

THE ERMINE STREET GUARD

HANDBOOK



Introduction

The Ermine Street Guard is a society devoted to the construction and display of Roman military equipment. However, its character is far more complex than this statement implies.

To the public, it represents a detachment of the Roman Army of the second half of the first century A.D., a military organisation demanding obedience from its members. It also contains an element of showmanship to ensure that the equipment is displayed to the best advantage and that the interest of the spectators is maintained. Both aspects require smart, crisp drill and well-rehearsed routines.

In private, it is an informal club in which all members co-operate to make equipment and enjoy the social amenities. It has a democratic constitution and each member is welcome to contribute suggestions, ideas and opinions to its administration.

The Guard also has an important educational function. It is an attempt to put some flesh on the dead bones of history, to act as a link between the archaeologist and the public and to display historical exhibits in a more instructive, stimulating and memorable way than by locking them in glass cases. In addition to the public displays, visits are made to schools where the children enjoy being able to touch and handle the equipment.

A considerable amount of research is necessary to ensure that every piece of equipment is as authentic as is practicable. Everything is made to museum standards of accuracy and workmanship, and the equipment is continually being improved as new information and funds become available.

The Society is even more educational to the members themselves, who acquire a thorough and vivid knowledge of the Roman army and the Roman way of life that goes far beyond anything they learnt at school. They visit important Roman archaeological sites and have opportunities to meet the leading authorities on the subject. They also develop unsuspected skills when making the equipment and carry out important character-building assignments. It is no picnic to march wearing twenty pounds of armour and carrying a shield weighing twelve pounds.

These are high ideals, but if The Guard is to flourish, it is in the interest of every member to aim at nothing less than the highest standards of accuracy, workmanship and display. The greater the effort, the greater will be the sense of achievement and comradeship.

RULES

Title

The Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) shall be called 'The Ermine Street Guard' hereinafter called The Guard.

Objects

The objects of the CIO are:

The advancement of education for the public benefit by:

- i. The study of the Roman Army
- ii. The production of accurate copies of Roman armour and equipment and their use to facilitate and support further academic research
- iii. Providing educational displays to the general public, at historical sites, museums, schools and colleges

Constitution

The Guard shall be governed by its Constitution as approved by the Charity Commission – charity Number 1183802. The Constitution is available for download from The Ermine Street Guard website.

Membership

Membership of the Guard shall be open to any person with an interest in the aims of the society over the age of 18.

Associate membership is available to anyone not wishing to play an active part in The Guard. Associate members will receive any newsletters and bulletins published by The Guard and may attend some meetings.

All prospective full members shall be interviewed by the Officium before they are accepted.

A member will be allocated to legionary or auxiliary service and to a Contubernium at the discretion of the Officium, with consideration being given to the needs of The Guard and preference of the recruit.

In the event of a grave breach of the rules of The Guard, or of misconduct on the part of the member, the member shall be invited to attend, and be heard at an Extraordinary Meeting, which shall be convened to decide what action is necessary.

Membership may be terminated under clause 9 (4) of the Constitution of The Guard.

All new members are required to read sign and agree to abide by The Guard's Health and Safety and Data Protection policies.

The annual subscription for both full and associate members shall be set by the Officium and agreed by the Trustees and shall become due on the 1st October.

Members joining The Guard after 1 April shall pay a proportion of the subscription at the discretion of the Actuarius.

Trustees of The Guard

Trustees are elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The Trustees of the CIO manage the affairs of the The Guard.

Under the terms of the constitution there must be at least three and no more than twelve Trustees.

At every AGM one-third of the Trustees must retire but can stand for re-election.

The Trustees may delegate any of their powers or functions to a suitable committee. Currently the Trustees have agreed to delegate the powers set out below to a committee (Officium) which must contain at least three Trustees.

Officers

The Guard shall have as its officers a:

- i. Magister (Chairman)
- ii. Cornicularius (Secretary) and
- iii. Actuaris (Treasurer)

The Officers must be current Trustees and are appointed by the Trustees.

