roman medical herbs – give it a look please.

## Events

Sure would be nice to do more than a couple of public events – even if I can't breathe (stay tuned for info on that)... We had talked about renting Ft. Loudon. Be nice to find Celts...

*Ad terminus, est victoriam!*

**D. M. VARIANUS**



## Roman Holidays in this Month:

**T**he 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.

- **4-17. Plebian games in honor of Jupiter. The 13th was the great festival day and highpoint of the games.**



## 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.



# Layout for a Century Camp

by Gaius Vorenus

*Prefect Legio IX*

**L**egio IX has its camp laid out according to the model described by Hygenus, who wrote sometime in the last half of the second century, between the reigns of Trajan and Septimius Severus. Hyginus, is important because, after Polybius and a few brief paragraphs in Josephus, he is the only source who attempts to provide a comprehensive description of the Roman army march camp.

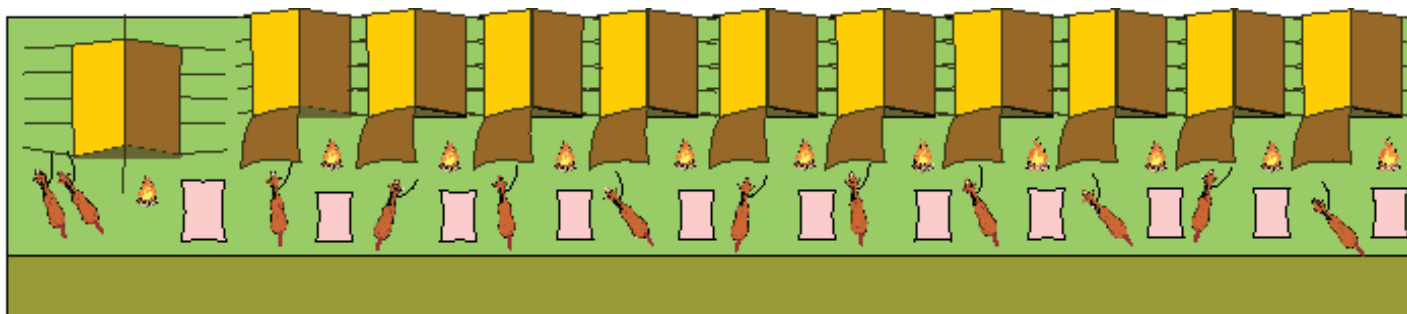
In our description, the word "CENTURY" refers to a Roman military unit composed of 80 men. Our setup shows a small sample of how tents would be arranged as part of a larger encampment.

*Plena centuria habet milites LXXX; erunt papiliones X,  
qui occurrunt in longitudine pedum CXX.*

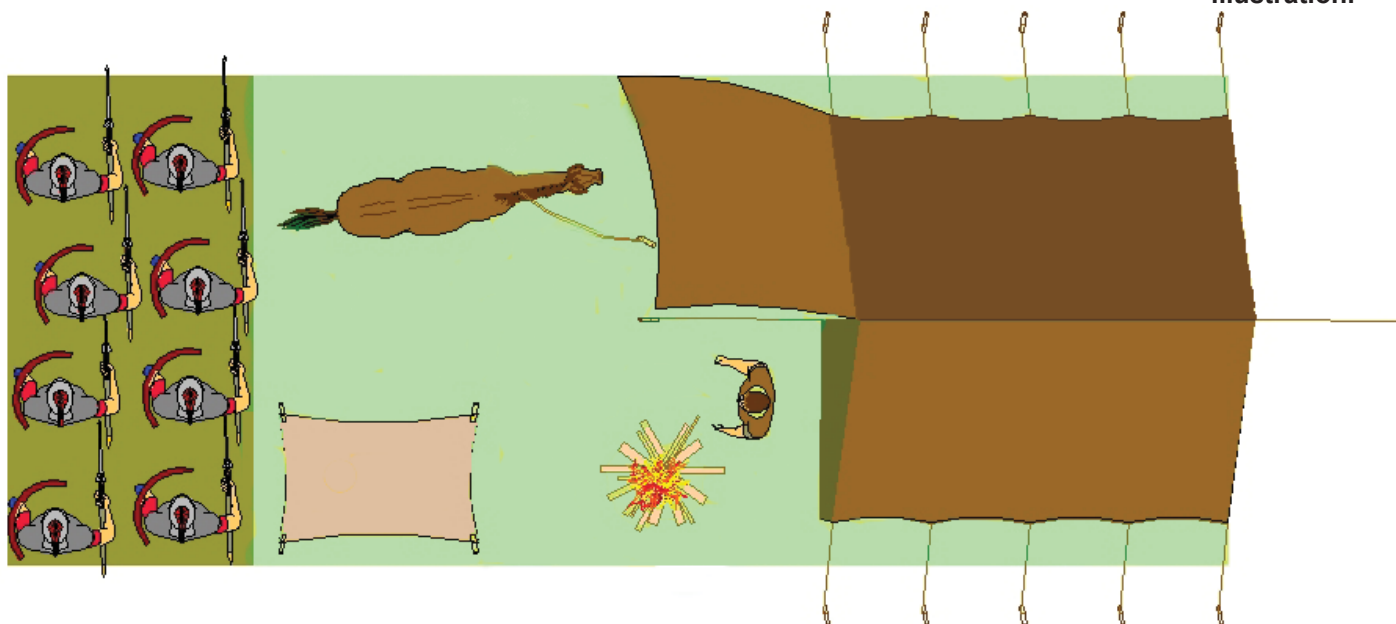
Loosely translated: "There are 80 men in the century, 10 tents that take up 120 feet in length."

## The Century's Space

The centurion is allocated double the space of the contubernium. His tent, though illustrated at the same size as the others, has higher side walls, requiring longer guy ropes on either side. He would have been assigned two mules, which would have



Our camp layout demonstrates part of one row of tents with a centurion tent on the end, as shown in the illustration.

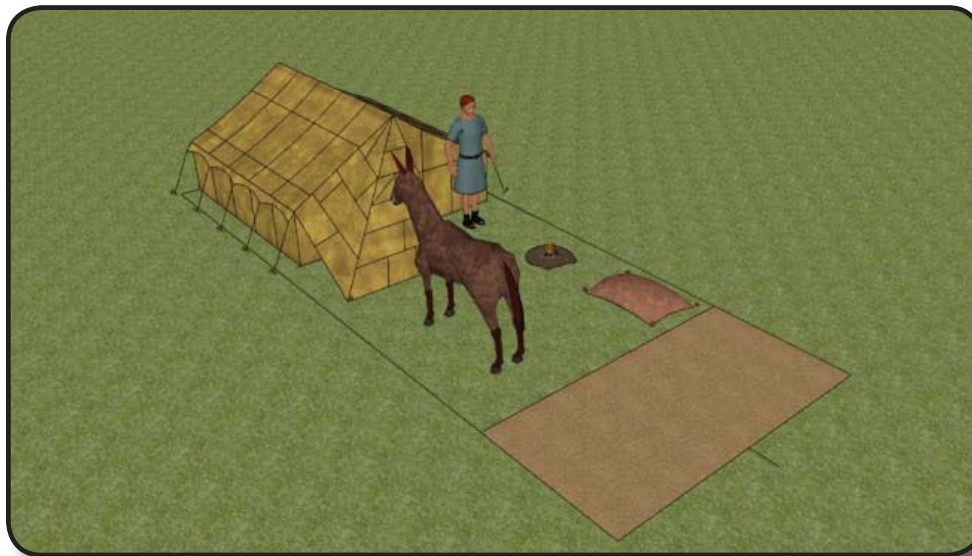
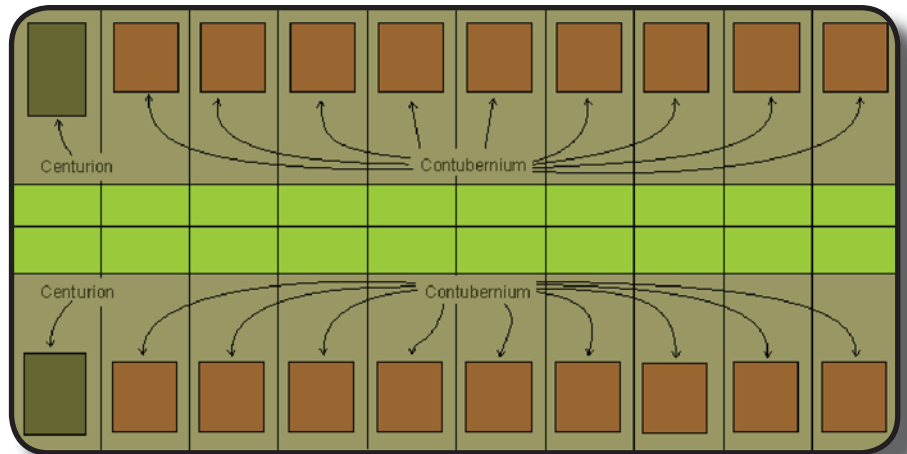




