DOMI TRANS MARE VINDOLANDAE
AT HOME ACROSS THE SEA AT VINDOLANDA*

Kerry Peardon

In circa AD 100 Flavius Cerialis, prefect of the Ninth Cohort of Batavians at Vindolanda, concludes a letter seeking military preferment, thus: haec tibi a Vindolanda scribo ... hiberna ... .

Little did he know that his correspondence would be retrieved from a partially burnt rubbish pile (preserved thanks to the British weather) adjacent to his praetorium in 1973 (and later years): to be voted (in 2003) as the most significant of the British Museum’s ‘Top Ten Treasures’ of British origin. This archaeological treasure trove reveals an insight into the formative phase of the northern frontier of Britannia in the previous ‘Dark Period’, dating from the end of Agricola’s governorship (AD 84) to the establishment of Hadrian’s Wall in c. AD 122.

The Vindolanda tablets not only provide a vignette of military, economic and social life on the northern frontier but also reflect the Romanization and Latinity of north-west Gaul. The letters, accounts and dispatches reveal that there was a literary military establishment at Vindolanda within a decade of Agricola’s conquest of northern Britain.

Roman Involvement in Gallia and Britannia prior to AD 85:

Julius Caesar commences his commentaries on the Gallic Wars by stating that Gaul is divided between three main groups: the Belgae, the Aquitani and the Galli. The Belgae, dwelling on the opposite bank of the Rhine to the Germani, and thus being most remote from Roman civilising influence are

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1 “I write this to you from Vindolanda where my winter-quarters are ...”; Tab. Vindol. II.225.24-25 in A.K. Bowman, Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier. Vindolanda and its People (London 2003) 129. Translations of the Vindolanda tablets are those of Bowman and Thomas. Other translations from the Latin are my own. The Vindolanda Trust has an excellent internet site which makes available the tablets published in A. Bowman and J. Thomas (eds), The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses II) (London 1994): <http://vindolanda.escd.ox.ac.uk/>. The online database provides a photograph, title, category, commentary, text, translation and notes for each tablet.

2 The praetorium is the prefect’s residence. Cf. Tac. Agr. 12.3 on the British weather.

3 Bowman (n.1) 3.
the ‘most brave’ (*fortissimi*). It is from this region that the Batavians originate and following Caesar’s conquest of Gaul came under the influence of Roman culture.

Roman involvement in Britannia was initiated in late summer 55 BC by Julius Caesar, on the pretext of British tribes crossing the Channel to reinforce the Gauls. He embarked upon a reconnaissance in strength lasting three weeks, being forced to return to Gaul due to almost being stranded after having suffered naval losses from storms and adverse tides.

The following year, taking five legions and two thousand cavalry, Caesar invaded Kent. His invasion was a topic of conversation in Rome. Catullus asks if Mamurra was to add the riches of Britannia to his cupidity. Cicero, in July 54 BC, writes to Atticus that the outcome of the war is awaited. In November 54 BC Cicero quotes to Atticus a dispatch he received on 24th October from his brother Quintus Cicero and Caesar, written from the shore of south-east Britain on 25th September. In his letter Caesar reports that the war in Britain has been concluded, hostages received, no plunder but money demanded, and finally he was withdrawing the army from Britain. Caesar neglected to relate that he was forced to make an inconclusive treaty with the local kings due to British resistance, unrest in Gaul, and channel storms causing havoc with his fleet. Tacitus’ assessment of Caesar’s British war is that he frightened the natives and gained possession of the coast; he is seen to have pointed out the island, not to have handed it on to the Romans. The Roman civil wars, lack of plunder and the prevailing Roman assessment of the uncultured nature of the people, so emphatically expressed by Cicero, led to the loss of interest in the island.

Tacitus provides a summary of Roman interest in Britannia over the following ninety years. Britannia was forgotten (*longa oblivio Britanniae*). Augustus stated that this was policy (*consilium*); Tiberius claimed it was a rule (*praeeptum*) of Augustus; Gaius urged an invasion but lacked constancy.

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4 Caes. *BG* I.11.
6 Caes. *BG* IV.29.
7 Caes. *BG* V.8-9.
8 Cat. 29.3-4; cf. 11.11-12.
9 Cic. *Att.* IV.xvi.7.
10 Cic. *Att.* IV.xvii.5.
11 Caes. *BG* V.10; V.22.
13 Cic. *Att.* IV.xvi.7: “Actually the fact now has been found out that there is not the least quantity of silver on that island, nor any hope of plunder apart from slaves, amongst whom I reckon that you [Atticus] expect none to be learned in letters nor music”; cf. Tac. *Agr.* 13.3.
of mind to complete the task. Finally in AD 43 it was undertaken by Claudius. Claudius spent only three weeks in Britannia, returning to Rome to claim bellum confectum (war concluded) and to demand a triumph.\textsuperscript{14}

Roman involvement over the next forty years was difficult and plagued by revolts and massacres.\textsuperscript{15} When Agricola, Tacitus' father-in-law, arrived in Britannia as governor (AD 78) he quelled the province with a military campaign. An enlightened governor, he realised that armed force was doomed to failure if injustice and exploitation of the population persisted.\textsuperscript{16} He embarked on a program of Romanisation of the province: the building of temples, bath-houses, fora and houses; and he made provision for educating the sons of the local elites, as was established for the sons of Gallic leaders at Augustodunum (Autum) in Gaul. The result of this policy was that the people were eager to wear the toga and speak good Latin. Tacitus somewhat cynically states that the population was beguiled into enslavement masked as civilisation.\textsuperscript{17} The Vindolanda tablets are proof of the success of this policy in north-west Gaul, where those Batavians described by Julius Caesar as the most uncultured of the inhabitants of Gaul are now protecting Roman interests and communicating in good Latin, the lingua franca of the Roman army.

Having pacified the province, Agricola commenced a series of seven campaigns to extend Roman power into the north. By his fourth summer (AD 81) he had extended Roman territory to the isthmus between the Fourth and the Clyde rivers. He continued a combined land and naval advance into Caledonia culminating in the victory at Mons Graupius (AD 84).\textsuperscript{18} Included in his forces Agricola had eight thousand auxiliaries.\textsuperscript{19} Following this battle Agricola was recalled to Rome and the Romans withdrew to the isthmus between the Tyne and Solway rivers, which was viewed as the frontier. Tacitus, writing at the same time as Flavius Cerialis (AD 100), states that this frontier is fortified by garrisons,\textsuperscript{20} that all the nearer (southern) areas are

\textsuperscript{14} Tac. Agr. 13; cf. Tac. Ann. I.11.4; I.77.3; IV.37.3.
\textsuperscript{15} Tac. Ann. XIV.31-37. The most famous is the Iceni revolt (AD 60/1) led by Queen Boudicca. During the revolt the veteran colony and provincial capital, Camulodunum (Colchester), as well as Londinium (London) were sacked and their inhabitants massacred.
\textsuperscript{16} Tac. Agr. 19.1. The Iceni revolt had been precipitated by the Romans confiscating the estates of the Iceni chiefs, the flogging of Boudicca and the rape of her daughters (Tac. Ann. XIV.31). The Trinobantes joined in the revolt having lost their lands to the veteran colony at Camulodunum (Tac. Ann. XIV.31).
\textsuperscript{17} Tac. Agr. 21; cf. Tac. Ann. III.43.
\textsuperscript{18} Tac. Agr. 29-38.
\textsuperscript{19} Tac. Agr. 35.2.
secure and that the enemy has been isolated as if onto another island.\textsuperscript{21} Vindolanda, established in AD 85 on the Stanegate line running between the Tyne and Solway rivers, is one of the forts.\textsuperscript{22}

**Vindolanda:**

The pre-Hadrianic history of Vindolanda is divided into four periods:

I. AD 85-92 (Early fort)
II. AD 92-97 (Rebuilding and enlargement of the fort)
III. AD 97-104
IV. AD 104-122

The earliest ink leaf tablets date from *circa* AD 90 whilst the bulk of the tablets are from periods II and III. The first tablets were found in 1973, and as of the year 2000 over sixteen hundred tablets have been added to the inventory (853 published) of which the vast majority is of the ink leaf type.\textsuperscript{23}

The ink leaf tablets are approximately the size of a postcard (180 by 90 mm.), 1-3 mm. thick, the wooden surface coated with beeswax to facilitate writing with ink. The ink is composed of carbon, gum arabic and water as that used to write on papyrus. The writer used a pen with a split nib as the ink on the tablets is visible at the edges of the stroke, leaving the centre with less ink or clear. It is thought that the writer, as was the practice on papyri in Egypt, used a pen with a split reed nib (like that of a modern fountain pen) since the iron nib as used on the wax of stylus type tablets could not be split.\textsuperscript{24}

The Romans were familiar with veneer furniture and so could cut wood to the thickness required. Similar ink leaf tablets made from the bark of the lime/linden tree have been discovered on the Continent. These ink leaf tablets are called *tiliae* which is the Latin name for the lime tree (*tilia/ae*). As the lime tree is not found in Britannia, the tablets in this province were made locally from birch, alder and oak. Recent discoveries of these tablets have been made at the Roman forts at Caerleon and Carlisle.\textsuperscript{25} These ink leaf tablets are the equivalent to the papyri documents found in Egypt and the

\textsuperscript{22} Bowman (n.1) 6.
\textsuperscript{23} Bowman (n.1) 8.
\textsuperscript{24} The Nicholson Museum (University of Sydney) has on display a split reed nib and an ink well found in Egypt and dating to the Roman period (personal observation 22/8/2007).
East. Papyrus was not suitable for correspondence in the wet climate of north-western Europe.

The writing can be parallel to the long or short side of the tablet and long reports can be on tablets strung together in a concertina fashion. These were probably called *pugillaria*, such as mentioned in the writings of Seneca the Younger, Martial, and Pliny the Younger. The convenience of having such a string of tablets able to be held in the hand is well illustrated by Augustus, who at the annual riding past in review of the equestrian order (*transvectio*), reproved those equestrians (*equites*) with moral failings by handing to them a set of tablets (*pugillaria*) detailing their respective faults. The recipients, in silence, were obliged to read the *pugillaria* in the presence of Augustus.\(^\text{26}\)

The sites of the discovery at Vindolanda are important. They are on the *via principalis* near the *praetorium* (prefect's residence), the barracks block and the workshop. Thus they are not the official military records from the headquarters building (*principia*) nor from the record office (*tabularium*).\(^\text{27}\)

The significance of this is that the tablets represent the letters, accounts and documents thrown out from the prefect's household and so give an insight into the military, domestic, social and economic lifestyle of an auxiliary military community who made their home away from their homeland in north-west Gaul at Vindolanda.

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\(^{26}\) Suet. *Aug.* 39.1. Suetonius states that this public embarrassment was the mildest form of censure. Onlookers could presume that the number of tablets strung together was proportional to the misdemeanours.

On the other hand, Martial (XIV.5 and XIV.7) uses the word *pugillares* to refer to wax writing-tablets that are the stylus type; and Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* I.6.1) uses *pugillaria* in an unambiguous reference to stylus type tablets. The *pugillaria* referred to by him at *Ep.* I.22.11 and by Seneca at *Ep.* 15.6 are referred to in a literary context and may be of either type. Gellius (17.9.17) also refers to stylus type tablets when he writes that new tablets (*pugillaria nova*) are those whose wax has not been smeared. The problem would seem to be an intractable one, but Bowman ([n.1] 81) suggests that the word *pugillaria* probably refers to such notebooks as those referred to above in the text (i.e., ink leaf tablets strung together). He alludes to Martial and Juvenal for parallel usages, but does not cite specific references.