The Guard may opt to elect a President should it be considered appropriate to do so.

Management

The affairs of the Guard shall on a day to day basis be managed by an Officium, which shall consist of the following officers:

- i. Magister
- ii. Cornicularius
- iii. Actuaris

and up to six other elected members (Officiales).

The Officium may opt to appoint five ex-officio members.

A Quorum shall consist of no less than five Officiales.

A motion shall be decided by a majority vote and the Magister shall have a casting vote.

The purposes of the Officium shall be:

- i. To control the day to day management of The Guard.
- ii. To consider applications from persons wishing to join The Guard.
- iii. To assist The Guard in its functions.
- iv. To organise and deal with any matter arising in connection with The Guard.
- v. To report back to the charity Trustees after each meeting

The Officium shall meet at least twice a year at a mutually agreed meeting place and the Cornicularius shall give at least seven days' notice to the Officiales of any meeting.

Should a majority of the Officiales require a meeting then the Cornicularius shall be informed so that a meeting may be arranged as soon as is practicable.

The Cornicularius shall give an annual report and keep minutes of the Officium meetings.

The Actuaris shall maintain full and proper records of all income and expenditure and other such information as may be necessary.

The Actuaris shall give an annual report and interim reports when called upon by the Officium.

The Actuaris shall maintain a record of all The Guard's assets.

All elected Officiales shall be fully subscribed full members of The Guard.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Once a year an Annual General Meeting of The Guard shall be held at such time and place as the Trustees shall determine. At least 14 clear days' notice shall be given in writing by the Cornicularius to each member. At such Annual General Meeting the business shall include the election of Trustees and members to serve on the Officium; the consideration of accounts; and the transaction of such other matters as may from time to time be necessary.

Bank Account

The charity shall keep a bank account and cheques and online transactions shall be signed or approved by at least two of the four bank signatories.

The four signatories shall be:

- i. The Magister,
- ii. The Cornicularius
- iii. The Actuaris and
- iv. one other nominated Trustee.

The Trustees shall have full power to deal with the funds of The Guard.

Personal Equipment

At the discretion of the officium a member may be issued with a set of personal equipment.

The following items are classified as personal equipment.

- i. Tunica
- ii. Focale
- iii. Caligae
- iv. Lorica
- v. Cassis
- vi. Gladius et vagina
- vii. Balteus
- viii. Cingulum militare
- ix. Pugio et vagina

Each member shall be prepared to assist in the construction of his own personal equipment with the help and advice of other members of The Guard.

A member may purchase additional or more elaborate equipment from outside suppliers however the officium will decide if said equipment is of standard to be used at Guard displays.

Personal equipment (other than that purchased by a member) always remains the property of The Guard

The personal equipment of each member may, at the discretion of the Officium, be stored at the home of the member for the duration of his membership. On termination of membership, the equipment must be returned to The Guard. Under exceptional circumstances, special arrangements may be made at the discretion of the Officium.

The individual member shall be liable for any loss of equipment held by them

Personal equipment shall be kept clean and in a good state of repairs.

The design and materials of all personal equipment must be approved by the Officium.

General equipment is defined as all equipment owned by The Guard which is not held in the personal custody of individual members.

Each member shall be prepared to assist in the construction and maintenance of general equipment.

The design and material of all general equipment must be approved by the Officium.

No item of general equipment may be removed from The Guard's headquarters without the permission of an Officialis.

Ranks and Promotion



All ranks of The Ermine Street Guard are, of course, based closely on those of the Roman Imperial Army. However, adaptations are made to suit the needs of the Society. For instance, there is no evidence that any ranks wore a red focale, also Roman officers were appointed not elected.

The Officers, i.e. Centurio, Signifer and Optio are elected by the Full Members and their appointments are permanent. They may however be voted out of office at an Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary Meeting to which all Full Members have been invited.

