**‘Everyman an Emperor’ – Colchester’s First Roman Festival**

**Garrison Sergeant Major and paratrooper, WO1 Andy Lamont, joined Praetorian Guard Sergeant Major and Roman fiction authors as a guest panellist at Colchester’s first Roman Festival celebrating both the City’s rich Roman Garrison history and today’s Garrison which is home to the United Kingdom’s airborne forces.**

The fun-packed family festival was held at the end of July in Lower Castle Park over what was the Temple of Claudius. The temple was famously sacked and burned by Queen Boudica in AD 60/6. Over two days visitors were able to watch battles between Roman soldiers and tribes, gladiatorial displays, archery, falconry, and other arts of war. Authentic cooking complemented craft stalls, traders, artisans, educators, and entertainers in the tented Romano-British market.

The two very different era Sergeant Majors, Warrant Officer Andy Lamont, Garrison Sergeant Major, and Marcus Flavius Albinus, Octio (or Sergeant Major) of the Praetorian Guard of Britannia, chatted about army life, training, equipment, and their operational experiences to a packed audience.

The panel of major fiction authors included Alison Morton (ex-British Army), Ruth Downie, Simon Turney, and Harry Sidebottom, with Alex Gough chairing. The panel identified many similarities between soldiering in Roman times and as a member of The Parachute Regiment serving in Colchester today whether it be equipment worn and used such as body armour and helmet, to the physical and mental strengths required of a Praetorian Guard or paratrooper, and the shared professionalism to win in battle.

Although in Roman Britannia a soldier declaring themselves as an Emperor would have led to them being put immediately to death, the panel talk was titled ‘Colonia and Colchester – “Everyman an Emperor”’ drawing on Field Marshal Montgomery’s speech “What Manner of Men Are These That Wear The Maroon Beret?”. Thankfully that’s not the case today, and those who rightly wear the maroon beret continue to “…. have the highest standards in all things whether it be skill in battle or smartness in the execution of all peace time duties. They are in fact - men apart - Every Man an Emperor.”