

COMITATVS

RECREATING • LATE • ROMAN • TENTS

“the cavalry should take with them... small tents or a couple of heavy cloaks, the one for covering if needed and the other as a tent or shelter...”

Emperor Mauricius, *Strategikon* (circa 600 A.D.)

Roman military tents appear on the early 2nd century Trajan's Column: 8-man side walled tent of made of leather panels, which at the time was cheaper than cloth.

Over 300 years later, the *Ambrosian Iliad* manuscript shows Greek soldiers at the siege of Troy, but dressed as Late Romans and camped in simple wedge tents without panels, suggesting cloth, perhaps linen canvas, rather than leather.

They resemble Maurice's later advice: two soldiers could make a light, functional shelter in the field, combining their spare cloaks, like the shelter halves used by American Civil War troops who called them 'dog tents' or indeed today's army poncho shelters. They can be slung from branches or a frame made from foraged sticks or even a spear held up by two javelins and with pegging loops tied around stones. A shield closes each end, stopping draughts.



'Ambrosian' Iliad camp (C5th)

Comitatus has tested this design on marches along Hadrian's Wall winter and found it surprisingly effective, and the hardier members camp in them at events, sleeping on skins. C4th



'Vienna' Genesis tents (C6th)

cavalry equipment found at Deurne, Netherlands was wrapped in a cloak-sized sheet of goatskin panels, which may have had a similar purpose.

Wedge tents are also shown in the C6th 'Vienna' Genesis. They appear to be more comfortable: taller, with door-flaps and two uprights holding up a handy protruding ridge pole. This classic ridge design is still popular today, and most Comitatus families sleep in them at events.

Larger cloth tents with open sides for meetings, are also seen in the *Ambrosian Iliad*, inspiring the awnings and booths we use for our crafts and Living History displays and to gather around the camp fire in the evenings.



'Ambrosian' Iliad leader's tent

**For further information, please phone 01904 704357
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