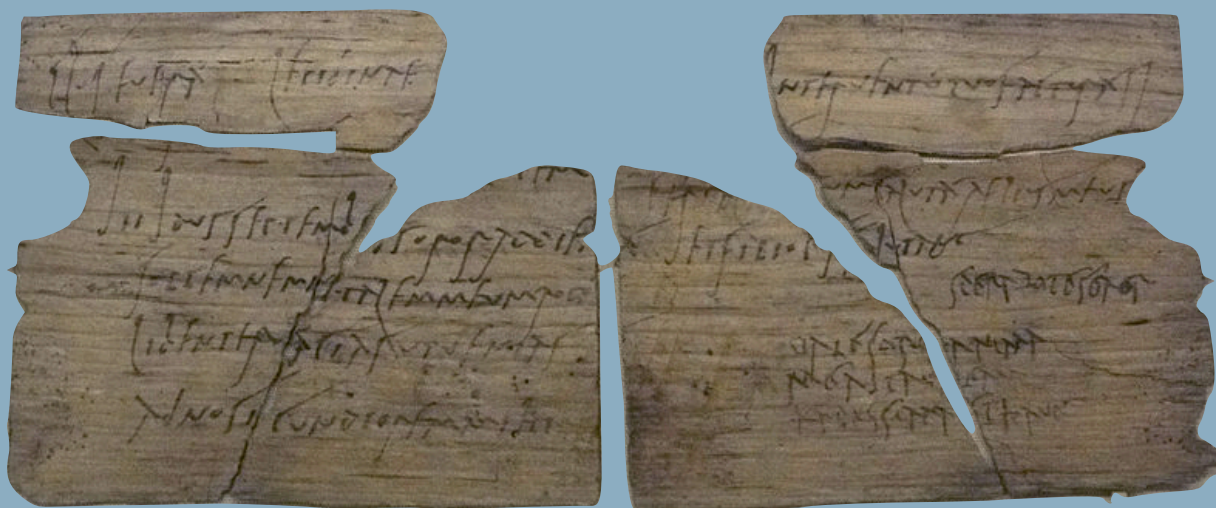


Auxiliary soldiers: Romans-to-be

A birthday invitation

This is a letter from Claudia Severa to her friend Sulpician Lepidina, wife of Flavius Cerialis, the commander at Vindolanda. Claudia Severa was the wife of Aelius Brocchus, commander of another fort near Vindolanda.

The note is written in two hands, and it is thought that it is Severa herself who writes the final brief greeting. This would make it one of the earliest surviving examples of writing in Latin by a woman.



Claudia Severa to her Lepidina greetings. On 11 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. Give my greetings to your Cerialis. My Aelius and my little son send him their greetings.

[the final note is written in different handwriting]

I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper, and hail.

[on the back, in the first hand]

To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa.

Vindolanda Tablet 291 (British Museum).

Does it surprise you that a birthday invitation, written by a woman, should survive from a Roman army camp?

What does this letter tell you about life at Vindolanda?

Further reading:

For high quality image and the Latin:

<http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/4DLink2/4DACTION/WebRequestQuery?searchTerm=291&searchType=number&searchField=TVII>