

## EDITORIAL - Safely behind a wall

The word 'siege' surely conjures up images from that most famous of all ancient conflicts: Troy. It sets the Homeric example for all Greek and Roman warriors to follow... except when it comes to the technical aspects of that context. The Siege of Troy illustrates Bronze Age issues with siege warfare perfectly: there are no close, encircling lines; the Greeks raid in the area, the Trojans sally forth; battles, skirmishes, and duels are fought, but no decision can be forced, until Odysseus alights upon his horsey ruse. Siege technology is almost entirely absent.

Until the arrival of the Assyrian Empire and their new technology, fortifications, a food supply, and a reliable source of water made the besieged almost perfectly safe from attack.

Trickery, a treaty, or divine intervention were just about the only ways to capture a well-defended city. And yet, even the most spectacular equipment (when it did arrive), was not always enough to force a way in. And on the other side of the proverbial wall, extensive fortifications could end up becoming an inefficient, long-term resource drain. Still, they were a symbol of strength and independence that, by themselves, might be worth building or, conversely, taking down. In the end, most settlements felt safer with a strong set of walls standing nearby.



Jasper Oorthuys  
Editor, *Ancient Warfare*

## Roman camps found in the Netherlands

Traces of a Roman camp have been uncovered in the Netherlands, which may be connected to preparations for the military invasion of Britain.

Working in Valkenburg, in the province of South Holland, a team from the ADC ArcheoProjecten, together with Archol, is presently conducting an excavation at the site. Preliminary investigation has revealed a *vallum*, the tell-tale V-shaped ditch of a Roman military installation, measuring over

380 metres in length. Remains of a sod rampart were also found next to the ditch. This wall was founded with wooden piles.

The foundations of a tower that once protruded above the wall have also been identified. At another location, 80 metres to the north of it, evidence suggests the presence of a second tower, while 80 metres to the south, the wooden posts of what may have been a large gateway have been found. Assuming the rampart ran the entire length

## 3,300-year-old bronze sword found in Moravia

A rare bronze sword and an axe have been found by chance in a place in which archaeologists had no idea to look. Roman Novák was searching for mushrooms in the Jeseník district of Northern Moravia. He discovered a metal object protruding from the ground amongst some stones. He kicked it and then realised it was a blade. Further digging revealed the bronze axe head. He immediately contacted local archaeologists.

Jiří Juchelka, who leads the archaeology department at the nearby Silesian Museum, has closely studied the artefacts. The sword blade, now broken into two parts, had lain buried in the ground for some 3,300 years.

The artefacts were taken to a lab to be examined and conserved. The lead archaeologist told Radio Prague: "The sword

has an octagonal handle. It is only the second sword of its type to be found here." The design is known from examples found in Northern Germany.

Juchelka noted several details about the sword, which had been cast in a mould in around 1300 BC: "They were obviously trying their best, but the quality of the casting was actually pretty low. X-ray tests show that there are many small bubbles inside the weapon. This suggests that the sword was not used in combat but was instead of symbolic value."

Archaeologists have been back to the find site several times. The area is sparsely populated today. To better understand the environment in the Bronze Age, archaeologists will conduct a survey at some time in the future.

The finds will then be exhibited in turn at the Ethnographic Museum of Jesenícko and the Silesian Museum.

Hilt of the bronze sword found in Moravia. Like many swords of the era, it was cast in a mould instead of forged.

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