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VINDOLANDA: NOTES ON SOME NEW WRITING TABLETS

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## VINDOLANDA: NOTES ON SOME NEW WRITING TABLETS

The welcome publication of two substantial letters found at Vindolanda, with learned commentary<sup>1</sup>, leaves a number of matters open for further discussion. Some remarks directed in particular at the nomenclature of the persons mentioned, six in one letter, eleven in the other, may be of interest, together with some reflections provoked by the writer's study of the Vindolanda material, published and unpublished.

### 1. Chrauttius to Veldedeius (Inv. no. 86/470)

The letter, addressed *Londini. Veldedeio equisioni cos. a Chrauttio fratre* (lines 22-26, reverse), belonged to Period III, and was found in the filling above the demolished remains of the praetorium of the praefectus of cohors VIII Batavorum<sup>2</sup>. This period ended in 102 or 103, for the timbers from which period IV was constructed can be dated to winter 103/4<sup>3</sup>.

The six persons named are:

Chrauttius, the writer (lines 1, 25)

Quot.s (?), a person to be greeted (?) (line 8)

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#### Abbreviations:

Adams-Bowman-Thomas: J. N. Adams, A. K. Bowman & J. D. Thomas, 'Two letters from Vindolanda', *Britannia* 21 (1990) 33-52.

Evans: D. E. Evans, *Gaulish Personal Names* (1967)

Holder: A. Holder, *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz* (I-III, 1894-1916)

Kajanto: I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (1965)

Mócsy: A. Mócsy, *Nomenclator* (1983)

Reichert: H. