



In the Saddle

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There is no need to delve deeply into English history to appreciate the importance of the horse and its saddle. Saddles carried Roman, Saxon and Norman invaders across Britain, sustained the peripatetic English monarch and court, and advanced Tudor trade and Stuart civil war. From the 18th century the English saddle developed rapidly into the world's leading design and remains pre-eminent today. It is not difficult to find recent books describing the classic English saddle of the 19th and 20th centuries, but none deal with earlier saddles. The authors of the present volume, which is based upon a conference held in 2002 at Saddlers' Hall in London, explored rare books and manuscripts, private and fine art collections, archaeological fragments, museum stores and family records to piece together this account of the historic antecedents of the English astride saddle and the parallel development of the side-saddle. Few people in history owned saddles as these were cumbersome and expensive objects. Although horse ownership increased after the Middle Ages, saddle survival depended upon a coincidence of care, neglect and good fortune. The conservation of several of these rare survivals has made it possible for their hand manufacture and original decoration to be described and illustrated for the first time. This book describes how collaboration between archaeologists, restorers and experimental riders enabled a Roman saddle to be recreated and ridden. This delightful and beautifully illustrated volume should fascinate riders, archaeologists, conservators, historians and curators alike.