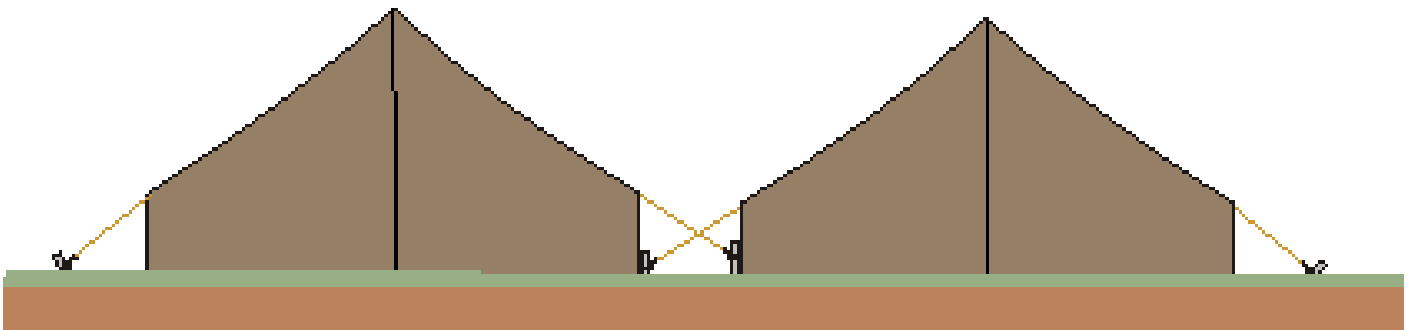


been kept elsewhere, and a correspondingly larger amount of personal possessions stored under tarp. Notice the crossed guy wires between the tents. This was done to conserve space and to impede any attackers who breached the camp's defenses.

Centuries were arranged with their tents back to back and with a street between facing tents. Putting two centuries together in the illustration below begins to give you an idea of what the Roman camp would have been like. In the area represented below some 162 men and 22 mules would have camped.



The illustration above shows two centuries facing each other. The centurion's tents are on the end and colored olive green. The 12 pedes (12 Roman feet) of open space for moving around is shown as lime green and forms an avenue between rows. This is important for considering how troops moved around inside the camp.



**\*NOTE:** The crossing of the ropes between the tents, is described by Hyginus. Therefore, we have setup our encampment following this description in the interest of historical accuracy

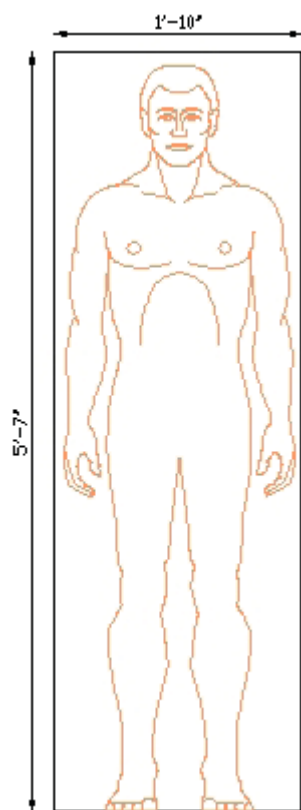
The reason ropes were crossed in this manner, according to Hyginus, were for efficient use of space **and** TO improve and aid in defense of the camp. The idea was that any attackers, especially at night, who got through the camps outer defenses would be impeded because tripping over the ropes as they ran through the camp. Agrippa, a commander of Legio IX, writes of a night attack by the Picts (in Scotland) against their vexillation camp, which gave time for the Roman defenders to organize a counterattack to defeat the enemy.



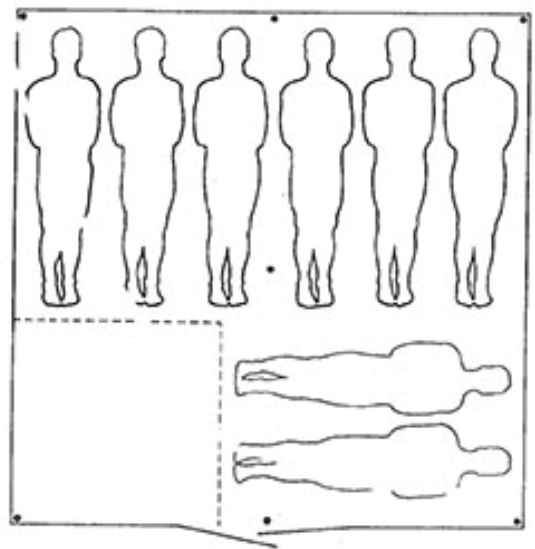
## The Layout for Each Tent

The basic Roman Army unit was the **contubernium**, a group of tentmates. According to the evidence the number of men per tent was **8**.

The figure below, shows the "average" Roman soldier used in the illustrations. He stands just under 5'7" tall. His sleeping space is 1'7" wide and 5'7" long. Eight of these sleeping spaces can be arranged inside a ten foot Roman tent (ten **pedes**, Roman feet = 9'7").



The diagram on the right shows sleeping arrangements for all 8 men. The open space in the corner could have been used for personal possessions. But these and other baggage may have been kept outside the tent with the bulky weapons and armor in the 5 pedes area in front of the tent that was allotted for this. This equipment may have been protected by some type of a lean-to shelter.

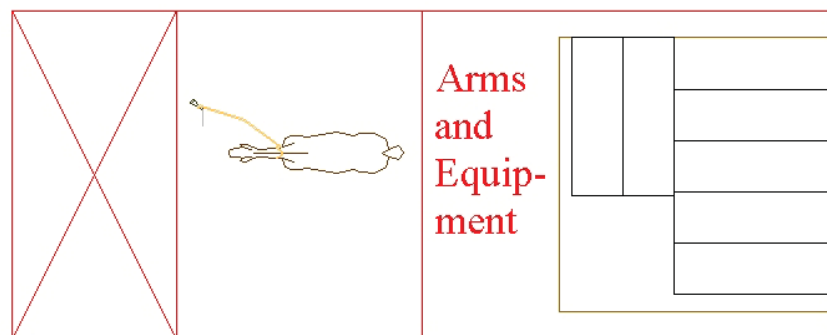


Each 8-man contubernium would have one servant who would handle the pack mule. It seems most likely that the century's mule and servant would stay with the contubernium. The mule would be staked outside the tent. If, indeed, a lean-to was used to protect the company's baggage, then it is also possible that the servant slept in the lean-to, not only to conserve space in the tent, but also to act as a guard over the unit's possessions.

## The Contubernium's Space

The Hyginus plan allows each **contubernium** a space of 30 **pedes** by 12 **pedes**. The space with the tent, mule and lean-to are shown in the illustration here to the right.

