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## The Romans kept right, of course

It was not the French revolutionaries, followed by Napoleon, who devised the innovation of keeping right, as Mrs Norah Leggatt suggests (*Current Archaeology* 90, 223).

For a long time past, men used to wear shields on the left and fight with the sword in the right hand. Surely such people in a fighting position would not pass each other swordhand to swordhand, because their right side was uncovered, as contrasted to their left side which was protected by the shield. The worst they could do was to keep left instead of right.



Let us have a look now at the drawing (above) by L. Dahm, after E. Zahn on the Roman grave pillar of the Secundinii at Igel, some 8 kms south-west of Trier. On a cart, drawn by two horses, two men are to be seen, of whom the driver is sitting at the left. So the cart must be running on the right side of the road; compare the position of cart-drivers and motorists on the Continent nowadays.

In other words, keeping to the right is the normal way, time out of mind. Why and since when do the British keep left and how long will they insist this is normal?

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