

Auxiliary soldiers: Romans-to-be

Daily life at Vindolanda

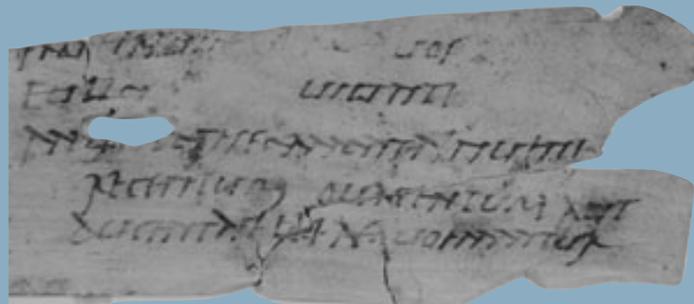
The inhabitants of the fort at Vindolanda were auxiliary soldiers drafted in from other regions (particularly in this case Batavians and Tungrians; from the modern day region of the Netherlands and Belgium). Later they were supplemented with locally drafted British auxiliaries too. The fortress was no longer just a military base, but had grown a *vicus*, a settlement just outside the fortification walls, as well.

Food

This tablet shows an order for the acquisition of foodstuffs, most probably written by the slave of the prefect Verecundus.

pullos pullos viginti,
mala si potes formonsa
invenire centum,
ova centum aut ducenta,
si ibi aequo emantur ...
(sextarios) viii muriae
modium olivae

...chickens, twenty, a hundred apples, if you can find nice ones, a hundred or two hundred eggs, if they are for sale there at a fair price. ... 8 sextarii of fish-sauce ... a modius of olives



Vindolanda Tablet 302

Within the Vindolanda tablets 46 different types of foodstuffs are mentioned. The most exotic appear in letters and accounts connected to the commander's house, but it is clear that soldiers in the camp did not eat badly.

Amphora and barrels that would have carried wine, fish sauce and olive oil from Spain and Italy were found along the northern frontier. Along with grain these were the top four products shipped across the empire; the essentials of Roman life.



Earthenware from Vindolanda.

Work for auxiliary soldiers

From a Vindolanda tablet we have a report of work assignments. Although these auxiliaries were soldiers, on a daily basis in the absence of battle they performed much more mundane and ordinary tasks. Of 343 men present on the record, 12 were making shoes, 18 were building the bath-house, others were out collecting lead, clay and rubble, while still more were assigned to the wagons, the kilns, the hospital and on plastering duty. Looking at these jobs, Vindolanda might have felt more like a small Roman town than a fort in many ways.

The bath-house



The camp at Vindolanda later even had a bath-house (recognisable for its hypocaust brick piles). Accounts indicate that there was a **balniator**, a bath-house keeper, called Vitalis.

Foundations of bath-house at Vindolanda.

Thinking about these sources and beyond:

What aspects of life in Vindolanda would have made the fort feel like any Roman town?

How Roman would the camp have felt?

Further reading:

On the food tablet: <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/4DLink2/4DACTION/WebRequestQuery?searchTerm=302&searchType=number&searchField=TVII>