30 pedes (Roman feet)



12 pedes



Above left, the remains or original Roman tent stakes (pegs) and above right, a modern reproduction.

## Setting up Our Camp

Our future plan is to make a rope with coloured marks on it that will be staked on the front line of the tents. The differing colours will denote where the poles go, where the edges of each tent will be and where the stakes will be. This will allow the unit to set up our camp by most members, instead of having to have certain key members in attendance.

## Is this Right?

Did the Romans do it this way? We don't know, but our belief is that they had to have something similar. They set up their camps all the time and quickly, with military precision. In

our case, we don't do it every day, nor even every month, so we need a guide in how to do this. Our desire is for us to have an overhead plan, showing how it will look when set up.

## The Trucker's Hitch

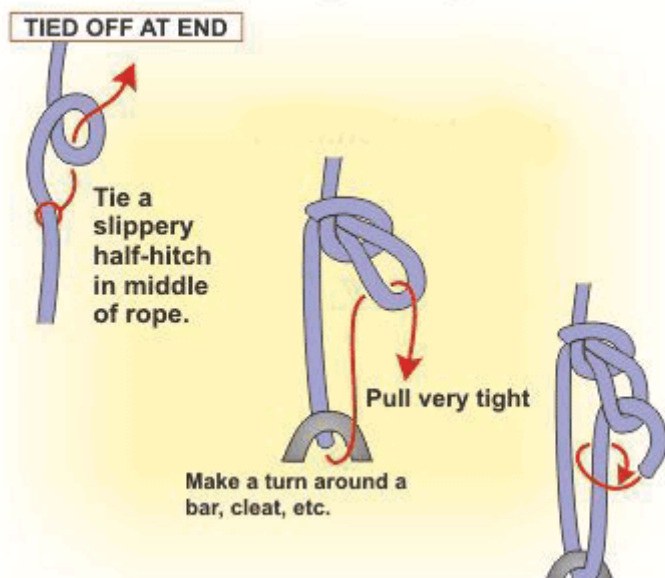
This is the knot that we use to tie down and secure our tents. The Trucker's knot allows a line (such as our tent guy ropes) to be pulled tight and will also then keep it tight.

When used properly, use of this knot will allow us to get our tents set -up in a secure and neat way.

No, we don't know exactly what they used then, but it had to be something like this knot.

Tie off one end of rope. Lay rope over load to be tied down. Tie a slippery half hitch in the middle of the line to form a small loop. With free end make a turn around a fitting and bring the free end back up to the loop in the line. Feed through and pull line very tight. Secure the knot with the tension in the line with one or two half hitches (overhand knots) tied snug to the loop.

Finish with one or two half hitches (overhand knots).







The inner sole is usually one layer of leather, sometimes two, used to protect the foot from the ends of the hobnails.

However, as with all things Roman, the design of the caligae was meant to be functional in many ways.

The openness of the caligae enabled the soldier to wear them all day, to work, march, or stand in them for long



## Roman soldier's footwear

**T**he heavy sandals known as *caliga* (pl. *caligae*) are the classic Roman army boot. Numerous examples have been found at first-century sites. When most people think of the Roman Army, they think of them wearing caligae. Also worn, were *calcei* (pl. of *calceus*) a more enclosed type of boot worn in colder climates such as Britain or Germany.

### Caligae

When first looking upon the Caligae, it is difficult to see how such a flimsy piece of footwear could have been so beneficial to the Roman soldier. It does not offer much in the way of protection and does not give the impression of being very sturdy when going over rough terrain.

Caligae are comprised of three elements: the upper, the outer sole, and the inner sole. The upper is one piece. The outer sole might be made of one, two or three layers of leather and this depends upon your preferences.



Original caliga — notice how thin the straps are  
(photo courtesy of [www.ledermuseum.de](http://www.ledermuseum.de))





nearest river to cool them off, washing away the aches of the day. He was then refreshed and ready to continue.

The underside of the caligae were fitted with studs (hobnails) that the soldier had to buy himself, they were not supplied by the army. Not only would they protect his feet over rough ground, but these "studs" also provide traction on soft ground and slow the effects of wear and tear on the leather soles of the caligae. Another thing, the studs also enabled him to use them in battle to stamp on fallen enemy warriors as his unit advanced into the opponent hordes. This was effective as the Roman unit was at least ten rows deep, so any fallen enemy would probably have been severely injured, or dead, soon after falling in front of the Roman advance.

### Calceus/Calcei (pl.)

By the late 1st century the army began to transition into an enclosed boot called calcei. They offered more



protection and warmth than the caligae. They quickly became a staple in both Roman military and civilian dress. Calcei that enclosed the whole foot, as distinguished from sandals, or caligae were much better in the wet and colder British climate. These calcei are generally considered to be a center seamed or laced shoes with the separate inner and outer soles.

## Boots

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This GREAT article on calcei is from the ***The Roman Recruit website*** and used with the kind permission of the author, **Paul Elliott**. Please visit **Roman Recruit** and give it a look!

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**I**n armies throughout the ages, the marching boot has been a prized possession. Weapons will only be needed in times of war, but the boot is needed every single day. Command sends the soldier into awful terrain on a regular basis, for long periods of time, often to cover very large distances. Earlier legionaries wore the caligae, open sandal-like boots that had thick soles held together with hobnails. From the late 1st century onwards the army began to equip itself with calcei, an enclosed boot more often used by civilian



**Boots made by Paul Elliott, they lasted three years and were used on two cross-country marches before coming apart! They are greatly missed!**

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workers. This transition may reflect the fact that more recruits were coming from the northern frontiers, where enclosed boots are of great benefit, or it might reflect changes in the supply system, with legions turning to civilian sources for their footwear. Whatever the reason, calcei were ubiquitous in the British provinces. At Vindolanda the wet conditions have preserved many examples of Roman footwear, civilian and military, adult and child. A great proportion (of all types) have hobnails hammered into the soles, a technique which binds the thick soles strongly together, which reduces wear and tear, and which gives an excellent grip akin to wearing modern football boots!

Each calcei was made up of three major parts, an insole and an outer sole as well as one large upper. The flexible leather upper was curved around and then whip-stitched to the insole. After this, the outer sole was placed onto the bottom of the boot and hobnails were then hammered into the outer sole and bent over to bind the three pieces of leather together. Individual calcei have been found that are held together with more than a hundred hobnails! The upper part of each boot is brought together and stitched up the front and again up the heel. There are other stages, too, such as building up a heel with extra layers of leather between the soles (no Roman boot has an exterior heel), and inserting internal toe and heel strengtheners.



Wearing Roman marching boots day after day in rough terrain made the author aware of some problems. Hobnails can come out, a situation which often occurs when negotiating rocks and boulders. Waterlogged



leather is weak. When wet boots are caked in mud the extra weight on the bottom of the boot can create tears in the leather upper.

### A Danger

Less of a problem when travelling across country is the effect that hobnailed boots have on smooth paved surfaces. The Roman marching boot is lethal on smooth surfaces, slipping easily and landing the over-burdened legionary on his back! This might seem amusing, but history suggests that more than one Roman foot-soldier has been killed by his boots. The Jewish chronicler Josephus, writing about the Roman siege of Jerusalem in AD 70, recounted the death of a centurion called Julianus, who had seen his soldiers putting up a poor defence, and who had sprung forward to charge into the mass of Jewish rebels single-handed. He killed many and chased the rest to a corner of the inner court of the Temple. There was a reason that Roman roads were surfaced with gravel and not flagstones, for:

*"...he was wearing the ordinary military boots studded with masses of sharp nails, and as he ran across the pavement he slipped and fell flat on his back, his armour clanging so loudly that the runaways turned to look. His men were too*



*terrified to go to the rescue, and so: "the Jews crowded round him and aimed blows from all directions with their spears and swords ... Even then as he lay he stabbed many with his sword;...but at last, when all his limbs were slashed and no one dared come to his aid, he ceased to struggle."*

## Footcare

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by Decimvs Mercativs Varianus

*Legio IX Hispana*

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**F**irst, if your feet hurt, are cold or you get blisters, you're not gonna be having fun! And you won't really be able to participate with the unit either. In this little article, I will cover some things you can do to keep your feet happy and healthy.

