IN THIS ISSUE: Attack of the Celts! - Confronting the Classical world

Attack of the Celts: Confronting the Classical world

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John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, has long been regarded as one of Britain’s greatest generals as well as a key English political figure in the first decade of the eighteenth century.

The subject of numerous books in English, Marlborough has typically been seen only in terms of British political and military history. In this book, twelve leading specialists of the period broaden the perspective by assessing Marlborough in the wider and more diverse contexts of the European situation, the common soldier in the British army, the complementary activities of navies, the differing perspectives of the Austrians, Dutch, French, and Germans as well as in the context of the British popular press and the visual arts.

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**Extremely rare Iron Age helmet found in Kent**

An anonymous metal detectorist scanning in a field near Canterbury, England, has found a helmet used in the Iron Age to hold cremated human bones. Described as ‘vanishingly rare’, the helmet, made of copper-alloy, had been turned upside down and used as vessel to contain a human cremation. A brooch found with the helmet likely once fastened a bag holding the bones. Both the helmet and brooch date from the early to mid-first century BC.

The helmet is of the so-called ‘Montefortino’ style, named after the town in Italy where the first example of this type was discovered in a Celtic burial. The round bowl of the Canterbury-specimen is largely intact, save for some damage to the crown – which would have featured a raised central knob – and a split across the front brow. The lower edge shows signs of the punched ‘rope’-type decoration, commonly found on this type of protective headgear. The protruding neck guard survives, but the cheek plates are missing.

To analyse the helmet and establish details of its manufacture, decoration and use, laser-scanning has been used, according to Dr Steven Willis, senior lecturer in archaeology at the University of Kent, Canterbury. He also said that a helmet found in Belgium had been similarly used as a container for a cremation burial.

“This is a very rare find”, said Julia Farley, Iron Age curator at the British Museum, London. “No other cremation has ever been found in Kent accompanied by a helmet and only a handful of Iron-Age helmets are known from Britain. Therefore we think this example was probably made on the Continent and it is fascinating to speculate how it came to be in a grave in Kent.”

In the middle of the first century BC, Julius Caesar was engaged in his war of conquest in Gaul (modern France). Mercenaries are known to have travelled from Britain to join the fighting. One theory is that the person who owned this helmet might have fought in Gaul, against the Romans or even alongside them, eventually returning to Britain with the helmet. Alternatively, it may have been taken from a Roman soldier as a trophy. In 55 and 54 BC, Caesar landed on the Kent coast not far from where the helmet was found. At this time, Montefortino-design helmets were worn by both Gallic and Roman troops.

The find spot on farmland was subsequently excavated by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust. The helmet has been registered as treasure with the UK’s Portable Antiquities Scheme and will remain with the British Museum for the time being.

**Trojan War survivors looked west for a new start**

In the aftermath of war, the survivors of the fall of Troy looked to the west to rebuild their prosperity. This is the conclusion of a study of pottery found at the battle site at Hisarlik in Anatolia in Northwest Turkey.

Scientists examined Bronze Age pottery shards from the level of human habitation called Troy VIIa – widely believed to be the city destroyed in the war memorialised by Homer – and the level immediately above it. The study published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* (volume 40, 2013) presents compelling statistics-based evidence that the chemical composition of the clay used to make pots before and after the Trojan War were the same. Rather than abandoning the site, it seems the survivors stayed on and continued to use local materials to produce pottery.

Before the war, which ended in around 1250 BC, the Trojans had traded with their Hittite neighbours to the east. The Hittites had to abandon the land they controlled along the Aegean Sea around 1210 BC and their own Empire collapsed around 1180 BC. The Trojans had to quickly find a new export markets. They found them in the Balkans. The story told in the *Aeneid* by Roman poet Vergil has the survivors fleeing west to build a new home, finally establishing one in Italy.

**Themes and deadlines**

The following are the themes for the next upcoming issues:
- VII.1 Egypt under pressure
- VII.2 Wars in Sicily
- VII.3 The Early Roman Republic (February 20th)
- VII.4 Logistics and the army train (April 20th)
- VII.5 The March of the Ten Thousand (June 20th)

If you have a proposal that fits our themes, we’d be interested to hear from you to discuss the possibility of publishing an article. Send your proposal – including the angle you propose to take, ideas for illustrations and artwork, and your qualifications – to editor@ancient-warfare.com. Do make sure you send them before the proposal deadlines mentioned above.