\(^{27}\) Bowman ([n.1] 7. The *via principalis* was the main street, which ran parallel to the *praetorium* (commander's tent/residence). The *via principalis* was intersected at right angles by other streets. Polybius (VI.27-32) describes the regulation Roman camp.
Military Life:

One of the earliest tablets, dated to the second period (AD 92-97), is a strength report of the First Cohort of Tungrians.\textsuperscript{28}

18 May, net number of the First Cohort of Tungrians, of which the commander is Julius Verecundus the prefect, 752, including 6 centurions.

Of whom there are absent:

- guards of the governor: 46
- at the office of Ferox: 337
- at Coria [Corbridge] including (?) 2 centurions
- (?) a centurion
- ... outside the province: 6
- including 1 centurion
- set out (?) to Gaul: 9
- including 1 centurion
- at Eburacum [York] (?) to collect pay: 11
- at (?) ... (?!) 1
- total absentees: 456
- including 5 centurions
- remainder, present: 296
- including 1 centurion

from these:
- sick: 15
- wounded: 6
- suffering from inflammation of the eyes: 10
- total of these: 31
- remainder, fit for active service: 265
- including 1 centurion.

The Tungrians are from Gallia Belgica, originally having migrated across the Rhine and settling on Gallic territory.\textsuperscript{29} Tungrian cohorts were in the Roman army in AD 69 defending Gallia Narbonensis from the ravages of Otho’s fleet.\textsuperscript{30} Later they formed a part of the auxiliaries in Agricola’s campaigns and two cohorts of Tungrians were at the battle of Mons Graupius.\textsuperscript{31}

In AD 90 they were present at Vindolanda under the command of Julius Verecundus, the prefect who likely preceded Flavius Cerialis. Their number

\textsuperscript{28} Tab. Vindol. II.154 in Bowman (n.1) 101-102.

\textsuperscript{29} Tac. Germ. 2.3.

\textsuperscript{30} Tac. Hist. II.14; Tac. Agr. 7. Troops from Otho’s fleet murdered Agricola’s mother and plundered her estate in Liguria during one of these raids.

\textsuperscript{31} Tac. Agr. 36.1.
would suggest that if they did not compose the whole garrison then they were a significant component. The left half of a tombstone of a centurion of the Tungrians killed in action, which has been dated to the late first or early second century AD, has been found at Vindolanda. This epitaph, along with the six wounded recorded in the Tungrian strength report, is consistent with the garrison experiencing active service.

The cohort has a nominal complement of seven hundred and fifty-two, including six centurions. This is between the nominal strength of an auxiliary cohort quinaria (six centurions and 480 men) and a cohort militaria (ten centurions and 800 men). The following might be noted about this document: that it is dated, but is not a formal end of month report, suggesting that it is a draft or day report; that there is a large number on special duties at Coria; that forty-six are away contributing to the governor’s guard; that there appears to be a centurion at Londinium; that nine seem to have been registered as having set out for Gaul; and that eleven are likely at Eburacum collecting pay.

In fact only two hundred and ninety-six are at Vindolanda. Of these fifteen are ill, six are wounded, and ten are suffering from eye inflammation (a common condition afflicting both Cicero and Pliny the Younger). Thus from a nominal strength of seven hundred and fifty-two including six centurions only two hundred and sixty-five including one centurion are available for duty. The report demonstrates that the frontier defence was not composed of static defensive garrisons, rather a significant number of troops are performing other duties in distant parts of the province and on the Continent or may have been on leave.

This strength report of an infantry auxiliary cohort (cohors peditata) is unique for Britain. Being a military document, the style is terse, but the Latin is of an acceptable standard considering that it was a second language.

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32 A.R. Birley, 'A New Tombstone from Vindolanda' Britannia, 29 (1998) 299-301. The frontier region appears to have been a site of continual conflict during this period. The Historia Augusta relates that Britannia was one of Hadrian’s initial problems (SHA Hadr. 5.2). He indeed visited the province early in his Principate and then constructed the wall known as Hadrian’s Wall.

33 See Vindolanda Tablets Online <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/reference/auxunits.shtml> for the composition of auxiliary units of the Roman army.

34 Cic. Att. VII.xiv.1; VIII.xii.1; Plin. Ep. VII.21. The inflammation of their eyes temporarily impaired their vision so preventing them writing. Horace (Sat. I.5.30) relates that one of the tribulations he suffered on his famous journey to Brundisium with Maccenas (38/37 BC) was inflammation of his eyes for which he applied black ointment.
Most of the Vindolanda tablets relate to periods II and III (AD 92-104), when the Ninth Cohort of Batavians, a *cohors equitata*, was forming a part of the garrison at Vindolanda. It is in this period that their commander, Flavius Cerialis, concludes his letter: *haec tibi a Vindolanda scribo ... hiberna...*.

Like the Tungrians, the Batavians came from Gallia Belgica and had fought with distinction in campaigns under Drusus (13-9 BC) and Tiberius (8-7 BC and AD 4-6) to subdue the Germani and create a new province between the Rhine and the Elbe. The province was abandoned in AD 9 following the massacre of three Roman legions with their auxiliaries under Varus in the Teutoburgian forest ravines by the Germani under the renegade Arminius. The Batavians served as auxiliaries with the avenging Roman army, commanded by Germanicus, in campaigns to subdue the Germani between the Rhine and the Elbe and to stabilise the Roman frontier along the Rhine (AD 14-16).

Following the German campaign the Batavians continued to serve in the Roman army and the Praetorian Guard (until AD 68). They served in Britannia where under their own leaders they distinguished themselves either in the initial invasion and/or in the suppression of subsequent revolts. Four cohorts of Batavians fought under Agricola at the battle of Mons Graupius. It is probable that these are the cohorts that now garrison Vindolanda.

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35 *A cohors equitata* is composed of 480 troops of which 120 are mounted. It is an appropriate unit for an unsettled frontier as it has increased mobility to skirmish with insurgents. Current scholarship considers the idea that a fort was garrisoned by one unit as far from realistic due to the splitting of units and the combining of parts of units. It is known that the Tungrians were still in the area after the Batavians arrived (Bowman and Thomas [n.1] 22-24).

36 *Tab. Vindol*. II.225.24-25 in Bowman (n.1) 129.

37 Tac. *Hist*. IV.12; Tac. *Ann*. I.59; II.8; II.11; *OCD* (Oxford 1996) 235. The devastating effect of the loss of the three legions had on Rome and Augustus is related by Suetonius, who writes that Augustus, fearing a riot in the city, ordered night patrols. Augustus mourned the loss by not shaving nor cutting his hair, striking his head on doors crying: “Quintilius Varus, restore my legions!” (Suet. *Aug*. 23) Velleius Paterculus wrote an almost contemporary account of the Varian disaster (II.117-120). Cassius Dio also relates this disaster and its effect on Rome and Augustus (LV.18-23). Archaeological finds have confirmed Mommsen’s suggestion that the battle occurred near modern Kalkriese (*OCD* [n.37] 1489). Tacitus vividly portrays the emotional effect of the scene of desolation that confronted the avenging Roman army under Germanicus when, six years later, they came to pay their last respects to the unburied fallen (*Ann*. I.61-62).

38 Tac. *Hist*. IV.12; Cass. Dio LV.24. The Batavians would have been among the elite of the Germani in the Praetorian Guard of Tiberius (Tac. *Ann*. I.24; *OCD* [n.37] 235).

39 Tac. *Agr*. 36. The Batavians are given an honorable mention for their skill with the sword and their bravery.
The Batavians, by virtue of their ancient alliance with Rome, were exempt from tribute in return for providing soldiers in war.\textsuperscript{40} They, renowned for their prowess in battle, were granted the privilege of being commanded by one of their own elite.\textsuperscript{41} This policy could cause problems as witnessed by the Batavian revolt in AD 69/70.\textsuperscript{42} In the struggle for the Principate involving Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian following the death of Nero (AD 68), a Batavian of regal lineage (and a Roman citizen), Julius Civilis, seized the opportunity to raise north-western Gaul, the Batavian homeland, in revolt against Roman rule. He united the Batavians with the tribes of the left and right banks of the lower Rhine: the Nervi and Tungri of Belgica, and the Bructeri and Tencteri from Germania. A letter from Antonius Primus and the turning of a ‘blind eye’ by Hordeonius Flaccus (both partisans of Vespasian), encouraged Julius Civilis to raise the spectre of a Gallo-Germanic revolt so as to prevent reinforcements coming to the then princeps, Vitellius, who was opposing the western march of Vespasian’s troops from Syria and Moesia under Mucianus. It was only after the defeat of Vitellius at Cremona (AD 69), and the refusal of Julius Civilis, now reinforced by the tribes of Gaul and Germania (including the Tungrians), to lay down his arms that the Flavians realized their machinations had put in jeopardy Roman power in Gaul.

At Vindolanda, of course, the Batavians are stationed in a province distant from their homeland.\textsuperscript{43} As stated above, their prefect was a Batavian noble,

\textsuperscript{40} Tac. Germ. 29.1: “just like weapons and arms they [the Batavians] were reserved for wars”. This suggests that the Batavians were not conscripted by the Romans but obliged to provide auxiliary forces when required.

\textsuperscript{41} Tac. Hist. IV.12.

\textsuperscript{42} Tac. Hist. IV.12. Tacitus, in his detailed account of the revolt of Julius Civilis, places more emphasis for the cause of the revolt on the harsh treatment and conscription of the Batavians by Vitellius, along with the opportunism of Julius Civilis (Tac. Hist. IV.13). Whilst stating the facts, Tacitus is more restrained in his comments on the Flavian partisans, Antonius Primus and Hordeonius Flaccus (Hist. IV.12-36). It was under the Flavians that Tacitus’ career prospered and it could be asked if he wrote as he claimed: sine ira et studio (“without anger or favour”) (Ann. I.1; Hist. I.1).

\textsuperscript{43} British auxiliaries served in Agricola’s forces at Mons Graupius (Tac. Agr. 29.2) and diplomata (folding bronze tablets, given to a soldier on discharge, delineating his privileges, such as rights of marriage and citizenship) attest to Britons serving in Pannonia in this period (R. Ogilvie and I. Richmond [n. 20] 251). Some of these may have been conscripts. The Roman policy of conscripting the subject population and having them serve outside their homeland is given as one of a number of grievances by the Caledonian leader Calgacus (Tac. Agr. 31.1). In AD 360 the unpopular demand by Constantius II that Julian transfer his Herculanum and Batavian auxiliaries from their homeland and families in Gaul to serve on the Persian front led to them revolting and elevating Julian to Augustus (Amm. Marc. XX.4-20). Such a policy was not unique to the Romans. Hannibal, prior to leaving Spain to invade Italy (218 BC), garrisoned Carthage and North Africa with Spanish levies and fortified his Spanish possessions with Africans. Foreign troops, having no local ties, were more likely to maintain the subject population under strict control and were in effect hostages for their own loyalty and that of their people (Liv. XXL11-12).
Flavius Cerialis, whose name indicates that he (or his father) was given Roman citizenship by one of the Flavian emperors (post AD 70). Cerialis is also the *cognomen* of the general (Petilius Cerialis) who crushed the Batavian revolt of AD 69/70 and subsequently became governor of Britannia. Was Flavius Cerialis (or his father?) rewarded with Roman citizenship for loyalty to Rome during that revolt on the recommendation of Petilius Cerialis?

The Romanisation of the Batavians is witnessed by the fact that these once formidable enemies, now under their own commander, are the frontline defence of the empire along the Stanegate line, and writing fair Latin. With what irony does Tacitus put into the mouth of the chief of the Caledonians in his set pre-battle speech that those Gauls in the Roman army would remember their former liberty and turn their swords onto the Romans?

**Duty Rosters:**

The work details assigned on the duty rosters reveal the facilities at Vindolanda and the expertise of the auxiliary units. One such report of work assignments is provided below:

24 April, in the workshops, 343 men.
   of these: shoemakers, 12
   builders to the bath-house, 18
   for lead ...
   saw-makers (?) ...
   builders to the hospital ...
   to the kilns ...
   for clay ...
   plasterers ...
   for ...
   for rubble...
   ...

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44 Tac. Agr. 8.2. Petilius Cerialis was governor of Britannia in AD 71-74. The *nomen* was the middle name of the three (*praenomen, nomen, cognomen*) which most Roman citizens possessed. The *nomen* distinguished one *gens* from another, the *cognomen* one *familia* from another and the *praenomen* one member of a *familia* from another. When a person was given Roman citizenship he took the *nomen* of his patron’s *gens*, in this case Flavius. On this occasion, if the suggestion in the text above is correct, Flavius Cerialis has chosen to commemorate his personal champion through his *cognomen*.

45 Tac. Hist. V.24-25. Tacitus notes that some Batavians favoured accepting terms from Petilius Cerialis to cease their revolt.

46 Tac. Agr. 32.3.

47 *Tab. Vindol.* II.155 in Bowman (n.1) 102-103.
This report indicates that the auxiliary cohort had the expertise to construct the standard necessary facilities for the garrison, namely a hospital (valetudinarium), and a bath-house (balneum), the remains of which are extant.\(^{48}\) The Latin word for ‘builders’ (structores) encompasses carpenters and masons. The duty detail also included those experienced in working with lead (plumbum), saw-makers for timber, kiln workers and plasterers for building construction.

The work of the saw-makers and carpenters caused admiration mixed with consternation when the 2004 excavation at Vindolanda was flooded by a still functioning Roman water main bringing water to the fort from a nearby spring. The flow rate of the water pipe, which was constructed of bored alder trees expertly joined together by oaken pegs, required daily pumping out of the excavation.\(^{49}\) As wooden water pipes were commonly used for forts and villas in isolated areas in northern Europe due to the plentiful availability of suitable timber, the Batavians would have been familiar with the technique of boring the length of the tree trunks. In Britannia, which became the principal source of lead for the Roman world, wooden water pipes were much more common than lead.\(^{50}\)

Whilst the presence of a hospital at Vindolanda has not been confirmed by archaeological findings to date, buildings conforming to the characteristic plan of known Roman army hospitals have been tentatively identified at Housesteads fort and at Wallsend.\(^{51}\) It is possible that the hospital at Vindolanda has not survived as it may have been of timber construction similar to the hospital at the Roman legionary fort at Fendoch in Scotland, built at the turn of the first century AD.\(^{52}\)

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48 See Bowman (n.1) 175 and Vindolanda Tablets Online <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/exhibition/army-3.shtml> for photographs of the remains of the pre-Hadrianic bath-house at Vindolanda. The stone piers separating the hypocausts under the warm room (tepidarum) and hot room (caldarium) are visible.


50 A.T. Hodge, Roman Aqueducts and Water Supply (London 2005) 111-112, 307. As the wooden water main at Vindolanda proves, wood does not rot provided it is continually wet. Pliny the Elder (NH XVI.81) advises that alder wood is suitable for water pipes.

51 L. Allason-Jones, ‘Health Care in the Roman North’, Britannia 30 (1999) 134-135. Roman military hospitals have a standard plan deriving from Caesar’s field hospitals in his Gallic campaign (BG VI.38). The first permanent Roman military hospital was identified (based on the finding of medical instruments) at the fort at Neuss, near Dusseldorf. The forts at Housesteads and Wallsend, built in relation to Hadrian’s Wall, are of a later date to that of Vindolanda.

52 R. Jackson, Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire (London 2000) 135-136.
The Tungrian strength report stated that 337 men were at Coria (Corbridge). The excavation of the fort at Coria has brought to light “one of the larger collections of medical instruments found in Britain”. These instruments include scalpels with disposable iron blades, forceps and needles to cauterize ingrown eyelashes, a cause of eye inflammation which afflicted ten of those in the Tungrian strength report. Of particular note is the presence of instruments (ophthalmic needles and associated bone handles with a screw thread) for couching cataracts; this hazardous but sight-saving procedure is well described by Celsus. Thus the medical facilities at Coria were of a high standard. One may ask whether all of the 337 Tungrians at Coria were seconded to the office of Ferox as stated in the strength report or were some receiving medical treatment not available at Vindolanda.

The presence of a hospital at Vindolanda and the surgical expertise at Coria shows the Roman army’s fastidiousness in providing excellent medical care not only at its legionary bases such as Chester but also to the outlying auxiliary frontier forts.

The lead working party is interesting in that the Romans used lead extensively and had previously sourced supplies from former Carthaginian mines in Spain and Sardinia. Britannia had copious resources of lead in five mining areas, one not distant from Vindolanda, namely Yorkshire, where a lead ingot bearing the name of Domitian and the place of origin ‘Brig’ has been recovered. Whilst the identification of the site of ‘Brig’ is unknown, it has been speculated that it stands for Briganticum, which would be in the territory of the Brigantes, who were the most populous tribe in Britannia and whose capital, Isurium (modern Aldborough), was in north Yorkshire. It is possible that it is the Briga mentioned in the Vindolanda tablets where Aelius

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53 Allason-Jones (n.51) 141.
54 Martial (X.lvi) celebrates one Hyginus thus: “... the hairs that wound the eyes you, Hyginus, see ...”.
55 Cels. VII.7.14. In Rome this was a specialist procedure performed by a medicus ocularius. The tombstone of one such eye specialist is in the Capitoline Museum, Rome (personal observation 5/5/2006).
56 Jackson (n.52) 134.
57 Plin. NH XXXIV.164. Pliny states that there was a law limiting production of lead in Britannia due to its abundance and ease of extraction. This was to maintain the price and protect other mines, as due to confiscations or sale, all lead mines belonged to the state and were leased to private entrepreneurs. In Spain and Gaul the extraction of the ore, the veins of which were not rich and had no associated silver, was much more difficult and costly, requiring deep pits and a large work force. The Romans reopened the lead mines in Sardinia in the fourth century AD when transport from Britannia became too problematical due to unrest in the western provinces. For Carthaginian exploitation of mines in Spain, see Diod. Sic. V.38.2-3.
Broccibus was prefect and to where the senior officers of Vindolanda travelled to celebrate the festival of Fortuna.\textsuperscript{58}

Lead ingots discovered at a Somerset mine are stamped:

\textit{TI. CLAUDIVS CAESAR AVG.P.M.TRIB.P.VIII.IMP.XVI.DE BRITAN.}\textsuperscript{59}

The ingot stamp dated to AD 49 (six years after the invasion of Britannia) reveals that the Romans wasted no time in exploiting these mines which had been worked previously by the Britons.\textsuperscript{60} As the ore was close to the surface it could be extracted by a small workforce (such as the duty detail at Vindolanda) in open cut quarries.\textsuperscript{61} The extracted ore (\textit{galena}) was smelted close to the mines and most of the lead ingots exported to the more urbanised areas of the Roman world for the manufacture of water pipes, roofs, sealing clamps in building columns, ships and armament, seals, dyes, medications and many other uses besides.\textsuperscript{62} Thus the work detail for lead in this duty roster could be for a number of purposes such as work or guard duty in a Yorkshire ore quarry, smelting operations, or most probably to make the finished products from the lead ingots necessary for the infrastructure of Vindolanda.\textsuperscript{63}

Another tablet mentions the presence of a bath-keeper (\textit{balniator}), whose duty would be to maintain and oversee the use of the bath-house.\textsuperscript{64} The provision of a bath-house was standard for the forts along the northern frontier since cleanliness was important for preventive health. It is probable that the families of the soldiers were permitted to use the baths (at set times to avoid mixed bathing) as occurred at the legionary fortress at Caerleon in

\textsuperscript{58} Cf. \textit{Tab. Vindol.} II.190; II.292 in Bowman (n.1) 111-114; 136-137. The lead ingot (\textit{CIL VII.1207}) is stamped: IMP.CAES.DOMINO.AUG.COS.VII (on the upper face) and BRIG (on the side). (Imp[erator] Caes[are] Dom[i]no Aug[ustus] co[n]s[ule] VII. Brig[anticum??]) The ingot has been dated to AD 81.


\textsuperscript{60} Boulakia (n.59) 140. Pre-Roman British coins and fibulae have been found in the excavations.

\textsuperscript{61} Boulakia (n.59) 140. Although most mine workers were slaves, soldiers were also used. Tacitus (\textit{Ann.} XI.20) relates that legionaries toiled in underground silver mines in several provinces.

\textsuperscript{62} Boulakia (n.59) 144.

\textsuperscript{63} That Britons worked as slaves in Roman mines in Britannia may be inferred from the pre-battle speech of the Caledonian leader Calgacus who tells his followers that as there are no mines in Caledonia, death is the only option in defeat (\textit{Tac. Agr.} 31).

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Tab. Vindol.} II.181.8 in Bowman (n.1) 107.
Wales. Public health measures for general hygiene and to prevent infectious diseases would require that not only serving personnel be cleansed but all who were domiciled at the fort. Thus the health and housing of auxiliaries, like their legionary brothers, was a priority, especially in view of the wounded and sick mentioned in the Tungrian strength report.

The detail assigned to the kilns, the plasterers and saw-makers were related to the construction work about the fort. Such construction work required stone and another duty roster records the construction of a guest-house (hospitium), burning limestone and clay production.

7 March sent with Marcus, the medical orderly, to build the residence, builders, number 30 to burn stone, number 19 (?) to produce clay for the wattle fences of the camp ...

Note the medicus accompanying the construction detail. In the context the medicus is probably a medical orderly (miles medicus or capsarius) dispatched to attend to injuries from falls and to lacerations from saws and burns. It was routine practice in the Roman army for a medical orderly, with his bag of bandages, to be assigned to detachments doing dangerous work. Trajan’s column depicts two medical orderlies treating wounded soldiers in the Dacian campaign. At Vindolanda the medical orderly would also have treated those listed as ‘sick’, those with ailments such as eye inflammation and those wounded in skirmishes as noted previously in the Tungrian strength report. The medical orderly at Vindolanda had the services of a resident pharmacist (seplasiarius) who would have dispensed the medical prescription listed on another tablet for eye infections and wounds. It is not known if Vindolanda at this date had a qualified doctor in residence or visiting. Evidence that qualified medical doctors were present at some Roman frontier forts is provided by the finding of the tombstone of a certain

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65 Allason-Jones (n.51) 143-144.
66 Sickness was a great problem for armies. In 205 BC a severe epidemic crippled two Roman armies, one of which the senate authorized to be disbanded to avoid contagion causing a high mortality. The same epidemic incapacitated Hannibal’s forces, which had in fact transmitted it to one of the Roman armies (Liv. XXIX.10). Mark Antony suffered over half his losses (of twenty-four thousand dead) in his Parthian campaign of 35 BC due to disease, namely “dropsies and dysenteries” (Plut. Ant. 49-50). When the princeps Valentinian had his mortal febrile illness in Pannonia (AD 375) no army medical doctor could be contacted as he had sent them to treat the troops suffering from the plague (Amm. Marc. XXX.6).
68 Jackson (n.52) 132. See fig. 34.
69 Tab. Vindol. III.586.7 in Bowman (n.1) 123-124.
70 Tab. Vindol. III.591 in Bowman (n.1) 125-126. Most of the ingredients in this tablet are mentioned by Celsus or Pliny the Elder for use in medical treatments (Bowman and Thomas [n.25] 44-46).
Anicius Ingenuus, *medicus ordinarius* of the First Cohort of the Tungrians at Housesteads fort.\(^{71}\)

The guest-house (*hospitium*) was necessary to accommodate visitors to Vindolanda. The accounts for food show that there were regular visits of officers from neighbouring garrisons and also the governor of the province visited the fort.\(^{72}\)

An inventory of the domestic furnishings in the prefect's residence at Vindolanda reveals the standard of housing for the household of Flavius Cerialis. There are kitchen utensils (drinking vessels, shallow dishes, side plates, platters, bread baskets, eggcups), a bronze lamp, blankets and curtains. Listed also are what appear to be personal items such as cloaks, necklace-locks, headbands, hair, bags and a saddle.\(^{73}\)

These tablets make known the facilities available to the garrison at Vindolanda. The guest-house, hospital and bath-house, along with the plumbing express the Roman army's emphasis on health and amenities for its most valuable asset, the troops. The furnishings and personal items in the *praetorium* show the comfortable accommodation of the prefect, Flavius Cerialis, in keeping with his equestrian status.