### Be Gellin'

Yeah, Dr. Scholl's shoe inserts are farby... **SO WHAT!** Use them! Especially in our caligae which don't flex – you need some padding in these things, as there is no give at all. In some things like health issues (and foot care certainly IS that), authenticity sometimes needs to take a back seat to health. And anyway, no one can see inside your boots, so it's a moot point – go get some of the gel inserts and put them in your caligae! The Dr. Scholl's machine at Wal-Mart, the one where you stand on – it's great!

### Moleskin

Before you put anything on your feet though, you need to get some "moleskin." Moleskin is kind of like a padded, fuzzy stick-on tape that protects sensitive areas of your feet – it comes in thin and thick types, but I've never found a need for the thick stuff. Moleskin comes in squares that you can cut to size, allowing you to fit just the areas you need to protect (such as the heel or toes) from rubbing and getting blisters. To

figure out where to put the moleskin, put your boots on and just walk around your yard a bit – you'll quickly know where you need to apply the moleskin. Note: Make sure to smooth out **ANY** wrinkles when applying the moleskin.

### Socks and Sock Liners

Often, you'll hear someone tell you to wear two pair of socks to protect your feet – that advice is okay, but it's also not the best with caligae. And please, don't wear cotton socks underneath your wool socks – they get all wet when your feet sweat and this is bad! What do I recommend? First off, don't be cheap, go to REI or a good hiking store and buy some good, padded hiking socks in a neutral colour like grey (ca. \$15) and... (this is important) buy a pair of polypropylene "sock liners" (ca. \$6) to wick away moisture from your feet. I just found out that amazon.com sells this stuff, so I made a page where you can buy them easily, if you so desire <[www.reenactor.net/store/socks.html](http://www.reenactor.net/store/socks.html)>. Either way, get these items, as they will protect your feet and thus heighten your enjoyment of the hobby.

### Put It Together

First the moleskin, cut it to size and apply it, making sure to get all the lumps and wrinkles out. Then, the sock liners, leaving a little room in the toes (you did trim your toenails right?!), so as not to have tight spots when you put the socks on over the liners. Make sure there are no wrinkles. Now, put on your socks, careful not to pull them too tight on the toes – if they are, yank on the toe area until there's room for your little piggies to move freely. Once AGAIN, ensure there are no wrinkles.

These steps will help to ensure that your feet are happy, and happy feet mean you'll be happier!





# WARMER THAN SOCKS

*An alternative to Udones.*

by Dave Stone

**S**oldiers throughout history frequently used footwraps, instead of socks. Many of you have heard of footwraps, but don't know exactly what they are or how they are worn, or even what they can do for you. I hope to impart some information on footwraps to you in this article.

## What they are

Footwraps are simple square or rectangular pieces of soft, flannel-like wool or wool-blend cloth that are wrapped around the feet. They may be worn over socks, or less often, by themselves.

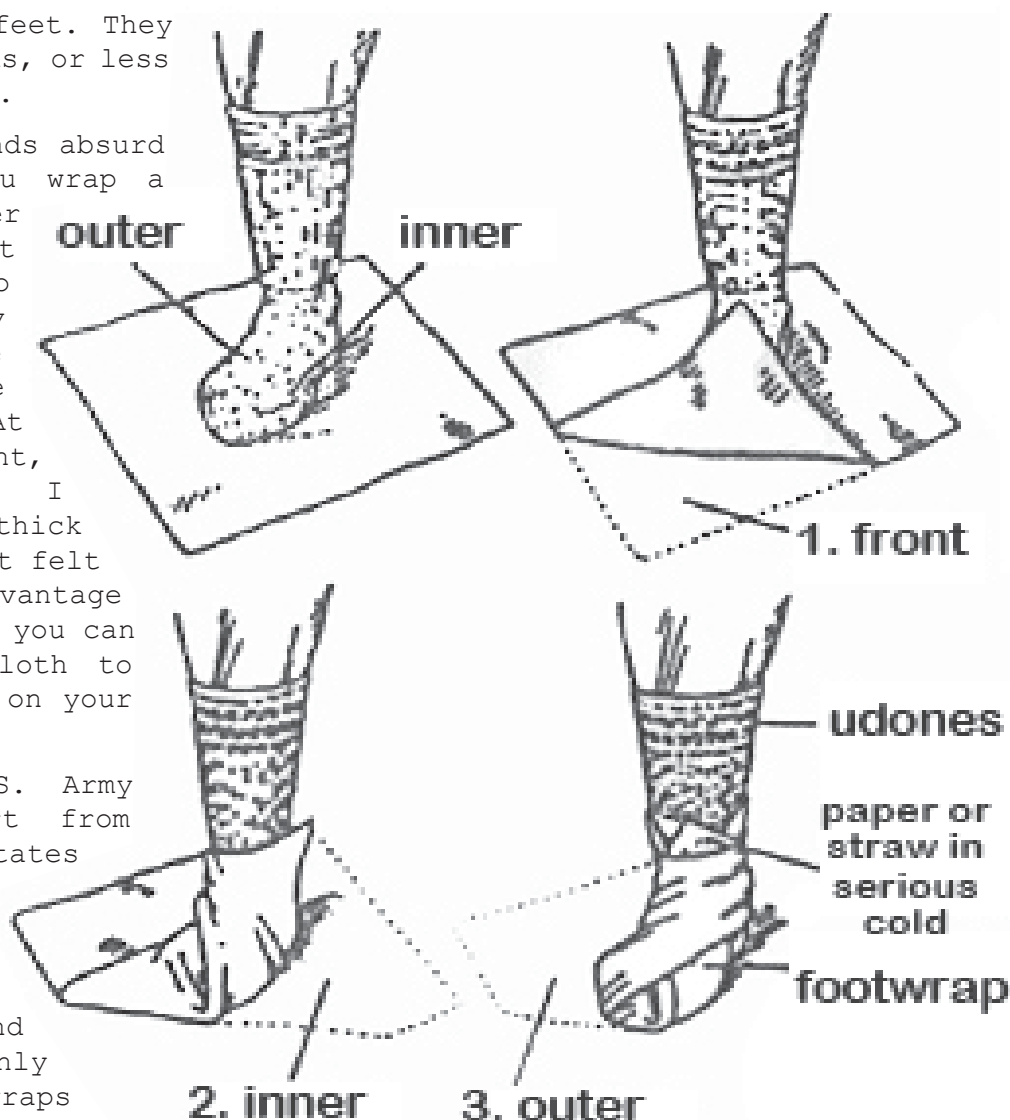
Now I know it sounds absurd to suggest that you wrap a scrap of cloth over your socks, but not only are they easy to make, they're easy to wear, are quite comfortable, and are also quite warm. At my last Roman event, inside my caligae, I wore only a pair of thick footwraps and my feet felt wonderful! Another advantage of footwraps is that you can arrange folds of cloth to protect a sore spot on your ankle or heel.

**Another note:** U.S. Army Quartermaster report from WWII (oh, icky) states that among German prisoners, men who wore footwraps in leather boots seldom had trench foot, and that men who wore only shoes and footwraps

seemed to be able to keep their feet warm and dry in any weather.

You can make your footwraps out of any sort of fine flannel material; just cut out two squares about 16-18" square. You need not hem the edges, just let them fray out a little.

To wear the footwraps, rotate the square into a diamond and place your foot on it so that your instep is along





a centerline from top to bottom (**fig. 1**). Your foot isn't exactly in the middle, but a little off to one side. Now, fold up the front (**fig. 2**), then the inside (**fig. 3**), then the outside (**fig. 4**). Now, hold the folded part in place, and stuff your foot into your caligae. Unlike socks, footwraps won't bunch up around your toes, and they don't seem to creep around on you at all.

Armed with this info, you can now be authentic where no one can see you! Have fun, and if you can't make the footwraps work, ask me for help!



# Some thoughts on Repro Caligae: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.

by D. Mercativs Varianvs  
*Signifer, Legio IX HSPA*

**W**e've all seen the really ugly caligae – Hell, we've owned them :-o This short article will hopefully show you a path to alter your ugly caligae into something that is much more like the real thing was. Will it be hard? No! But... you will have to do some cutting and fitting.

## Tools

- An Exacto knife. With some spare blades
- Leather tools
- a good pencil and maybe a pen
- some patterns (we'll have some here)
- Photos to look at
- Leather dye
- Neatsfoot oil
- No fear

What we want to do, is first look at photos of the real thing, both from museums and statuary. Then a couple good repros so that you can recognize what needs to be changed and corrected on your caligae.

Really look at the original straps... they are much sleeker and not so fat and blodgy. The edges are curved, not sharply cut with hard angles. What this does is help prevent the leather from tearing at these sharp edges – much like you drill a crack in metal to stop it continuing.



X-Acto Knife



X-Acto carving set

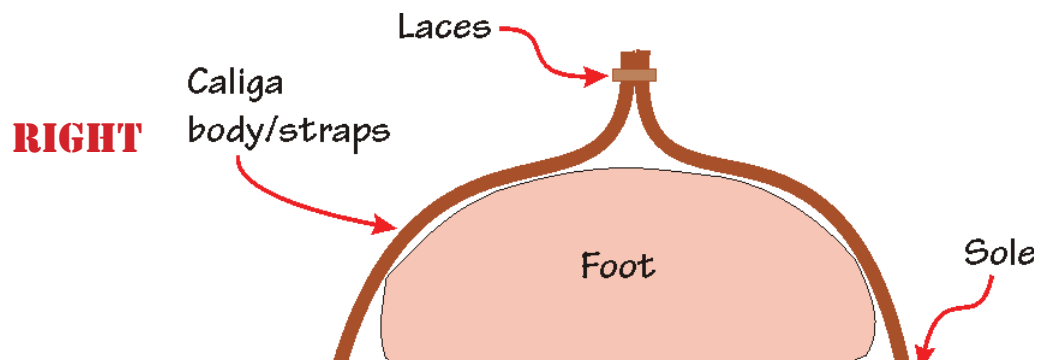


More leather carving tools to make smooth corners

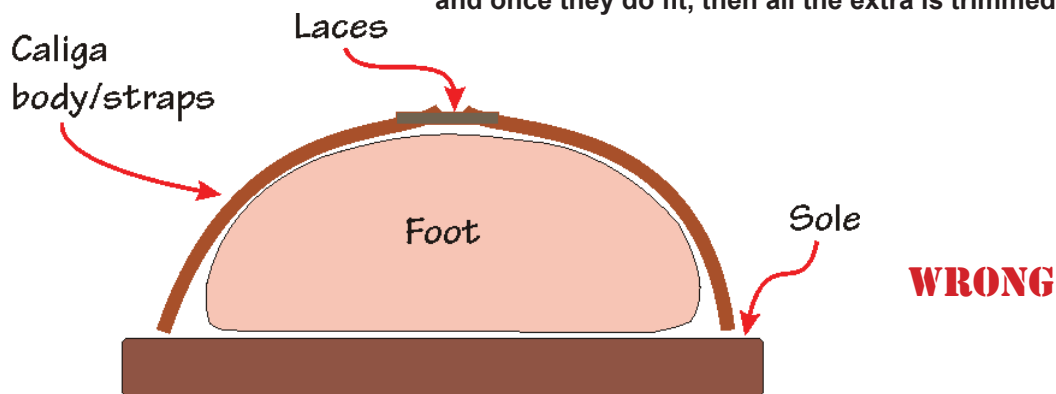




A really hideous pair of repro caligae with mishapen and fat, un-trimmed straps. Yuck. This is the true sign of a new, boot-recruit — a true greenbeak. This can be fixed though — don't be scared. You don't want to look like this! Hasten forward there, bold X-Acto knife.



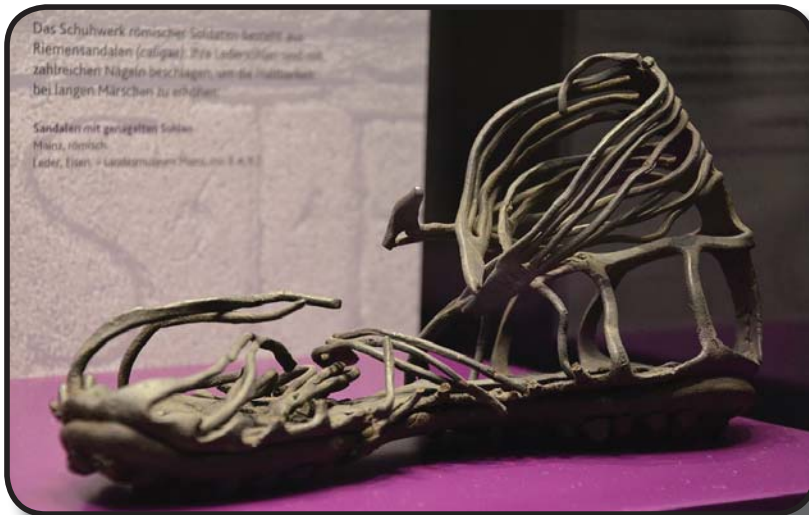
How the straps should fit your foot. The straps are flat against each other, and once they do fit, then all the extra is trimmed off and the open areas, well, opened up.



This is the **WRONG** way for your caligae to fit your foot. The straps need to fit flat against each other — not end to end.



Right: a good pair of repro caligae. Notice the thinner straps and more open areas. The tabs at the top are still too big and clumsy though.



Left and below: Original, surviving caligae. Thin straps and lots of open area. Yes Poindexter, some of that is because of shrinkage, but not most of it.

Look at the top of the straps, where the laces go... see how they are rounded out? That's so that they will not rip when you







Above: In this photo of a caliga made by German craftsman, Martin Moser, you can see how the laces should be and how the tops of the flaps are trimmed. **THIS**, is how your caligae should look.

