Where to find out more; a list of important books and articles about Roman artillery.

The most up to date information on most aspects of Roman artillery can be found in the editor’s new book Roman Imperial Artillery (order form below). It contains an extensive bibliography. The problem is that much of the published evidence in books or journals is only available in specialist libraries. The most important books are:


They are out of print, but available in many libraries. Unfortunately second hand bookshops charge astronomical prices for them.

The following books are either still in print or readily accessible in second hand bookshops:

Schalles H-J et al 2010: Die Frühkaiserzeitliche Manuballista Aus Xanten-Wardt. Xanten Berichte Band 18. Verlag Philipp von Zabern. A detailed account of the discovery of the Xanten-Wardt scorpion and the painstaking efforts to conserve this highly important archaeological find. The description of the catapult as a manuballista is erroneous. The interpretation as a hand-held, hand-spanned weapon is unconvincing.

The following articles are in journals usually available in university libraries:

Published in Britannia:
Published in the Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies:
Iriarte A. 2000: ‘Pseudo-Heron’s cheiroballistra a(nother) reconstruction: I. Theoretics’, JRMES 11, 47-75. Reconstruction as a hand held, hand spanned weapon, based on the ms reading of 11/3 dactyls (25mm) for the rope-spring diameter.

Published in other journals of local and specialist societies: some of these are available online and therefore downloadable:
Baatz D. 1980: ‘Ein katapult der Legio IV Macedonica aus Cremona’, Römische Mitteilungen 87, 283 - 299. The full publication of the Cremona shield, washers etc..
Campbell D.B. 2011: ‘Ancient catapults. Some hypotheses re-examined’, Hesperia (Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens) Volume 80, 677-700. 677-685 contain a valuable analysis of the evidence for the invention of the catapult and the arrival of torsion artillery. He rightly refutes Rihll’s suggestion that sling bullets were originally invented for catapult ammunition.


Tittel K. 1913: Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie 1913, 1039-41. Rightly challenges Schneider’s strange verdict on the Cheiroballistra manuscript.