The Roman army was a great bureaucracy maintaining meticulous records.\(^{74}\) A *renuntium* is a duty report, usually made by the second in command of a century, the *optio*. Some thirty-two duty reports have been found, all of a similar format but each written by a different hand, presumably those of the *optiones* themselves. This indicates that familiarity with Latin extended down to the lower levels of the auxiliary troops. Below is a *renuntium* of the Ninth Cohort of the Batavians:

15 April. Report of the 9th Cohort of Batavians. All who should be are at duty stations, as is the baggage. The *optiones* and *curatores* made the report. Arcuittius, *optio* of the century of Crescens, delivered it.\(^{75}\)

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\(^{71}\) Allason-Jones (n.51) 133-134. It is thought that a *miles medicus* was a medical orderly and that a *medicus ordinarius* was a qualified doctor with medical duties only and holding the rank of centurion. The latter would have had general practice and hospital duties. Housesteads fort was constructed c. AD 124 as one of the twelve permanent forts along Hadrian’s Wall (J. Crow, *Housesteads Roman Fort* [London 1992] 1).

\(^{72}\) *Tab. Vindol.* III.581.96 in Bowman (n. 1) 119-122.

\(^{73}\) *Tab. Vindol.* II.194; II.196; III.596 in Bowman (n.1) 116-119.

\(^{74}\) Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris* 2.19.

\(^{75}\) *Tab. Vindol.* III.574 in Bowman (n.1) 103-104.
It is intriguing that none of the *remuntia* recovered state anything was amiss. It would also appear that a *renuntium* was not made until all requirements had been met.

It was important to brief a new officer to Vindolanda of the customs and the fighting ability of the local population. The number of wounded listed in the Tungrian strength report and the epitaph of a certain centurion of a Tungrian unit killed in action are consistent with skirmishes.\(^{76}\) The following tablet is the first and only report describing the native peoples. It is not a glowing appraisal.

... the Britons are unprotected by armour(?). There are very many cavalry. The cavalry do not use swords nor do the wretched Britons mount in order to throw javelins.\(^{77}\)

Tacitus reports that the Britanni fought with huge swords which would have been quite unwieldy for cavalry. Their swords, unlike Roman swords, lacked a point and so were also unsuitable for cut and thrust at close quarters.\(^{78}\)

Similar reports have been found in Egypt informing new officers of the local situation.\(^{79}\)

**Requests For Leave:**

Vegetius, writing in the fourth century AD, states that leave was difficult to obtain in the Roman army.\(^{80}\) The numerous applications for leave found at Vindolanda have a similar format but are written by different hands, implying that each applicant wrote their own leave request rather than a scribe. In contrast in Egypt a scribe wrote out a standard request form leaving a space vacant for another hand to insert the applicant’s name.\(^{81}\) The requests appear to be written by lower rank soldiers, who have a reasonable grasp of Latin. This again displays the educating and cultural influence of the Roman army.

... I ask ... that you consider me a worthy person to whom to grant leave at Ulucium (?).\(^{82}\)

I, Messicus ..., ask, my lord, that you consider me a worthy person to whom to grant leave at Coria [Corbridge]. (Back) ... (?) of Messicus.\(^{83}\)

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\(^{76}\) Birley (n.32) 299-301.
\(^{77}\) *Tab. Vindol.* II.164 in Bowman (n.1) 103.
\(^{78}\) Tac. *Agr.* 36.1.
\(^{79}\) Bowman (n.1) 22-23.
\(^{80}\) Veg. *Epitoma rei militaris*, 2.19.
\(^{81}\) Bowman (n.1) 33-34.
\(^{82}\) *Tab. Vindol.* II.174 in Bowman (n.1) 104.
... of the century of Felicio. I ask, my lord Cerialis, that you consider me a worthy person to whom to grant leave...\(^{84}\)

These requests are for leave in local centres, where perhaps the soldiers had friends, girlfriends or de facto relationships, bearing in mind that soldiers in this period could not enter into a valid marriage until they had completed their twenty-five years service. Archaeological evidence reveals large civilian townships springing up about Roman garrisons with taverns and brothels to relieve the soldiers of their pay in return for supplying their needs and entertainment.\(^{85}\)

The site of Ulucium is not known but is presumed not too distant from Vindolanda. As to the duration and how far a soldier could go on leave, it is not recorded. However in the Tungrian strength report there are soldiers recorded in Londinium, in Gaul and outside the province. Whether they were on official duty or on furlough is open to speculation.

**Patronage in the Roman Army:**

The importance of influential friends in Roman society is seen in the contemporary letters of Pliny the Younger. The Vindolanda tablets reveal that such contacts were also of advantage to one's career in the auxiliary units of the Roman army in a province far from Rome. A certain Karus writes to Flavius Cerialis requesting that he use his influence with the regional centurion at Carlisle, Annius Questor, to obtain a position for a certain Brigonus. The substance of the letter has been written by an adjutant (scribe) and signed by Karus.

...ius Karus to his Cerialis, greetings.... Brigonus (?) has requested me, my lord, to recommend him to you. I therefore ask, my lord, if you would be willing to support him in what he has requested of you. I ask therefore that you think fit to commend him to Annius Questor, centurion in charge of the region, at Lugualium [Carlisle], by doing which you will place me in debt to you both in his name and my own. I pray that you are enjoying the best of fortune and are in good health. (2nd hand) Farewell, brother. (Back, 1st hand) To Cerialis, prefect.\(^{86}\)

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\(^{83}\) *Tab. Vindol. II.175* in Bowman (n.1) 104.


\(^{86}\) *Tab. Vindol. II.250* in Bowman (n.1) 131-132.
There is also a draft letter by Flavius Cerialis himself seeking preferment through a superior officer who has been promoted and has access to the provincial governor, Marcellus. This draft can be dated to circa AD 103, as a diploma records Marcellus as the governor of Britannia.\footnote{Bowman (n.1) 45. Lucius Neratius Marcellus is cited in a diploma of AD 103 as the legatus Augusti. As a result of the settlement of 27 BC the more military sensitive provinces (of which Britannia was one) in which legions were stationed (excepting Africa Proconsularis) were under the direct control of the princeps, who appointed his own governor, known as the legatus Augusti. It is known that Flavius Cerialis’ letter is a draft as there is neither a greeting nor farewell.} Pliny the Younger used the same senator (Marcellus) to obtain a position for Suetonius Tranquillus, the biographer.\footnote{Plin. Ep. III.8. Tacitus (Agr. 19.2) makes the point that his father-in-law, Agricola, as governor, promoted on merit and not on patronage.}

To his Crispinus. Since Grattius Crispinus is returning to … and … I have gladly seized the opportunity my lord of greeting you, you who are my lord and the man whom it is my very special wish to be in good health and master of all your hopes. For you have always deserved this of me right up to the present high office (?). In reliance on this … you first … greet (?) Lucius Marcellus, that most distinguished man, my governor. He therefore offers (?) the opportunity now of … the talents (?) of your friends through his presence, of which you have, I know, very many, thanks to him. Now, in whatever way you wish, fulfil what I expect of you and … so furnish me with very many friends that thanks to you I may be able to enjoy a pleasant period of military service. I write this to you from Vindolanda where my winter-quarters are (?) so that (?) … \footnote{Tab. Vindol. II.225 in Bowman (n.1) 128-129. The addressee Grattius Crispinus is a different person to the Grattius Crispinus mentioned in the letter.}

It is of interest that Flavius Cerialis is wished well by brother officers Niger and Brocchus when he goes to meet the governor. Aelius Brocchus was the prefect at Briga and the families of Flavius Cerialis and Aelius Brocchus, as shall be shown, were quite close.

Niger and Brocchus to their Cerialis, greeting. We pray, brother, that what you are about to do will be most successful. It will be so, indeed, since it is both in accord with our wishes to make this prayer on your behalf and you yourself are most worthy. You will assuredly meet our governor quite soon. (2nd hand) We pray, our lord and brother, that you are in good health … expect us (?). (Back, 1st hand?) To Flavius Cerialis, prefect of the cohort … \footnote{Tab. Vindol. II.248 in Bowman (n.1) 130-131. Aelius Brocchus later commanded a cavalry unit in Pannonia according to an inscription he dedicated at that place (CIL III.4360 cited in Bowman [n.1] 57).}
Whether Flavius Cerialis’ meeting with the governor (Lucius Marcellus) referred to in the latter letter was mediated through the influence of his friend Crispinus (the addressee of the former letter) is not known but quite possible.

**Transport and Communication:**

Transport was essential for communication and maintaining the garrison in materials, food and supplies, not to mention the fetching of the soldiers’ *stipendium* from York. The Tungrian strength report and other correspondence reveals that there was much movement of personnel about the province and this required good communications. The road network in northern Britannia was established during the Flavian period when the Brigantes were being subjugated and Agricola was advancing into Caledonia. 91

It is known from the duty roster reports that there were workshops (*fabricae*) at Vindolanda which required materials such as lead and stone. Another document shows that these workshops had the capacity to assemble and repair wagons.

Metto (?) to his Advectus (?) very many greetings. I have sent you wooden materials through the agency of Saco:

- hubs, number, 34
- axles for carts, number, 38
- therein an axle turned on the lathe, number, [1]
- spokes, number, 300
- planks (?) for a bed, number, 26
- seats, number, 8 (?)
- knots (?), number, 2 (?)
- boards (?), number, 20 + (?)
- … , number, 29
- benches (?), number, 6

I have sent you goat-skins, number, 6

(2nd hand) I pray that (?) you are in good health, brother. 92

Wagons were used to bring lead and stone for construction, food, clothing and other necessary supplies to the garrison. The writer of the following letter appears to have had a bad experience in the past regarding the reliability of a certain Vocontius in providing stone for building and obtaining the necessary transport. One can detect a tone of frustration in the writer’s statement to his superior that he should make a decision regarding the number of wagons and

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91 Bowman (n.1) 42.
92 *Tab. Vindol. II* 309 in Bowman (n.1) 139-140. Knots of maple-wood were used for making furniture (Plin. *NH* 16.68).
instruct Vocontius to act. Vocontius, the centurion responsible, is a little slack and has to be prodded to organize the matter.

