

# I n t r o d u c t i o n

It is with great pleasure that I write this brief introduction to what will surely become an invaluable contribution to the field of arms and armour studies and in particular the study of mail armour; *The Journal of the Mail Research Society*.

Despite the long history and wide geographical use of mail, from the 6<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to the present day, this form of armour has suffered from a comparative paucity of accessible studies. Although references to mail armour occur in all the major texts concerning armour it is usually just a passing reference. The large holdings of the Royal Armouries library, for instance, list only about 40 specific entries on the subject. Why this is so is not clear; maybe a Norman cavalryman depicted in mail hauberk is not quite as appealing as his late-15<sup>th</sup> century German counterpart, pictured in full plate armour. Maybe the aesthetics of the sculptural qualities found in plate armour, as well as its more complex construction techniques, are more highly regarded than those associated with a 'shirt' of mail. Whatever, this has not always been so, after all one of the first great exhibitions of armour, held in London in 1880, was entitled *The Exhibition of Ancient Helmets and Examples of Mail*. It also comes as something of a shock to realise that what are probably the best known papers on the manufacture of European mail, by E Martin Burgess, appeared some 50 years ago!

With exciting discoveries currently being made about the construction of mail, such as the galvanisation of Indian mail, the inception of this Journal provides a new and long overdue forum for informed discussion concerning mail armour.

My heartiest congratulations to Erik Schmid for taking this idea forward. I wish the Journal well and, like other readers, look forward to the following issues and their contents.

Robert C Woosnam-Savage  
*Curator of European Edged Weapons*  
Royal Armouries, Leeds, England, 2003

For further information regarding the Royal Armouries visit: [www.armouries.org.uk](http://www.armouries.org.uk)