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The Missing Weapons at Carlisle. M.P. Speidel writes: Some time before A.D. 105, Docilis, decurion of *ala I Gallorum Sebosiana* at Carlisle, wrote an ink-tablet letter to Augurinus, the prefect of his *ala*, listing the *lanciarii* in his unit that lacked *lancea*-spears or other weapons. Roger Tomlin published Docilis' letter with a rich commentary in *Britannia* 1998:[66]

Docilis Augurino praefecto
suo salu[tem].
Ita ut praecepisti lanciar<i>or[um]
quibus lanciae deessent om-
nia nomina subiecimus, aut
qui lancias pugnatorias aut
qui minores subarmales aut
qui gladia [i]nst[i]tuta non
hab[e]bant. Turma [s]enio[r]is
Genialis: [Ve]r[e]cundus lanciam
pugnatoriam item subarmales duas
- - - (etc.)

'Docilis, to Augurinus his prefect, greetings. As you ordered, we have attached below all the names of lancers who were missing lances, either who did not have fighting lances, or who (did not have) the smaller *subarmales*, or (who did not have) regulation swords. Troop of Genialis senior: Verecundus, (one) fighting lance and two *subarmales*. (etc.)'

Tomlin's text seems sound, including that of the long, much broken list of entries here omitted. His interpretation of *lanciarii* and *subarmales*, however, calls for reconsideration.

Tomlin suggested that the term *lancearii* in line 3 refers to all the horsemen of *ala I Gallorum*,[67] replacing the usual term *equites*. Such usage, however, is unparalleled, and it is hard to see why all the horsemen of the unit should be called *lancearii* when some, almost certainly, fought as *sagittarii*-bowmen, as *contarii*-lancers, or as slingers or javelinmen. Hadrian's speeches and Arrian's *Tactica* show that most cavalry units trained with all these weapons.[68] Units could have *sagittarii* and *contarii* specialists in their ranks without referring to this fact in their titles, an example being the Pannonian *ala I Canninefatium*, whose horseman Adiutor is depicted on his gravestone from Tipasa in Mauretania as a *contarius*-lancer holding a very long *contus* with both hands, while his unit is nowhere qualified as *contariorum*.[69] It seems therefore, that Docilis' *lancearii* refer only to those men of his *ala* who fought with *lancea*-spears, which would mean that others specialised in other weapons. Alternatively, one may consider reading: *Conalar<i>or[um]*, which also seems to fit the extant traces and would make better sense.

The term *lancearii* is better not translated as 'lancers', nor *lancea* as 'lance', tempting though it may be,[70] for in English 'lance' refers to a very long thrusting spear. In Latin, on the other hand, *lancea* is

66 Tomlin 1998, 55–63, No. 16, whence *AE* 1998, 839.
67 Tomlin 1998, 60.
68 Speidel 2006, 89f.; Arrian, *Tactica* 44.2.
69 Viator: Speidel 1992, 64. For the inscriptions of *ala I Canninefatium* see Lőrincz 2001, 179–83.
70 Tomlin 1998, 58 translates 'lancer' and 'lance', but see his note 84 (p. 55).

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a horseman's regular, all-purpose weapon, used for throwing and jabbing as well as thrusting. It is the medium-length weapon seen on most cavalry gravestones.[71] *Lancea*, therefore, is best translated as 'spear', the generic word for shafted weapons, and *lancearius* as 'spearman'.[72]

Whether or not the three groups of soldiers introduced by *aut* are subgroups of the *lancearii* who missed their *lanceae*-spears, may be left open, though by listing *subarmales* between *lanceae pugnatoriae* and *gladia instituta*, Docilis' letter proves *subarmales* to be part of the fighting or training equipment of horsemen in the *alae*. However, this does not suggest that they are 'evidently' spears as Tomlin assumed, for the *gladia instituta* of the next group, regulation swords,[73] are not spears either. Nothing then stands in the way of taking *subarmales* here for garments, which is what they are elsewhere too. They are, as their name suggests, doublets, worn under a cuirass.

When in A.D. 192 Septimius Severus reached the gates of Rome, he ordered the Praetorian Guard to come out and meet him *cum subarmalibus inermes*, 'shirtsleeved and without weapons'.[74] Other passages too show *subarmalis* to be a soldier's shirt, worn underneath the cuirass.[75] To wear only a *subarmalis* (Greek: χιτών) meant not to wear a cuirass.[76] A Vindolanda writing-tablet, mentioning such a garment, shows that at the turn of the second century *subarmales* were in use among soldiers in Britain.[77]

Doublets may have been used in training. Hadrian, in his manoeuvre critique for the legionary horsemen at Lambaesis told them that by wearing cuirasses they had made their spear-throwing exercise overly hard, thereby taking away from its grace*:* 'Vos ex difficilibus difficil[limum feci]stis ut loricati iaculationem perageretis' 'Out of a hard thing you have made the very hardest, throwing spears while wearing cuirasses.'[78] Normally, therefore, horsemen did this particular spear-throwing exercise without wearing cuirasses, evidently wearing *subarmales*.

