

Soldier School

When a Roman signed up as a legionary, he faced pain, violence and terror. And that was just the training!

After the sword practice came the spear practice - throwing javelins at targets. It was a bit like a very dangerous game of darts.

Once the soldiers had got the hang of throwing spears at targets, they took turns throwing them at each other! They put leather balls on the points bits first, though - they weren't that stupid!

Recruits got trained (and bullied) by tough old soldiers called centurions. Some of them were even meaner than PE teachers.

Roman soldiers were given salt as part of their wages. This from the Latin word for salt - 'sal'. We still use the word 'salary' today to mean wages. (Don't think your mum or dad would be too pleased to get salt in their pay packets!)

New troops had to practice sword-fighting with wooden swords, which had weights on them to make them even heavier than metal ones. This also meant they hurt even more when the soldiers hit each other!

Recruits were made to march for ages with huge packs of weapons, armour, tools, food and cooking pots on their backs. No wonder legionaries were nicknamed 'mules'!

Legionaries were taught how to fight in formations like this one - the 'Tortoise'. The shields made a 'shell' to protect them from arrows.

Centurions only really had one rule: 'Do what I say - or else!'

The army kitted out new recruits with their armour and gear. They'd look after them - the coat was taken from their wages.