... you ought to decide, my lord, what quantity of wagons you are going to send to carry stone. For the century of Vocontius (?) ... on one day with wagons ... Unless you ask Vocontius to sort out (?) the stone, he will not sort it out. I ask you to write what you want me to do (?). I pray that you are in good health.\textsuperscript{93}

Another letter advises that wagons have been dispatched for stone and requests that they be loaded immediately on arrival so that they will return with the stone in the early morning. The stone quarry must have been in the vicinity of Vindolanda.\textsuperscript{94}

Given the poor state of the roads, the garrisons on the Stanegate line were expected to ensure there were sufficient supplies for winter perchance they be isolated. In the following letter Flavius Cerialis reports that he is complying with his superior’s request to prepare his winter quarters for inclement weather.

Flavius Cerialis to his September, greetings. Tomorrow, which is October 5, as you wish my lord, I will provide some goods by means of which we may endure the storms even if they are troublesome.\textsuperscript{95}

**Business Transactions and the Cash Economy:**

The following letter reveals the reason a wise officer prepares for winter. It gives an insight into the problems in obtaining supplies, the cash economy of northern Britannia and sharp business practices. In summary, Octavius, a centurion, has paid a deposit on the purchase of some wheat but needs cash urgently to complete the transaction, otherwise he will lose his deposit, not to mention the potential loss of face. He requests that he be given some hides and a cart which are at Cataractonium (Catterick) since he does not wish to risk his animals on the poor state of the roads. A contract entered into by Octavius to sell some hides has been dishonoured. There is also some umbrage regarding what Octavius thinks is profiteering by a messmate.

Octavius to his brother Candidus, greetings. The hundred pounds of sinew from Marinus – I will settle up. From the time when you wrote about this matter, he has not even mentioned it to me. I have several times written to you

\textsuperscript{93} *Tab. Vindol.* II.316 in Bowman (n.1) 143-144.
\textsuperscript{95} *Tab. Vindol.* II.234 in Bowman (n.1) 130.
that I have bought about five thousand modii of ears of grain, on account of which I need cash. Unless you send me some cash, at least five hundred denarii, the result will be that I shall lose what I have laid out as a deposit, about three hundred denarii, and I shall be embarrassed. So, I ask you, send me some cash as soon as possible. The hides which you write are at Cataractonium [Catterick]—write that they be given to me and the wagon about which you write. And write to me what is with that wagon. I would have already been to collect them except that I did not care to injure the animals while the roads are bad. See with Tertius about the 8½ denarii which he received from Fatalis. He has not credited them to my account. Know that I have completed the 170 hides and I have 119 (?) modii of threshed bracis. Make sure that you send me some cash so that I may have ears of grain on the threshing-floor. Moreover, I have already finished threshing all that I had. A messmate of our friend Frontius has been here. He was wanting me to allocate (?) him hides and that being so, was ready to give cash. I told him I would give him the hides by the Kalends of March. He decided that he would come on the Ides of January. He did not turn up nor did he take any trouble to obtain them since he had hides. If he had given the cash, I would have given him them. I hear that Frontinius Julius has for sale at a high price for leather-making the (things) which he bought here for five denarii a piece. Greet Spectatus and ... and Firmus. I have received letters from Gleuco. Farewell.

(Back) (Deliver) at Vindolanda. 96

This letter reveals that the garrisons could purchase locally supplies, such as wheat, hides and sinews for cash and in return could sell surplus goods such as hides for a profit to entrepreneurs, whether they are fellow soldiers (Frontius) or private traders (Frontinius Julius). Thus whilst the regional headquarters at York controlled the payroll (stipendium), the frontier forts had the freedom to obtain supplies and conduct business on their own account. It was this which was the stimulus for townships to develop in the

96 Tab. Vindol. II.343 in Bowman (n.1) 144-146. Note that the 300 denarii paid by Octavius as a deposit for the grain is equivalent to one year’s pay for a legionary soldier in this period. A modius is a Roman dry measure used for measuring amounts of corn or fruit, equivalent to a peck. Six modii equals one medimnum which is the Greek dry measure equivalent to a bushel. Given that a bushel of grain is equivalent to about 60 pounds (27.3 kilograms), then Octavius has contracted for 227 tonnes of wheat. It has been estimated that an active man requires 3822 calories per day for subsistence, which would be supplied by about one seventh of a modius (L.A. Foxhall and H.A. Forbes, 'ΣΙΤΟΜΕΣΤΙΕΙΑ: The Role of Grain as a Staple Food in Classical Antiquity', Chiron 12 [1982] 48-49 cited in Bowman and Thomas [n.1] 122-123). Thus Octavius has contracted to purchase sufficient grain to feed one thousand soldiers for approximately one month (allowing for a little wastage due to threshing and rodents). The allowance for a soldier of five modii per month may be compared to the estimated corn dole allowance of five modii per month given to the needy plebeians in Rome (P.A. Brunt and J.M. Moore, Res Gestae Divi Augustae [Oxford 1967] 59). Another record of a commercial purchase of barley is found in Tab. Vindol. II.180 (Bowman and Thomas [n.1] 188).
vicinity of forts. Whether the grain was grown locally or had to be transported is not known.

That there was a significant cash economy at Vindolanda is supported by the fact that it is the site of the largest pre-Hadrianic coin find (including high denomination coins) in northern Britain.\(^97\) The large quantity of supplies purchased (one hundred pounds of sinews; the five thousand *modii* of ears of grain; the one hundred and seventy hides and an unknown quantity of *bracis*) and the high value coins found are consistent with purchases being destined for the garrison and not individual soldiers. The mention in the letter of a trade in hides and there being a significant number of hides at Catterick is also consistent with the archaeological evidence for the presence of a tannery at this centre between c. AD 85 and AD 120.\(^98\) Perhaps Octavius’ embarrassment should he forfeit the deposit for the grain purchase was that he feared his accounts being audited by the regional headquarters at York.\(^99\)

Octavius mentions that he has purchased a considerable quantity of *bracis*, which is husked wheat or emmer and used in the production of Celtic beer.\(^100\) Celtic beer was an important item at Vindolanda as the postscript to another letter highlights. There is an urgent request for beer from a certain Masclus to be sent to a detachment (*vexillum*) of soldiers who have been performing duty at an outpost from Vindolanda.\(^101\) Masclus was a *decurion* of the Ninth Cohort of Batavians, which denotes that Flavius Cerialis’ garrison at Vindolanda had cavalry (*cohors equitata*).\(^102\) Horses were ideal to provide increased mobility for patrols, enabling them to control extensive territory. This in turn meant that a smaller number of troops was needed to oversee the native population, thereby allowing some to be given special duties as seen in the Tungrian strength report.

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\(^{97}\) Bowman (n.1) 35.

\(^{98}\) *Tab. Vindol.* II.343 (commentary), *Vindolanda Tablets Online*, viewed 7 September 2005, \(<\text{http://vindolanda.esad.ox.ac.uk/>}\).

\(^{99}\) Pliny the Younger spent his military service in Syria as a military tribune auditing the accounts of auxiliary cavalry and infantry units. He uncovered considerable inaccuracy and fraud (*Plin. Ep.* VII.31.2; III.11.5).

\(^{100}\) *Plin. NH* 18.62. ‘Bracis’ is a Gallic word referring to a particularly white variety of husked wheat or emmer which the Romans called *scandala* (P.G.W. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* [Oxford 2006] 241).

\(^{101}\) *Tab. Vindol.* III.628.ii.4-6 in Bowman (n.1) 133-134: “My fellow soldiers have no beer. Please order some to be sent.” Masclus addresses Flavius Cerialis as *rex*. Besides being the Latin for ‘king’ the term denotes any man who is considered a great man in relation to his clients or someone who has control or headship within some sphere (*Glare* [n.100] 1650-1651). Thus Flavius Cerialis, as a Roman citizen and prefect of the cohort, held an exalted position among the Batavians.

\(^{102}\) There was a veterinarian at Vindolanda to care for the horses and other animals (*Tab. Vindol.* II.181.7 in Bowman [n.1] 107).
It is notable that at Vindolanda there was a *braciarius* to thresh the *braces*, and a brewer (*cervesarius*) to provide the beer for the garrison. The most potent and optimum quality Celtic beer (*cervesia*) was produced from the grain malting process. *Cervesia*, a prominent item in accounts at Vindolanda, was a popular alcoholic beverage amongst the fighting class of the society of Gaul and Germany. Thus the Batavians brought to Vindolanda their tradition of beer drinking. It appears that if brewing was not undertaken at the fort it was performed in the vicinity.

There are a number of accounts for the purchase of food which reveal the nutritious diet of the prefect’s household and fellow officers. In the past it was thought that the Roman military diet was predominately vegetarian and that meat was only consumed under duress. The accounts for food at Vindolanda reveal that Flavius Cerialis’ household consumed meat, especially pork and venison. The pigs were local as one account mentions the allocation of wheat for a certain Lucco, who was in charge of the pigs. Hunting, as will be discussed, was a source of venison, boar and birds. The account detailing the purchase of poultry over a period of more than two years (AD 102–104) demonstrates the importance of chicken and geese in the diet. The prominence of meat in the Batavian diet at Vindolanda has been paralleled by the finding of animal bones in rubbish deposits of forts in the Batavian homeland, the north-west provinces of the Roman world.

Although wheat was the staple food for the army, it was supplemented by other foods such as lentils, beans, eggs, olives and olive oil. Fish sauce (*muria*), a favourite of the Romans, also was on the menu for special occasions at Vindolanda. If one had the right messmate (*contubernalis*) one could even obtain British oysters, which were so renowned that Juvenal mentions those from Richborough with those from Circceii and Lake Lucrinus

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103 *Tab. Vindol. II.182.i.14* in Bowman (n.1) 108.
104 Jackson (n.52) 36.
105 *Tac. Germ. 23*; Jackson (n.52) 36. The Batavians originally came from across the Rhine in Germania where, at least according to Tacitus, excessive beer drinking played an important role in their society (*Germ. 22*).
106 *Tab. Vindol. II.191.4-13*; *Tab. Vindol. II.182.5-7* in Bowman (n.1) 114-115; 108-109.
107 *Tab. Vindol. II.180.27* in Bowman (n.1) 105.
108 *Tab. Vindol. III.581* in Bowman (n.1) 119-123.
109 Jackson (n.52) 131. *Tacitus (Germ. 23)* states that the diet of the Germani includes fresh game.
110 Bowman (n.1) 64-65. One type of wholemeal bread favoured by soldiers was called *panis militaris* (military bread) (*Plin. NH XVIII.67*; Jackson [n.52] 39). See *Vindolanda Tablets Online, <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/exhibition/army-6sh.html>*, for details of the Roman army diet and the numbers of tablets detailing food items.
111 *Tab. Vindol. II.190.27* in Bowman (n.1) 112. *Muria* is similar to *garum*, both made from small fish or shellfish and brine.
in Italy.\textsuperscript{112} Pliny the Elder, Juvenal, Seneca the Younger and Martial considered oysters a luxury associated with gluttony.\textsuperscript{113} Pliny the Younger strongly rebukes a certain Septicius Clarus for attending a vulgar lavish dinner which included oysters and dancing girls from Gades, rather than fulfilling the promise to attend his more modest affair.\textsuperscript{114}

Vindolanda also had imported luxury items. A certain Tagarminis purchased pepper (\textit{piper}) for two \textit{denarii}.\textsuperscript{115} Pepper was quite expensive, given that that annual salary for an auxiliary soldier was 250 \textit{denarii}.\textsuperscript{116} Tagarminis may well have held the rank of centurion of an auxiliary cohort, whose annual pay had been estimated to be one thousand two hundred \textit{denarii}, that is five times that of an ordinary auxiliary soldier. Had Tagarminis held this rank he would have been wealthy enough to indulge in some expensive goods.\textsuperscript{117} Pliny the Elder states that pepper was a luxury imported from India.\textsuperscript{118} He also describes the route travelled by the trading fleet that sailed annually from Egypt to India (using the trade winds) for luxury goods, the purchase of which drained some fifty million \textit{sestertii} from the wealth of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{119} From the Indian port of Becare the fleet sailed to the Red Sea port of Berenice, whence the goods were transferred overland by camel to Coptus on the Nile, then proceeded down the Nile to Alexandria.\textsuperscript{120} From Alexandria

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Tab. Vindol. II} 299 in Bowman (n.1) 137-138; Juv. IV.141; “oysters brought forth from the Rutupinian depths” (i.e., the sea off Rutiniae, a town of the Cantii, now Richborough, in Kent). Richborough has yielded many oyster shells (S. Braund (ed.), \textit{Juvenal: Satires, Book I} [Cambridge 1996] 266).