Hannsjörg Ubl has shown that doublets worn beneath cuirasses could be very large indeed.[79] The Carlisle *subarmales*, called *minores*, thus can and must be smaller doublets than those seen on marble statues for officers. With horsemen, one would expect smaller doublets anyway, and they too may have used different kinds, either for training and battle, or for summer and winter.

Docilis' letter, insofar as it is preserved, always lists two *subarmales* together, which makes sense only if both were used together. The fourth-century Anonymus, *De Rebus Bellicis* reveals that this was indeed the custom:[80]

> Hoc enim vestimenti genus, quod de coactili ad mensuram et tutelam pectoris humani conficitur, de mollibus lanis timoris sollicitudo sollertia magistra composuit, ut hoc inducto primum lorica vel clivanus aut his similia fragilitatem corporis ponderis asperitate non laederent, membra quoque vestientis inter armorum hiemisque discrimen tali solacio adiuta labori sufficiant. Sane ne idem thoracomachus pluviis verberatus ingravescente pondere adficiat vestientem, de Libycis bene confectis pellibus ad instar eiusdem thoracomachi faciem convenient superinducere.
>
> For anxious concern, the teacher of eagerness, made this kind of garment of felt to the size and for the protection of a man's chest, so that when it is put on first, the cuirass or full armour or such, will not wound the tender body with the sharpness of its weight, and the limbs of the wearer can, with the help of such comfort, withstand the onslaught of weapons and winter. However, so that this *thoracomachus* when lashed by rains does not bother the wearer with waxing weight, it should be covered with well-sown African skins shaped like the surface of this *thoracomachus*.

71 For these gravestones see Schleiermacher 1984.
72 This is true for German as well for the English language: Speidel 2004, 261, note 4.
73 cf. Vegetius 2.19.5*: milites instituti* (regular soldiers).
74 HA *Sev*. 11: 'Cum Romam Severus venisset, praetorianos cum subarmalibus inermes sibi iussit occurrere.'
75 HA *Claud*. 14.8; HA *Aurelian* 13.3; Martianus Capella, *De nupt*. 5.426.
76 cf. Arrian, *Tactica* 34.6: ἀντὶ δὲ τῶν θωράκων Κιμμερικὰ χιτώνια. Dio Cassius 75.1.2: ἐν τε τοῖς χιτῶσιν.
77 TV II, 184, cf. TV III, Appendix p. 156.
78 Speidel 2006, 37f.
79 Ubl 2006, 261–76, pl. 21.
80 Ch. 15. See e.g. Hassall and Ireland 1979, II, 14f. and pls XVI; XVII; Giardina 1998.

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Hence of the twin doublets supplied to the soldiers at Carlisle, one seems to have been soft and made of felt, the other waterproof and made of leather. The Anonymus even offers an illustration of the two garments, looking like short tunics and hung out to dry one above the other.[81] Perhaps the leather *subarmalis* fitted only its own particular felt *subarmalis* and therefore the two were always issued together. If not, an explanation for issuing each time two doublets together may be that they were the first issue of such garments to the soldiers concerned.

Docilis is known from another Carlisle tablet as a decurion, commanding a squadron in his *ala*.[82] Why should he write this particular report? Since training weapons are concerned, one may wonder whether he was the officer responsible for training the *ala*. Decurions, by and large, trained their own squadron,[83] but some officer must also have seen to the training of the unit as a whole. Since the title *decurio exercitator* is mentioned only once on an inscription,[84] there is reason to believe that an *ala*'s training-officer was usually one of its regular decurions without an extra title,[85] and this may be the case with Docilis. Perhaps he trained the *lanciarii*-spearmen of *ala I Gallorum Sebosiana* at Carlisle.

The prefect of the *ala* hardly wanted to know the names of these horsemen to punish them for losing their weapons, but rather to see that they replaced them. It was the soldiers' duty to procure their own weapons and training weapons, which is why a newly-recruited fleet soldier wrote to his father, asking him for two spears and a *gladium pugnatorium*.[86]

To the student of the Roman army, Docilis' letter stands out in showing how, in the sun, rain, and freeze of Northern Britain, Roman horsemen could train, fight, and function by wearing felt-padded, rainproof doublets beneath their armour.[87]

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[81] For descriptions of *subarmalis* doublets see Wild 1979, 105–10; Giardina 1988, 90f.; Bishop and Coulston 1993, 59, 85–7, 167; Bishop 1995; Sumner 2003, 37–9; Ubl 2006.
[82] Tomlin 1998, 44 and 63 ad loc.
[83] Vegetius 2.14.4.
[84] *AE* 1933, 214; Speidel 1984, 168; cf. ibid., 146: *decurio alae – magister cohortis* (*RIU* 5, 1073).
[85] Horsmann 1991, 82–92.
[86] P.Mich. VIII, 467. Roman soldiers had to pay for their weapons: Bishop and Coulston 1993, 198–201; Speidel 1992, 131–6.
[87] For an artist's reconstruction of a *subarmalis* see Sumner 2003, pl. C 2.

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