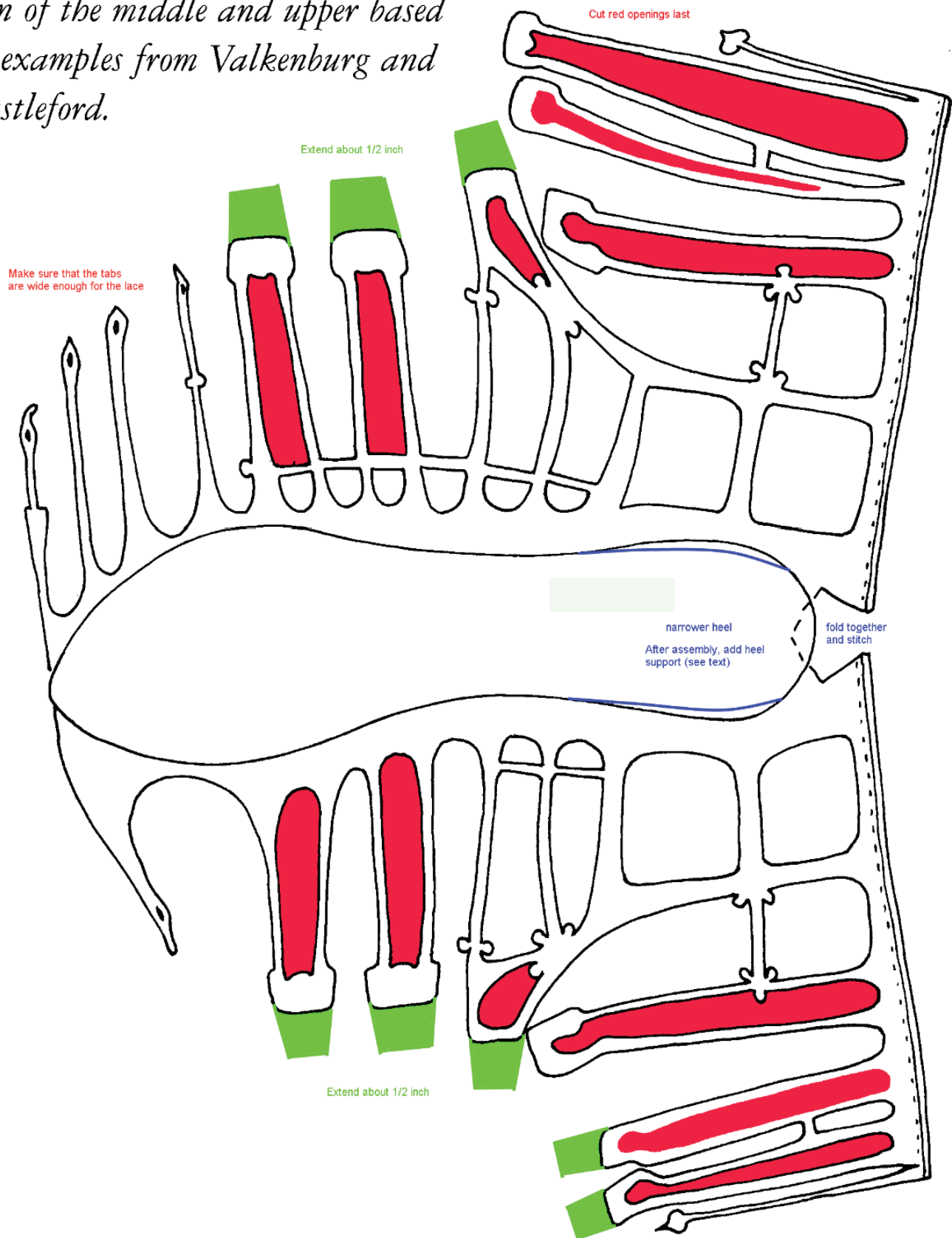


right: Laced right, but... the caligae are too small. Notice the gaps where the flaps don't quite come together — hurts your feet.



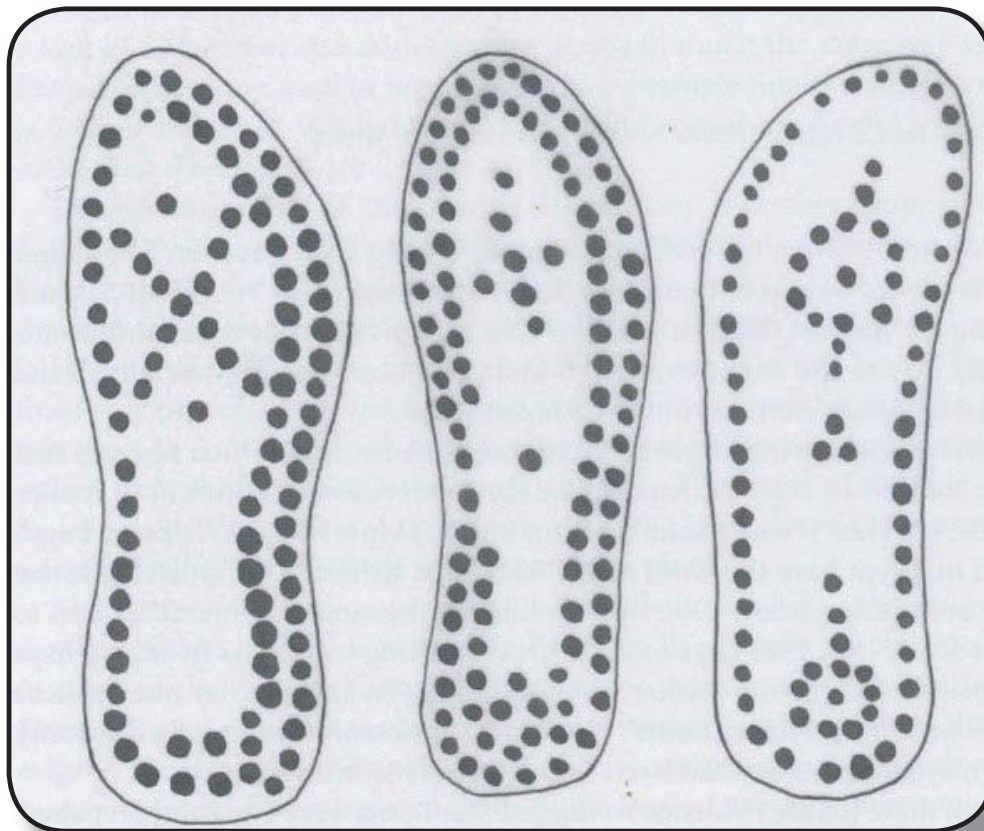


*Reconstructed cutting pattern of the middle and upper based on examples from Valkenburg and Castleford.*





On the left above are a couple of real, worn hobnails and new repros on the right. Below are some crusty, dug-up originals.



Nailing patterns from boots discovered at Vindolandia, dating from the first century.



# Medicinal Herbs: (On Roman Military Medicine)

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found and put together by **Publvs Cornelivs Magnus**  
*Medicvs, Leg. IX HSPA*

By **Andrew**, from the **Red Rampant Website**  
(Edited, added to and pix added)

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**Garlic** (*Allium Sativum*) – Galen wrote of Garlic as a cure-all. This herb is antibacterial, antiviral, antiparasitic and antifungal.



As in Greece, the Romans perceived garlic as an aid to strength and endurance; it was fed to both soldiers and sailors and was part of a ship's manifest when it set out to sea. With the emergence of Rome as a leading power, Greek medicine and its traditions gradually were transferred to Rome. The leading medical authority was the Greek, Dioscorides, who served as the chief physician for Nero's army.

Clearly, the concept that cardiovascular status may be improved by garlic, presently a subject of active research, has origins in antiquity. Garlic was also recommended for disorders of the gastrointestinal tract, for treatment of animal bites and for alleviation of joint disease and seizures.

**L**isted in this article, are some of herbs that are likely to have been used on the infirm Roman Citizen, soldier or slave. Note: the Latin names listed for these herbs are modern scientific names, not those used by the Romans themselves.

[The photos were added to give the viewer a better understanding of what is being discussed. As they say, a photo is worth a thousand words (or in this case, a piece of art. ~DMV)]



**Yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*) – Homer's *Iliad* has a scene where Achilles treats the wounds of his friend with Yarrow. This well-read story would have ensured this treatment was common knowledge in the Roman world. Modern research shows that Yarrow is an astringent, is anti-inflammatory and speeds healing. (McIntyre)





**Marsh Mallow (*Althea officinalis*)** – Marsh Mallow pollen has been found at Bearsden Fort. Pliny suggested this herb can be used as an ointment or a cough syrup. Marsh Mallow's medicinal use dates back 2,000 years. Arabian doctors created a poultice from the leaves to treat inflammation. The father of medicine, Hippocrates, used Marsh Mallow to remedy bruises and blood loss. Dioscorides wrote about the beneficial properties of Marsh Mallow, while Horace praised the laxative properties of the leaves and roots. Roman doctors used Marsh Mallow for toothaches, insect bites, chilblains, and irritated skin. The Chinese, Egyptians, and Romans ate a variety of marsh mallow for food.