\textsuperscript{113} Plin. \textit{NH} IX.169; XXXII.59; Sen. \textit{Ep. XCV.19}. Santra, a certain glutinous parasite, having gone to great lengths to obtain an invitation to a formal dinner, does not blush to greedily snatch the discards of oysters (Mart. 7.20.7). Juvenal associates oysters with the best fragrant wines and decadent late night suppers (VI.302; VIII.85-86). The oysters were preserved in brine (produced from evaporation of seawater) for transport from the coast. (Jackson [n.52] 37).


\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Tab. Vindol. II} 184.3-4 in Bowman (n.1) 109.

\textsuperscript{116} M.A. Speidel, ‘Roman Army Pay Scales’, \textit{Journal of Roman Studies} 82 (1992) 87, 106. Speidel estimates that in the period from the principate of Domitian (AD 84) to that of Septimius Severus (AD 197) an auxiliary infantryman received one thousand \textit{sestertii} per annum (250 \textit{denarii}) which is five-sixths of the pay of a legionary.

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Tab. Vindol. II} 184.3-4 in Bowman (n.1) 109; Speidel (n.116) 106. Speidel estimates that a centurion of an auxiliary cohort received five thousand \textit{sestertii} per annum (1250 \textit{denarii}).

\textsuperscript{118} Plin. \textit{NH} XII.29.


\textsuperscript{120} Plin. \textit{NH} VI.100-106; Strabo \textit{Geog.} II.V.12; XVI.IV.24. The \textit{Periplous Maris Erythraei} of the first century AD (an important source for knowledge of the trade routes to India and the
merchantmen would transport the pepper to Puteoli, then it proceeded by road to Rome to be stored in the pepper warehouses constructed by Domitian.\textsuperscript{121} The number of middle men and custom dues en route was a significant factor in the premium price for pepper.\textsuperscript{122}

As will be discussed below, expensive Massic wine may also have been imported to Vindolanda for special occasions such as religious festivals.\textsuperscript{123}

Roman Religious Observances:

Religious observances were important occasions for the Roman army. The auxiliary cohorts observed traditional Roman festivals such as to Fortuna (24th of June). An account for food and beverages for the celebration reveals that in the week preceding the festival large quantities of barley, fish sauce, pork, ham and lard, along with a considerable amount of alcohol were supplied to the prefect’s household at Vindolanda.\textsuperscript{124} The purchases included sixty-eight litres of Celtic beer, forty-six litres of vintage wine and an unknown quantity of wine, possibly Massic wine. Pliny the Elder and Vergil state that Massic wine, imported from Italy, is of the finest quality.\textsuperscript{125} In addition, there was an unknown amount of inexpensive sour wine (acetum), which was mixed with water to make posca, a refreshing drink favoured by soldiers and the lower classes.\textsuperscript{126} The alcohol consumed shows the Batavians, whilst keeping their traditional drink, cervesia, have adopted the traditional Roman drink (acetum) and may have acquired a taste for good quality wine.\textsuperscript{127}

east coast of Africa) has ships of a large size carrying pepper and other spices from India to the Egyptian port of Mosullon (OCD [n.37] 1142; 1436).

\textsuperscript{121} OCD (n.37) 1436. The popularity of pepper at Rome was such that in AD 92 Domitian had warehouses constructed for its storage. Warrington ([n.119] 89-90) states that vessels arriving from the east put into Puteoli and that Domitian had constructed a more direct road from that port to Rome in AD 95. However Aelius Aristides in his rhetorical treatise To Rome (11-13) describes merchant vessels arriving in the port of Rome, Ostia, delivering cargoes from all places including India.

\textsuperscript{122} Goods crossing the borders into the Roman Empire were subject to a 25 per cent tax. Within the empire there were custom zones which did not correspond to provincial boundaries. A custom due (portoria) of two and a half per cent was levied on the value of goods crossing from one custom zone to another. Thus pepper from the east would be subjected to the 25 per cent portoria on entering the empire and two and a half per cent added tax as it crossed numerous custom zones within the empire. The tax was imposed ad valorem and was let out to the publicani in the principate (OCD [n.37] 1228).

\textsuperscript{123} Tab. Vindol. II.190.16 in Bowman (n.1) 113.

\textsuperscript{124} Tab. Vindol. II.190.1-35 in Bowman (n.1) 111-113.

\textsuperscript{125} Plin. NH XIV.64; Verg. Aen. VII.725.

\textsuperscript{126} Jackson (n.52) 36.

\textsuperscript{127} Tacitus (Germ. 23) notes that the Germani dwelling near to the Rhine also acquired a taste for wine.
The Batavians appear to enjoy their alcohol, judging from the quantity purchased and its alcoholic content. Celsus classifies *cervesia* and vintage wine in his strongest class of alcohol.\(^{128}\) It would be interesting to know if they drank the quality Massic wine, whether they drank it in the Roman fashion (diluted with water) or in the Gallic fashion (undiluted), which so horrified the Romans.

The writer of this account, most probably a slave of Flavius Cerialis’ household, gives an impression of the social life on the northern frontier. He notes that the masters (*domini*) have stayed at Briga for the celebration. This is where Brocchus, whose family was close to that of Cerialis’, was prefect.

Another important day of sacrifice in the Roman world was New Year’s Day. As of 153 BC it was celebrated on the 1st of January, the festival of the ancient Italian god of gates (Janus). A certain person reports to Flavius Cerialis that he has made the accustomed sacrifice:

> ... to his Cerialis, greetings. Just as you wished, brother, I have consecrated the day of the Kalends by a sacrifice ... \(^{129}\)

In another fragmentary letter, a certain Hostilius Flavianus wishes Flavius Cerialis a happy and prosperous New Year.\(^{130}\)

The Saturnalia was also celebrated at Vindolanda. In one letter, Severus, a military officer, requests a slave, Candidus, to sort out the cost of radishes for the occasion. Candidus would have had a particular interest in ensuring that all the preparations were complete for the Saturnalia since this was a festive occasion of special significance to slaves. The festival of the Saturnalia commenced on the 17th of December and continued for seven days during which time slaves were given temporary freedom and dined with their masters. The occasion was characterized by inversion of the master/slave role. Statius, writing during the principate of Domitian, depicts the festivities and great merriment associated with much eating, drinking and the exchange of gifts.\(^{131}\)

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\(^{128}\) Plin. *NH* II.28; Jackson (n. 52) 36.

\(^{129}\) *Tab. Vindol.* II. 265, *Vindolanda Tablets Online*, viewed 7 September 2005, <http://vindolanda.casad.ox.ac.uk/>; New Year’s Day was also the occasion on which the military oath of allegiance (*sacramentum*) to the *princeps* was renewed (*Tac. Hist.* I.55). Alternatively it was renewed on the anniversary of accession (*OCD* [n.37] 1343).


\(^{131}\) Stat. *Silvae* I.6; cf. *OCD* (n.37) 1360-1361. Augustus had restricted the Saturnalia to three days; Gaius (Caligula) and Claudius increased it to five days. In practice these restrictions were ignored and the Saturnalia continued for seven days as it had in Cicero’s time.
Severus to his Candidus, greetings. Regarding the expenditure for the Saturnalia, I ask you, brother to sort them out at a price of four or six asses and radishes to the value of not less than ½ denarius. Farewell, brother.
(Back) To Candidus, slave of Genialis from Severus, cornicularius.132

This letter suggests that Severus is requesting Candidus to organize the preparations for the Saturnalia dinner at which slaves dined in the presence of their masters. Bowman does not consider that one can explain the addressing of Candidus as ‘brother’ as being entirely due to the familiarity associated with the Saturnalia.133 The address of ‘brother’ is not out of place amongst equals such as Flavius Cerialis, Niger and Brocchus; and Karus and Flavius Cerialis, however prima facie one does not expect it between a free soldier and a slave in a military establishment.134 On the other hand, Pliny the Younger recognized slaves as persons and not chattels and he considered that a slave found his identity within the household.135 Whilst in no way implying that Severus had read the writings of Seneca the Younger, who advised that it befits a sensible and educated man to live on friendly terms with one’s slaves, it is possible that the use of ‘brother’ by Severus in addressing Candidus reveals the humanity and enlightenment of Severus in regard to slaves as well as being in the spirit of the Saturnalia.136

An account for the 1st of March, relating to the supply of poultry over a period of more than two years (AD 102 to AD 104), reveals that the Matronalia, when husbands gave presents to their wives, was also celebrated in the household of Flavius Cerialis.137

In summary, it appears that the Romanized equestrian officer class lived well at Vindolanda. They did not lack the refinements of Roman culture in facilities and in their cuisine. Supplies were either provided locally or imported. Stylus type tablets, pepper and possibly good quality wine were

132 Tab. Vindol. II.301 in Bowman (n.1) 138.
133 Bowman (n.1) 52. Bowman refers to the use of ‘brother’ as a form of address to a slave as a very surprising feature of this letter.
134 Tab. Vindol. II.248 in Bowman (n.1) 130-131; Tab. Vindol. III.629 in Bowman (n.1) 134; Tab. Vindol. II.250 in Bowman (n.1) 131-132. ‘Brother’ is also the affectionate address amongst soldiers who share the same tent (Tab. Vindol. II.310 in Bowman [n.1] 140-141).
136 Tab. Vindol. II.233; II.250 in Bowman (n.1) 129; cf. Sen. Ep. XLVII. Seneca writes that slaves are human beings (hominis) and humble friends (humiles amicit) living under the same roof. Thus ‘brother’ (frater) was an affectionate way of addressing a person (Glare [n.100] 731). There is no evidence of sexual connotations in this use of ‘brother’ as seen in Petronius (Sat. 10.6; 127.2; 129.8).
137 Tab. Vindol. III.581.71-72 in Bowman (n.1) 121. Vespasian also gave gifts to his female guests on the Matronalia (Suet. Vesp. 19). See Ovid (Fast. III.229-230) for the celebration of the Matronalia on 1st March in honour of Mars.
imported, whilst Celtic beer, grain, meat, vegetables and ink leaf tablets were obtained locally. There were also facilities and specialist skills amongst the garrison for health, construction projects, animal husbandry and transport. The fort did not rely on the nearest legionary headquarters at York for these requirements.

