

A MILITARY OBJECT FROM LONDON IN THE PITT-RIVERS COLLECTION IN THE SALISBURY MUSEUM

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In going through the metal artifacts of Roman date in the Salisbury Museum¹³ a remarkably fine military apron terminal was noticed in the Pitt-Rivers Collection recently acquired by the Museum. The label attached to it states that it comes from 'Excavations in the City of London' (Acc. No. 3M 6A 27). Although this object does not have an attractive appearance, probably through being retrieved from a burnt deposit, it has an unusual feature, apart from its quality, in that the domed stud is still attached, whereas in many cases this has become detached and

lost. Complete mounts are rare and of one from Richborough where the stud is still in position, only half survives². An apron terminal comes from Verulamium where the stud has become detached³, thinner and inferior examples are common from Aislingen⁴, Rheingönheim⁵ etc. The London example is of finer quality than the usual thin strip types with their rather perfunctory niello decoration. All the other pieces have the usual silvered finish but on the one under discussion there are traces of gilt on the stud. Better quality of equipment does not necessarily signify a difference in units since it is evident from the decorated dagger scabbards⁶ that men were able to improve the quality of their equipment and even add decorative studs and mounts⁷.

The Pitt-Rivers object is yet another to add to the growing collection of military equipment of the Claudian period found in London⁸ and which would appear to support the suggestion that there was a fort on the N. bank of the Thames.

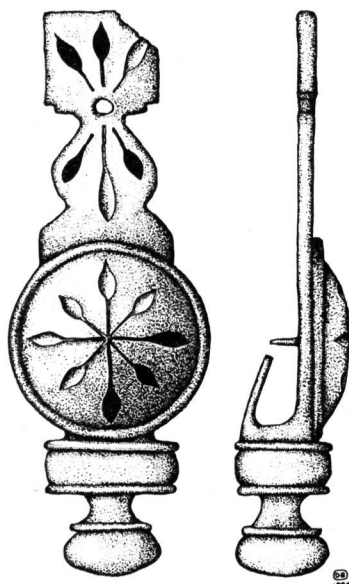


Fig. 1 A Roman military object from London
(I/I).

NOTES

- 1 I am most grateful to the Curator P. R. Saunders and the Archaeological Assistant, Mrs Conybeare for allowing me access to the material, and for their kind help in sorting it.
- 2 Richborough, V. 1968, B. W. Cunliffe, ed. Rep. of Soc. of Antiqs. No. 23, Pl. XXXVII, No. 126.
- 3 Sheppard Frere, *Verulamium I*, Rep. of Soc. of Antiqs. No. 28, Fig. 23, No. 49.
- 4 G. Ulbert, *Die Römische Donau-kastelle Aislingen und Burghöfe*, *Limesforschungen* 1, 1959, Taf 18, Nos 1-3, with examples of detached studs, Taf 19, Nos 1-5.
- 5 G. Ulbert, *Das Frühromische Kastell Rheingönheim*, *Limesforschungen* 9, 1969, Taf 28, Nos 24-26.
- 6 For a list up to 1970 see G. Ulbert, 'Das römische Donau-Kastell Risstissen' *Urkunden zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte aus Südwürttemberg-Hohenzollern* Teil 1, Heft 4 (1970), 16-19; and the additional British examples and a discussion by the author, in *The Production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment* Brit. Archaeol. Repts. International Ser. 275 (1985) 214-9.

7. Tacitus informs us (*Hist.*, 57) that the soldiers on the Rhine in support of Vitellius contributed their Belts, decorations and silver ornaments from their armour (*balteos phalerasque, insignia armorum argento*) which may imply that some of the equipment was solid silver, although no examples have

been found. It seems unlikely that *phaleras* here means, as some have assumed, military awards given for acts of valour.

8. Those found up to 1969 are listed in *Arch. J.* 115 (1960), 84–6, Nos 138–159.