In the ancient times, *Althaea officinalis* was used for soothing coughs and colds along with irritated skin. This slimy plant was also eaten by the Romans and Egyptians as a vegetable on a daily basis. Most of the mallows have been used as food, and are mentioned by early classic writers with this connection. Mallow was an edible vegetable among the Romans; a dish of marsh mallow was one of their delicacies. Also, the poor in Syria ate this plant to prevent starvation. Even in the bible Marsh Mallow is mentioned as a plant used for food during times of famine. Marsh Mallow pollen has been found at Bearsden Fort. Pliny suggested this herb can be used as an ointment or a cough syrup. (Alcock).



**Calendula (*calendula officinalis* aka Marigold)** – Used as a fever reducer, marigold was grown in southern Europe. From the Roman word "calendae" meaning the first day of the month. The name is said to refer to the fact that the plant flowers throughout several months. Good for skin rashes. It was widely used as a cheap substitute for saffron which in those times was extremely expensive.

**Uva Ursi (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)** – Galen wrote that he used this herb's leaves to treat wounds and stop bleeding. (Castleman)





**Hyssop** (*Hyssopus officinalis*) – Pliny of the first century AD describes wine made from this plant; which may have been an influence Benedictine monks who brought the herb to central Europe to flavour their liqueur. During the empire the use of Hyssop was known for its cleansing action and it was regarded as a remedy for lepers. Hyssop was considered protection against the plague (McIntyre). Although it would not protect the user from deadly disease, volatile oils found in Hyssop are useful at treating the coughing associated with colds and the flu. (Castleman).



**Borage** (*Borago officinalis* L) – High in calcium and potassium, Borage leaves can be used to treat inflammation and bruises. Roman-era Borage has been found in the South Downs of England. Some believe the name may stem from the Latin word "borus" which was a rough/hairy woolen cloak worn by Roman shepherds. It was used to lower temperatures and fever caused by colds or bronchitis. Also used for rheumatisms. The Greek medic Dioscorides remarks on its use against depression and for its relaxing properties. The Romans used it particularly as a flavouring in foods and drinks, and they brought it to England where it is still widely appreciated.





**Chamomile** (*Matricaria Chamomilla* and *Anthemis nobilis*) – Pliny recommended Chamomile as a cure for headaches, kidney, liver and bladder ailments. (Castleman)



**Horehound** (*Marrubium vulgare*) – Pliny and Celsus (a 2nd century Greek writer) suggested horehound as a treatment for coughs. At the Roman fortress at Carpow (Perthshire, Scotland) an amphora was found with the Greek word for horehound (prasion) written on it. Apparently, Leg. VI was using medicated wine as cough syrup. (Alcock)

**Parsley** (*Petroselinum Crispum*) – Parsley has a long and definite ancient history as a food plant. It was well known as a flavoring and garnish by the ancient Greeks and Romans, who even used it in festive garlands. Eating it was supposed to ward off intoxication!

Many herb books state that gladiators ate this herb before a fight to promote strength, cunning and agility.

*\*Some add that the Roman soldiers did the same. However, I have yet to see any citation to confirm this story.*







**Plantain** (*Plantago major*, *minor*, *lanceolata*) – Wound healer, poison antidote and one of the most notarized herbs in history dating as far back as Alexander the Great, who used plantain to cure his headaches. Pedanius Dioscorides, who studied medicine in Egypt and was a physician in the Roman Army – he used plantain for its soothing, cooling, healing and softening properties.



Plantago major



Plantago minor



**Blackberry** (*Rubus fruticosus*) -- Galen and the Greeks saw it as useful for gout. Dysentary has always been a problem to armies and Pliny recommended drinking a decoction of blackberry leaves and bark to treat diarrhea. The Romans found that chewing a leaf could help against bleeding gums. As blackberry leaves contain high levels



of tannins – an astringent that can indeed control diarrhea and bleeding gums. And, the Romans used a tea made of the leaves and bark was used for its astringent qualities. These tannins would also be useful in treating war wounds. Ground leaves could also be used against the pain of ulcers and scars. Today, the controlling body in Germany that regulates drugs, endorses blackberry leaf as a treatment for diarrhea. (Castleman)



**Thyme** (*Thymus vulgaris*) – There was a belief in the Roman world that sleeping on thyme could cure melancholy. There are many confirmed health benefits to consuming thyme (it treats coughs and aids in digestion). Of course, sleeping on it could offer only a placebo type effect. However, it is interesting to consider its uses... As with today's soldiers, Roman troops deployed away from home for years on end could suffer from depression and while the Roman army was perhaps not very sympathetic to this problem, yet the treatment was known.

The Romans thought that eating thyme before or during a meal would cure poisons, making it especially popular among Roman emperors. Thyme was also often given to Roman soldiers upon their leaving for battle, as a sign of courage.

**Fenugreek** (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) – The cavalry would have likely made use of this herb. Fenugreek was widely used in the ancient world as a food for sick horses and cattle. Some modern veterinarians use the herb to encourage sick livestock to feed. Roman physicians prescribed fenugreek to people suffering from fevers, respiratory and intestinal troubles. Modern researchers have not found fenugreek to have any effect on fevers, but it is recognized as anti-inflammatory. (Castleman)

*Fenugreek is mentioned in Josephus' The Jewish War. The besieged Jews in Jerusalem added the plant to the scalding liquid that they poured on the Roman attackers. The plants gelatinous fibers made the scaling ladders slippery and difficult to climb*



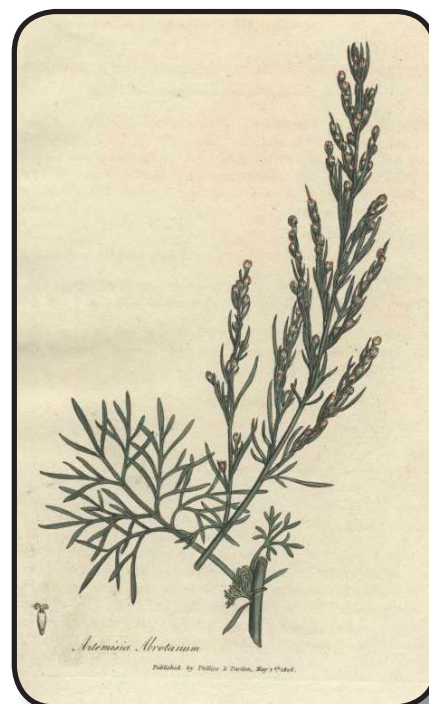


# The Use of Wine in Ancient Roman medicine

From the [mariamilani.com](http://mariamilani.com) website  
Edited, added to and pix added)

**W**ine was a frequent component of ancient Roman medicine. As is well known nowadays, alcohol is a good means of extracting the active elements from medicinal plants. Wine was the only form of alcohol known to the Romans as distillation wasn't discovered until the Middle Ages. Herbs infused in wine was a regular medicinal stratagem which would have a degree of effect given the alcohol's ability to extract the active compounds of a number of herbs. The "only" issue would be whether the infused herbs are the right ones for the particular ailment.

