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Editor's Preface

Since the publication of the last issue of *Arms & Armour*, the Royal Armouries and a number of its close colleagues have taken part in two major international conferences. In July, the International Medieval Congress once again took place organised with remarkable skill and care by a small but extremely capable team under the guiding hand of the IMC's Director, Dr Axel Müller, working from within the Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Leeds. This year, the IMC attracted over 1500 delegates, its greatest number ever, being university academics from all over the world. Once again a very broad range of subjects was tackled in carefully structured sessions.

The Royal Armouries is the only museum currently represented on the IMC's Programming Committee and we are currently developing the subject strand relating to Technology, Science and Military matters. This year the Royal Armouries organised two formal sessions and welcomed a group of delegates to the museum itself for an evening meeting to see and handle some late medieval armour and weapons. At the special invitation of the IMC's organisers three Royal Armouries' Interpreters were invited to give a special presentation of 'Arming the Knight', in which they demonstrated not only the way late 15th-century armour was constructed and worn, but also how it was used in combat. The Royal Armouries staff members involved in each of these contributions to the Congress were greatly encouraged by the positive responses we received, and we are already planning a greater number of IMC sessions in 2008.

A number of Royal Armouries staff also attended the Congress in Vienna of ICOMAM (the International Committee of Museums and Collections of Arms and Military History). This organisation was founded in the 1950s by a number of major arms and armour scholars and this year was of special significance since it saw ICOMAM formally adopted into the family of organisations affiliated to ICOM (the International Council of Museums). At the Congress several papers were read by Royal Armouries staff, highlighting activities such as displays, scientific research and major publication projects.

Exhibitions currently in preparation include one to be held in Leeds for six months from December 2007. This will explore the remarkable illustrated volumes of the *Chronicles of the Hundred Years War* written by Jean Froissart in the last years of the 14th century. The exhibition will be in association with academic staff of the University of Sheffield, and will include new electronic technology enabling the scintillating illustrated pages to be turned and the illustrations in them explored in fine detail.

Our thoughts and efforts, however, for the next year and a half will be dominated by work on the long-anticipated exhibition for 2009, to celebrate the 500th anniversary of King Henry VIII's accession to the English throne. The

Royal Armouries hold four armours and many other weapons, pieces of artillery and components of armour which either belonged to King Henry or were intended to equip his forces on land and sea. Many of these pieces were displayed at the Tower of London during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I as a form of memorial to her father. Any earlier military material formerly kept in store at the Tower had been disposed of by Henry after he came to the throne, so the pieces from Henry's reign are now our earliest and most direct link with the Tower as a major arsenal. For this reason the Royal Armouries takes the reign of Henry VIII as one of particular importance in its own history, since the Henrician material and the pieces associated with the later Board of Ordnance form the two principal parts of the collections which in time became the British national museum of arms and armour.

This exhibition will focus on King Henry's surviving arms and armour, and important pieces will be borrowed from other collections worldwide to augment the already considerable holdings of the Royal Armouries. Henry's passion for sport as well as military activity will be reflected by highlighting the pieces associated with the tournament.

The exhibition will be held at the Tower of London from spring to autumn 2009, and work on confirming the objects to be displayed and the design to present them to best effect has begun in earnest. A major publication will accompany the exhibition, one which will remain a valuable reference work long after the exhibition is over.

This issue of *Arms & Armour* contains an article by Ian Bottomley about an important recent acquisition; a probably unique early 17th-century Japanese aikuchi, or dagger, whose blade was made by adapting one of a German sword. A new Royal Armouries publication is also due for publication before the end of this year. By the same author, *An Introduction to Japanese Swords* will be a welcome new title, shedding light for the general reader on the mysteries of these enigmatic yet so often exquisitely beautiful weapons.

A steady stream of new pieces of research for publication in *Arms & Armour* continues, but still more would be very welcome in order to develop the scope of content of the Journal. The editorial team would also like to receive any short notes, observations and book reviews contributors would care to offer. We have been in discussion with our publishers, Maney Publishing, about the form and content of the journal, and are encouraged by their continuing enthusiasm for it. We all wish to see the journal grow and prosper, however, so would be delighted to receive more articles for possible inclusion in future editions.

Graeme Rimer
Editor