**Women and Social Life on the Northern Frontier:**

A conservative senator in a speech, set in AD 21 by Tacitus, abhors the fact that wives accompany their senator husbands on military assignments. According to this senator, wives lead to luxurious living in peace and panic in war. Women are unable to bear the trials of military service, are spiteful, ambitious, power hungry. Furthermore they seduce the centurions. In essence the presence of women make a Roman army look like a barbarian procession.¹³⁸

From this speech which Tacitus puts into the mouth of Caecina Severus the phenomenon of wives of commanders accompanying their husbands into the provinces was relatively common. Agricola’s pregnant wife accompanied him to Asia where he served as quaestor in AD 64 and again when he was governor of Britannia (AD 78-84).¹³⁹ Pliny the Younger’s wife accompanied her husband when Trajan appointed him *legatus Augusti* to govern Bithynia-Pontus in c. AD 110.¹⁴⁰

Flavius Cerelis had his wife Sulpicia Lepidina and (perhaps) children at Vindolanda as did Flavius’ friend and fellow prefect at Briga, Aelius Brocchus. The correspondence of Sulpicia Lepidina and Claudia Severa (Brocchus’ wife) provides a vignette of social life on the northern frontier. It has already been noted that on one occasion the officers from the Vindolanda garrison celebrated the festival of Fortuna at Briga, where Brocchus was prefect.

One of the best known of the Vindolanda tablets is the birthday invitation of Claudia Severa, wife of Aelius Brocchus, to Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Flavius Cerelis.

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¹³⁹ Tac. *Agr.* 6.2; 29.1.

¹⁴⁰ Plin. *Ep.* X.120; 121. Trajan gave retrospective approval for Pliny the Younger’s wife to use the Imperial Post to travel from Bithynia to care for her aunt on the death of her grandfather.
Claudia Severa to her Lepidina greetings. On the 3rd day before the Ides of September, sister, for the day of the celebration of my birthday, I give you a warm invitation to make sure that you come to us, to make the day more enjoyable for me by your arrival, if you are present. Give my greetings to your Cerialis. My Aelius and my little son send you their greetings. (2nd hand) I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper, and hail. (Back, 1st hand) To Sulpicia Lepidina, (wife) of Cerialis, from Severa.\textsuperscript{141}

The invitation reveals both the social life and the literacy of the equestrian class on the northern frontier. Although this invitation has been written by a scribe, the salutation and farewell is in the hand of Claudia Severa. Bowman makes the point that letters were commonly written by clerks or amanuenses and the fact that Claudia Severa used a scribe does not reflect on her level of literacy. Bowman considers that a study of the letter shows that Claudia Severa is on top of her material which indicates the quality of her literacy.\textsuperscript{142} Bowman considers that the elegance of the Latin in this letter may be attributed to Claudia Severa rather than the scribe. As Bowman states, the phraseology in the body of the invitation ("to make the day more enjoyable for me by your arrival, if you are present") and the elaborate farewell closure (see below) points to the personal touch of Claudia Severa, who in all likelihood dictated it to the scribe.\textsuperscript{143} The reason for her not writing the invitation may lie in the greeting and farewell, which are in her own handwriting. Her writing is somewhat a scrawl; according to Birley she has "a wobbly hand".\textsuperscript{144} This invitation is the earliest known example of surviving handwriting in Latin by a woman.\textsuperscript{145}

The effusive greeting and farewell in Claudia's own hand reflects the close bond between the two families. (Remember that Brocchus had wished Flavius well for his meeting with the governor.) Note the personal greeting for Sulpicia's husband and the fact that Claudia addresses Lepidina as "my dearest soul". Also note that Claudia's filiulus ("dear little boy") sends his greetings. This is typical of close Roman families. One reads the same

\textsuperscript{141} Tab. Vindol. II.291 in Bowman (n.1) 135. The Romans celebrated their own birthdays, those of family members and friends with gifts, offerings and banquets (OCD [n.37] 244).

\textsuperscript{142} Bowman (n.1) 85-86.

\textsuperscript{143} Bowman (n.1) 90. For a discussion of Roman cursive script of this period, see Bowman (n.1) 87-88.

\textsuperscript{144} R. Birley, Vindolanda's Roman Records (Greenhead 1994) 28. See Bowman (n.1) 69 for a photograph of the Vindolanda tablet depicting the birthday invitation letter of Claudia Severa. Claudia Severa's handwriting is in the right lower corner and is in marked contrast to that of the scribe.

\textsuperscript{145} However see the appeal of Valatta discussed below (n.151). Although the poems of Sulpicia (late first century BC) and the letter of Cornelia to her son Gaius Gracchus (late second century BC), if genuine, are known Latin writings of women that precede Claudia Severa, the birthday invitation has Claudia Severa's own handwriting.
affectionate greetings which Cicero appends from ‘little Tullia’ (*Tulliola*) and ‘little Cicero’ in his letters to Atticus.\(^{146}\)

It appears that Claudia Severa was in the habit of visiting her friend. The next letter refers to a proposed visit and gives insight into the relationship between Claudia Severa and her husband Aelius Brochus.

\[\ldots\] greetings. Just as I had spoken with you, sister, and promised that I would ask Brochus and would come to you, I asked him and he gave me the following reply, that it was always readily permitted to me, together with \ldots\ to come to you at Coria [Corbridge]? in whatever way I can. For there are certain essential things which \ldots\ you will receive my letters by which you will know what I am going to do \ldots\ I was \ldots\ and will remain at Briga. Greet your Cerialis from me. (Back, 2nd hand) Farewell my sister, my dearest and most longed-for soul. (1st hand) To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa, wife of Brochus?\(^{147}\)

If Coria is correct, then for some reason Sulpicia Lepidina was there and not at Vindolanda. Again, note the affectionate farewell (“my dearest and most longed-for soul”). There is much mutual respect between Claudia Severa and her husband Brochus. She makes a point of seeking her husband’s permission to visit her friend as such a journey would mean an absence of several days and perhaps a military escort. Aelius Brochus is only too happy to comply. It should be also noted that the wives do not take their husband’s *nomen*, but the address on the letters give the status of the women as ‘wife of’.

The close relations between the family of Aelius Brochus and Flavius Cerialis is revealed in the following letter of Brochus inviting Flavius Cerialis and Lepidina to stay as houseguests over the New Year.

\[\ldots\] greetings. Both the Saturnalia have passed and the \ldots\ have been sent to me and not so \ldots\ as \ldots\ Come with your Lepidina, in this way so that you may stay with us beyond(?) the New Year. \ldots\ My Severa greets you (both). (2nd hand) Farewell, my dearest brother. (Back 1st hand?) To Flavius Cerialis, prefect of the cohort, from Brochus \ldots\(^{148}\)

The importance of the Saturnalia festivities for their respective households is underlined by the fact that the invitation is issued after the Saturnalia. Having discharged their responsibilities to their household the two families could

\(^{146}\) Cic. *Att.* I.10.6; *Att.* II.9.4: “little Cicero greets Titus the Athenian”. Cicero, knowing Atticus’ love for all things Greek makes the greeting more personal (and delineates it from the formal business of his letter) by appending it in Greek.

\(^{147}\) *Tab. Vindol.* II.292 in Bowman (n.1) 136.

\(^{148}\) *Tab. Vindol.* III.622 in Bowman and Thomas (n.25) 82.
enjoy a quiet period amongst themselves. That the wives were specifically mentioned indicates that this was a family occasion. An account for poultry also appears to mention provision for a dinner for Aelius Brocchus on December 25th at Vindolanda. It is not known whether this was a private social function for Aelius Brocchus or a formal military dinner.¹⁴⁹

The social interaction between families is seen again in another letter from a certain Clodius Super to Flavius Cerialis. In the letter, Clodius Super apologises for not being able to attend the birthday party of Cerialis’ wife, Sulpicia Lepidina.

Clodius Super to his Cerialis greetings. Most willingly, brother, just as you had wanted, I would have been present for your Lepidina’s birthday (?). At any rate ... For you surely know that it pleases me most whenever we are together. If (?) ... I did not think ... lest before ... (Back, 3rd hand?) To Flavius Cerialis ...¹⁵⁰

There is an intriguing fragment of an appeal by a certain woman, Valatta, who attempts to use the influence of Lepidina on her husband Flavius Cerialis. Given that Flavius Cerialis is prefect of the Ninth Cohort of Batavians and the appeal concerns his ‘severity’ regarding some matter within his authority, one could postulate that Valatta is appealing to him on behalf of someone dear to her such as her husband. Perhaps her husband is a soldier in the cohort and about to be disciplined or flogged or worse. Has Valatta invoked Lepidina because she is a friend or is she afraid to approach Flavius Cerialis herself or has she been rebuffed by Flavius Cerialis? That is sufficient speculation. The fact that Valatta has invoked Lepidina’s name denotes that in Valatta’s eyes Lepidina has influence on her husband’s actions.

Valatta to her Cerialis, greetings. I ask my lord that you relax your severity (?) and through Lepidina that you grant me what I ask (?) ...¹⁵¹

Education and Culture:

Education and culture were not neglected on the northern frontier. Mention has been made of the child of Claudia Severus at Briga. Children’s footwear has been discovered in the praetorium at Vindolanda, consistent with there

¹⁴⁹ Tab. Vindol. III.581 in Bowman (n.1) 121.
¹⁵⁰ Tab. Vindol. III.629 in Bowman (n.1) 134.
¹⁵¹ Tab. Vindol. II.257, Vindolanda Tablets Online, viewed 13 September 2007, <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/>. It is thought that Valatta is a woman, which (if correct) means that the birthday invitation of Claudia Severa is not the only example of handwriting in Latin by a woman. Centurions could inflict floggings on other soldiers (Tac. Ann. 1.23).
being children in the household of Flavius Cerialis and Sulpicia Lepidina. Whether they were children of Flavius Cerialis and Lepidina is unknown.\textsuperscript{152} It is of interest that an ink leaf tablet has been recovered in the area of the praetorium which seems to be a writing exercise using a line from the \textit{Aeneid} (IX.473).\textsuperscript{153}

\begin{center}
\textbf{INTEREA PAVIDAM VOLITANS}
\textbf{PINNA}
TA \textit{VBEM} (2nd hand) seg. (space left by scribe)\textsuperscript{154}
\end{center}

Following 'pinnata' it should have been 'per urbem'. The final word 'seg' which might be read as \textit{segnis} [laz\textsuperscript{\textit{y}}] is in another more legible hand and is thought to have been the comment on the pupil's script by the teacher.\textsuperscript{155}

Also discovered is a part of a tablet with two versions of the opening line of the \textit{Aeneid}: \textit{arma virumque cano Troiae qui primus ab oris}.\textsuperscript{156} The \textit{Aeneid} was routinely used for writing exercises and a fragment has also been found in the Roman fort at Masada, at the opposite end of the Roman world to Vindolanda.\textsuperscript{157}

Martial in one of his epigrams records that Latin poetry was being recited in Britannia.\textsuperscript{158} Thus a century and a half after Cicero summarily dismissed finding anyone erudite in literature in Britannia there is someone on the northern frontier using Vergil to teach children writing and simultaneously imbuing them with Roman tradition and culture.\textsuperscript{159}

\textbf{Hunting at Vindolanda:}

Hunting was a pastime at Vindolanda as it was in other parts of the Roman world. Pliny the Younger, who was more at home in his literary pursuits,
caught three most handsome boars while sitting near his hunting nets with his stylus and writing tablets.\(^{160}\)

It has already been mentioned that the diet included venison and boar. Flavius Cerialis was involved in hunting a variety of animals and birds as well as fishing. In one letter he refers to his hunters and in another tablet there is an account listing two types of hunting dogs: \textit{segosi} and \textit{uertragi}.\(^ {161}\) The hunting scene of Dido and Aeneas in Vergil’s \textit{Aeneid} probably reflects the events of a Roman wild animal hunt. First out dash mounted huntsmen accompanied by a pack of keen-scented dogs (\textit{segosi} and \textit{uertragi}) to seek out and enclose the prey in a cordon of ‘wide mesh nets’. The noise of another group called ‘beaters’ cause the frightened prey to run wildly into the ‘wide meshed nets’ spread between the mounted hunters. The animals were then directed towards the ‘stop nets’ where they become trapped. This enables the main party, equipped with hunting spears, to give the \textit{coup de grâce} to the trapped animals.\(^ {162}\) At Houssteads, close to Vindolanda, a relief shows a stag being confronted by a hunter’s net.\(^ {163}\) According to Martial, one used the \textit{uertragi} if you were hunting for a hare and did not wish your prey to be despoiled by teeth marks.\(^ {164}\)

In the following letter Flavius Cerialis asks his friend Aelius Brocchus to send him hunting nets or snares.