An example of this would be **Artemisia Abrotanum** (aka **Southernwood**, **Lover's Plant** or **Lemon Plant**) which is known to be antiseptic and repel insects such as intestinal worms. When taken with wine the Romans regarded it as an antidote for poison

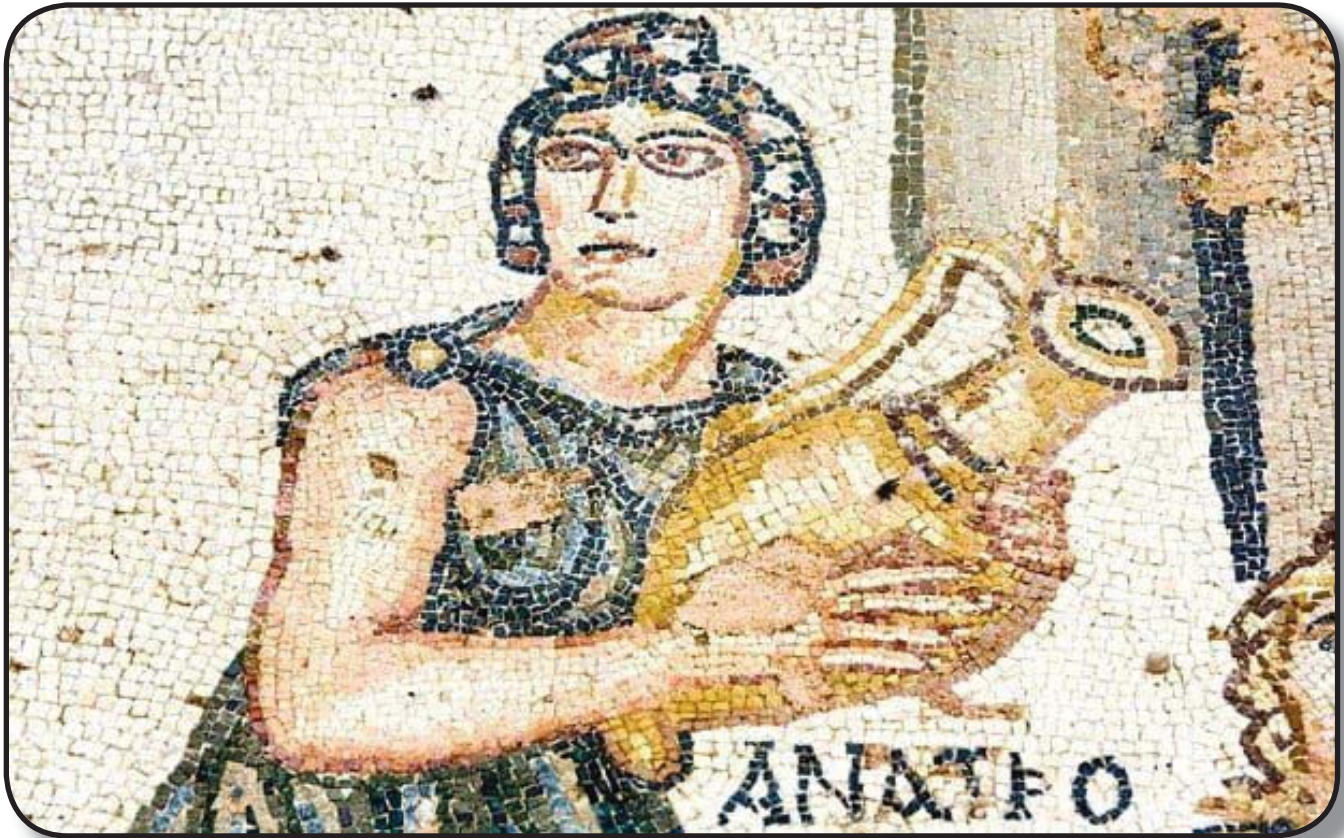


**Stinging Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*) Some herb books include an intriguing story in the history of the herb. They often state that nettles were first brought to Britain by Julius Caesar's invading army.

The plant's stinging needles were supposedly used by the Roman troops in cold climates to create a warming sensation on the skin.

Although Pliny does mention nettles as a food source and we know that stinging nettles have been used as a food source since the bronze age. Neither its use as a skin-warmer, nor its arrival in Britain are discussed in classic texts. The story was written by an English scholar of Elizabethan times, William Camden, and is apparently purely conjectural.





*"no one unskilled dares give  
Lad's Love to the sick."  
(Horace Epistles BkII EpI:90-117)*

Whether or not Lemon Plant's powers extend that far is questionable, perhaps it depends on the manner of preparation.

As an example of how the wine would be used in such a manner we show below a typical recipe for a laxative (from Apicius' cookery book...):

*"Rose (or violet) Wine-Rosatum:  
Rose petals, the lower white  
part removed, are sewn into a  
linen bag and immersed in wine  
for seven days. After which,  
add a bag of new petals which  
allow to draw for another sev-  
en days. Again remove the old  
petals and replace them with  
fresh ones for another week  
then strain the wine through  
the colander. Before serving,  
add honey sweetening to taste.  
Take care that only the best  
petals free from dew be used  
for soaking."*

Another interesting and curious mention of wine as a cure is made by Plutarch regarding Mark Antony's failed campaign against the Parthians: the soldiers stranded in the desert resorted to eating some local plants which drove them mad and then killed them. Wine, supposedly the only remedy against such a poisoning was not available to them.



# Guidelines for Submission of Material to Ad Signum

**W**e 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 prepress production of **Ad Signum** is done by Decimvs and Josephus, 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 proof galley 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 app you use on your phone.
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.

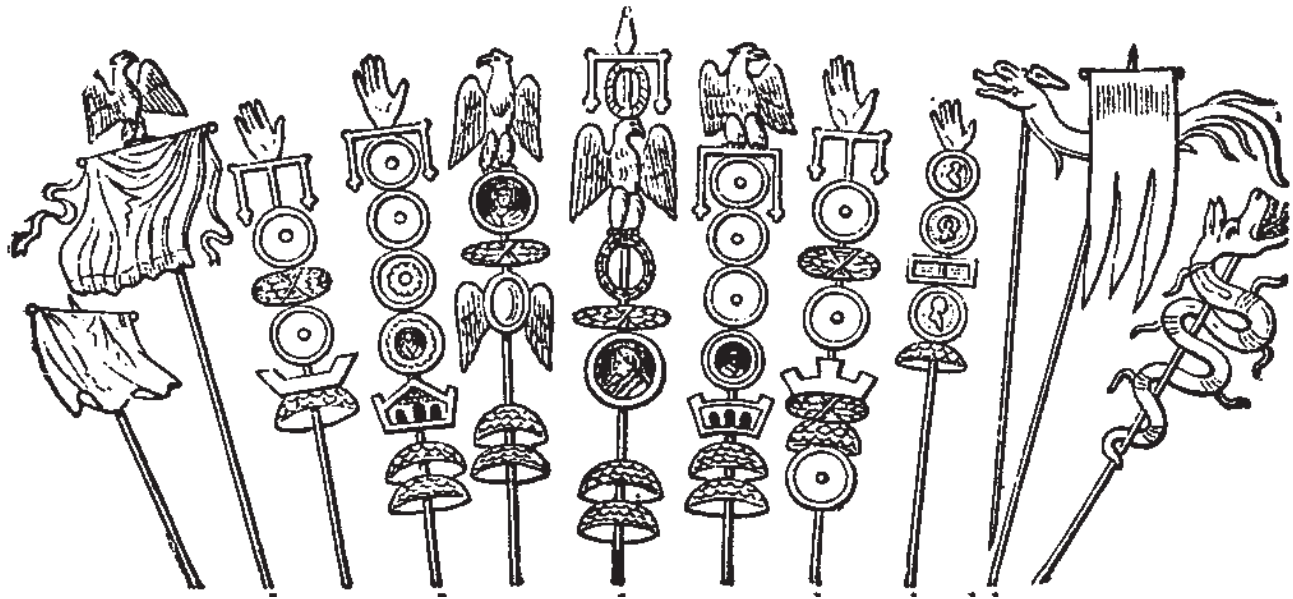
## Photographs

Preferably something scanned and/or from a digital camera (or where you stole it on the 'Net). 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 or peeling fava beans next week.



## Upcoming Events

- April xx-xx. 2023: **Private Event:** Ft. Loudon Pa
- September 2-3, 2023: **Virginia Scottish Games:** Great Meadow, The Plains, Va
- *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 (but rarely is). Please submit any articles you'd like published to the editor, Marsh Wise at dmvlegix@gmail.com (sorry, electronic format only), as text file or M.S. Word document or really, most electronic format.

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