Centurio

The Centurio is the officer commanding the unit. His badges of rank are greaves, red focale, a cloak, a transverse crest of feathers or horsehair, and a vine stick.

Signifer

The rank of Signifer is the highest below that of Centurio, but his military duties are limited to administration and carrying the signum. As a badge of rank, he has an animal skin over his helmet and wears a red focale.

Optio

The Optio is the second in command to the Centurio and assists him. His badges of rank may include a horsehair crest, knobbed staff, a silver finger ring and a red focale.

Decanus

The Decanus is the non-commissioned officer in charge of a Contubernium. His badges of rank may include a red focale and horsehair crest. He is elected annually by the members of his Contubernium and is responsible for:

- i. keeping the members of the Contubernium fully informed on Guard matters.
- ii. their attendance at displays.
- iii. seeing that their armour and equipment is complete, clean and in good repair.
- iv. their standard of drill, smartness and good behaviour on and off the field.
- v. the general welfare of his Contubernium.

He must pay attention to new recruits, ensuring that they are given instruction in drill and assistance with their kit. Off parade he must help them to integrate with other members. Thus, the rank of Decanus is a very important one.

Prodecanus

The Prodecanus assists the Decanus with his duties and takes charge of the Contubernium when the Decanus is not present. He too is elected annually.

Cornicen, Vexillarius & Imagnifer

These officers have no administrative authority in The Guard, but their special duties put their status above that of the ordinary ranks. They are elected by the same means as the other officers.

Cornicen

The Cornicen carries and sounds the cornu. His badge of office is an animal skin worn over the helmet.

Vexillarius

The Vexillarius carries the vexillum bearing the legion's symbol and number. His badge of office is an animal skin worn over the helmet.

Imagnifer

The Imagnifer carries an image of the emperor (in this case, Vespasian). His badge of office is an animal skin worn over the helmet.

Insurance

The Guard maintains suitable public liability insurance for all its displays, but members must ensure that when travelling abroad with The Guard they take out personal travel insurance that covers not only the journey but re-enactment at the various sites visited.

GLOSSARY OF LATIN COMMANDS

Some of the more commonly used words and phrases are listed below:

ADSIGNA – Fall in

INTENTE - Attention

LAXATE – Stand at ease

OTIOSE - Stand easy

DEXTRORSUM VOS DISPONITE PROCEDITE – Right Dress

DEXTRORSUM VERTITE - Right turn

SINISTRORSUM VERTITE - Left turn

AD TURGUM VERTITE – About turn

PULSUM PEDIBUS DATE - Mark time

CONSISTITE - Halt

INSISTITE – Stand still

UNUM ORDINEM FACITE – Form single line

SIMPLICEM ORDINEM FACITE - Form single file

DUOS ORDINES FACITE – Form double file

QUATOR ORDINES FACITE – Form fours

QUATOR(OCTO)ORDINIBUS – Prepare for fours (eights)

UNUM PASSUM PROCEDITE - One step forward march

DUOS PASSUS - Two steps

TRES PASSUS – Three Steps

ORDINES APERITE – Open order march

ORDINES DENSATE – Close order march

SALUTATE - Salute

CUNEUM FACITE – Form a wedge

TESTUDINEM FACITE - Form a testudo

PILA PORTATE – Slope pila

PILA IN TERRAM – Ground Pila

PILA SUMITE - Take up Pila

GLADIOS STRINGITE - Draw Swords

GLADIOS RECONDITE - Sheath Swords

SCUTA TOLLITE – Raise Shields to battle position

SCUTA DEMITTITE - Lower Shields

EXPECTATE - Wait for it

UT FUISTIS – As you were

ORDINES SERVATE – Watch the dressing

GRADUM SERVATE - Watch the step

ITER ACCELERATE – Quicken the pace

ITER TARDATE – Slow the pace

ITER INTENTE - March to attention

SILETE (plural) SILE (sing.) - Silence

AB SIGNIS DISCEDITE - Dismiss