Flavius Cerialis to his Brocchus, greetings. If you love me, brother, I ask that you send me some hunting-nets (?) ... you should repair the pieces very strongly.\(^ {165}\)

Aelius Brocchus may have had a particular interest in hunting as he made a dedication to Diana, the goddess of hunting, when he was prefect of a cavalry

\(^ {161}\) \textit{Tab. Vindol.} III.615 in Bowman and Thomas (n.25) 77-78: “my hunters” (the handwriting on this tablet is identified as that of Flavius Cerialis); III.594 in Bowman and Thomas (n.25) 48-52. \textit{Segosi} are Celtic hunting dogs, the ancestor of the bloodhound (Arr. \textit{Cyneg.} 3.1-4). \textit{Uertragl} are hunting dogs, the ancestor of the greyhound (Arr. \textit{Cyneg.} 3.6-7); cf. Bowman and Thomas (n.25) 48-52.
\(^ {162}\) Verg. \textit{Aen.} IV.121; IV.129-170. Vergil gives a good description of a Roman hunt in this passage. The Massylian horsemen in Dido’s hunt perform the same role as Cerialis’ hunters. Note that members of the hunting party have different types of nets: wide mesh and stop nets. The hunt is an expression of manly virtue (\textit{virtus}).
\(^ {163}\) Bowman (n.1) 72.
\(^ {164}\) Mart. XIV. 200.
\(^ {165}\) \textit{Tab. Vindol.} II.233 in Bowman (n.1) 129.
unit in Pannonia. If the second part of the letter refers to strengthening the nets it may suggest that Flavius Cerialis enjoyed hunting large prey such as boars or venison.

Another tablet contains a list of equipment for catching fowl and birds which had been left somewhere, perhaps at Vindolanda. The equipment includes nets for ducks, thrushes, swans, fishes and some snares.

**Roman Justice on the Northern Frontier:**

Tacitus remarks in the *Agricola* that the military court martial was unjust due to the presiding officers being arrogant and heavy handed; and lacking the experience of the law. Despite *Agricola* attempting to correct the problem, according to Tacitus, the following draft appeal provides evidence that military courts were still a rough and ready affair. Someone at Vindolanda has drafted an appeal to a certain Proclus, probably the provincial governor, in which he emphasises his innocence and the fact that he is from across the sea (*transmarinus*). His complaint concerns his alleged mistreatment at the hands of the military justice system. He appears to have attempted to go through the correct channels but to no avail.

... he punished (?) me all the more until I should declare my goods to be worthless or pour them down the drain. As befits an honest man I implore your majesty not to allow me, an innocent man, to have been beaten with rods and, my lord Proclus, I was unable to complain to the prefect because he was detained by ill-health and I have complained in vain to the *beneficiarius* and the (?) rest of the centurions of (?) his unit, I accordingly implore your mercifulness not to allow me, a man from overseas and an innocent one, about whose (?) good faith you may inquire, to have been bloodied by rods as if I had in some way committed crimes.

This *transmarinus* was sufficiently indignant at the highhanded attitude of the staff officer and centurions that he drafted a petition to Proclus seeking

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166 *CIL III.4360*: DIANA SACR C. AELIUS BROCCBUS PRAEFACT ALAE I [... (“To sacred Diana C. Aelius Broccbus Prefect of Cavalry Unit I ...”). No date is provided for this dedication but it belongs to the early 2nd century AD.

167 *Tab. Vindol. III.595* in *Bowman* (n.1) 126. Birley has suggested that the equipment was left behind when the Ninth Cohort of Batavians was transferred from Vindolanda (A.R. Birley, *Garrison Life at Vindolanda. A Band of Brothers* [Stroud 2002] 149 cited in *Bowman* and *Thomas* [n.25] 47).


169 *Tab. Vindol. II.344* in *Bowman* (n.1) 146-147. A *beneficiarius* is an adjutant seconded for special duties to a senior officer. In this case the *beneficiarius* had been seconded to the auxiliary cohort to perform the duties of the ill prefect. In *Tab. Vindol. II.344* the complainant describes himself as *transmarinus* which in this article has been given as *transmarinus*.
justice. If he had been a Roman citizen one would have thought that he would have mentioned the fact in his complaint as under the Porcian law scourging of Roman citizens was banned. One recollects that one of Cicero's accusations in his prosecution of Verres in 70 BC was that he had flogged a Roman citizen. One might also note the panic which was generated amongst the magistrates of Philippi, a Roman colony and city in Macedonia, when it was discovered that they had ordered Paul, a Roman citizen, to be flogged.\textsuperscript{170} That the writer refers to himself as a 'man from overseas' along with the reference to goods in the appeal and the fact that the reverse side of this tablet contains an account in the same handwriting for wheat suggests that the appellant was a civil trader and that the frontier zone was under martial law.\textsuperscript{171}

It seems that this man's experience was not unique. Juvenal, in his satire of the military, mirrors perfectly this man's experience at the hands of those who administer military justice.\textsuperscript{172} Juvenal's observations (in so far as they can be taken to reflect social reality) and the case of the transmarinus leave one in no doubt that the Roman army was a law unto itself and pity anyone who challenged its authority.

**Personal Correspondence:**

The structure of the auxiliary units led to close bonds between fellow soldiers. The basic unit of the century (eighty men) was the contubernium, eight men who shared a tent and a baggage horse on campaign. Thus it is not surprising to find letters between former tent-companions or messmates (contubernales) sending greetings, requesting or forwarding personal objects or asking to be remembered to other former contubernales and girlfriends. The sending of oysters by a contubernalis has already been discussed above.

The very first ink leaf tablet to be found in 1973 at Vindolanda was a letter which accompanied the sending of clothing to a soldier and contained greetings to all his contubernales.

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\textsuperscript{170} Cic. Verr. II.5.162. Cicero dramatically states that a certain Publius Gavius repeatedly uttered during a flogging: "I am a Roman citizen"; cf. Acts 16.

\textsuperscript{171} Tab. Vindol. II.344 (commentary), Vindolanda Tablets Online, viewed 13 September 2007, <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/>.

\textsuperscript{172} Juv. Sat. XVI.11-25. Apuleius (Metamorphoses IX.39-X.1) gives an entertaining fictional account, set in Thessaly, of an encounter between a centurion and a provincial market gardener over the commandeering of an ass for military transport. The plot, which has elements of the experience of the transmarinus and Juvenal's Satire XVI, revolves on the plight of the civilian when confronting the military. Fergus Millar ('The World of The Golden Ass', *Journal of Roman Studies* 71 [1981] 63) postulates that the plot reflects "realistic images of social and economic relations ... in a Roman province".
... I have sent (?) you ... pairs of socks from Sattua two pairs of sandals and two pairs of underpants, two pairs of sandals ... Greet ... ndes, Elpis, Iu ..., ... enus, Tetricus and all your messmates with whom I pray that you live in the greatest good fortune.  

Perhaps Sattua was a girlfriend he had met on leave and had knitted the socks.

In another letter Chrautius chides his friend for not writing and requests that he forward through another soldier the shears he had bought from a third soldier. Also he sends his regards to women friends, whom he may have met on leave.

Chrautius to Veldeius his brother and old messmate, very many greetings. And I ask you, brother Veldeius – I am surprised that you have written nothing back to me for such a long time – whether you have heard anything from our elders, or about ... in which unit he is; and greet him from me in my words and Virilis the veterinary doctor. Ask him (sc. Virilis) whether you may send me through one of our friends the pair of shears which he promised me in exchange for money. And I ask you, brother Virilis, to greet from me our (?) sister Thutena. Write back to us (?) how Velbutena is (?). (2nd hand?) It is my wish that you enjoy the best of fortune. Farewell. (Back. 1st hand) (Deliver) at London. To Veldedeius, groom of the governor, from his brother Chrautius.  

This letter also provides evidence of the travelling between units that the Tungrian strength report details. The letter was addressed to Veldedeius, the governor’s equerry at London. Apparently he disposed of it when he was at Vindolanda.

Another letter admonishing a delinquent correspondent is one from a certain Sollemnis to his *contubernalis* Paris. He calls him a neglectful fellow and sends his regards to other soldiers. Note that the names of the correspondents are not Batavian names. It was not uncommon for recruits to exchange their native names for Roman or Greek names.

Sollemnis to Paris his brother, very many greetings. I want you to know that I am in very good health, as I hope you are in turn, you neglectful man, who have sent me not even one letter. But I think that I am behaving in a more considerate fashion in writing to you ... to you, brother, ... my messmate. Greet from me Diligens and Cogitatus and Corinthus and I ask that you send

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173 *Tab. Vindol. II.346 in Bowman (n.1) 147-148.
174 *Tab. Vindol. II.310 in Bowman (n.1) 140-141. Note that Chrautius has two spellings for the addressee. Bowman has speculated that Veldeius is a syncopated form of Veldedius.
me the names ... Farewell, dearest brother (?). (Back) To Paris ... of the 3rd Cohort of Batavians, from Sollemnis ...

These letters between messmates are quite uninhibited and reflect the close relationships that develop between men that eat, sleep, relax and fight together.

Whereas the previous personal letters are between serving soldiers, this final letter is between two officers, Flavius Cerialis and his friend, Clodius Super, perhaps a regional centurion. Clodius Super is taking advantage of his position as supply officer to use government transport for private purposes. Clodius Super reports that a mutual friend has returned from Gaul and has approved some clothing. He further asks for clothing for his boys (most likely a reference to his slaves) now that he can organise transport. This is very probably the same Clodius Super who sent his apologies to Flavius Cerialis for not attending Sulpicia Lepidina’s birthday celebration.

Clodius Super to his Cerialis, greetings. I was pleased that our friend Valentinus on his return from Gaul, has duly approved the clothing. Through him I greet you and ask that you send the things which I need for the use of my boys, that is, six sagaciae, [an unknown number of] saga, seven palliola, five tunics. You know that I am smart in getting hold of this since I am the commissariat officer and am now on the point of acquiring transport. (2nd hand) May you fare well, my dearest lord and brother, and ... (Back, 1st hand?) To Flavius Cerialis, prefect, from Clodius Super, centurion in charge of the region (?).

The tone in this letter between two officers, whilst friendly, is more formal than the letters between the contubernales. The differences in tone may reflect the difference in rank.

Conclusion:

The Vindolanda tablets reveal the lifestyle of a Batavian military community who made a home away from their native land of Gaul, garrisoning the northern frontier of a recently pacified province. Only one hundred and fifty years after Julius Caesar conquered Gaul these people were thoroughly at home in a literate Roman culture, enjoying the facilities, education, health, economic wellbeing and social life that Roman civilization offered.

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175 Tab. Vindol. II.311 in Bowman (n.1) 141-142.
176 Tab. Vindol. III.629 in Bowman (n.1) 134-135. Although the main hand of no. 629 is quite different from the first hand of this tablet, it is thought that the writer is the same Clodius Super (Bowman and Thomas [n.25] 86).
177 Tab. Vindol. II.255 in Bowman (n.1) 132-133.
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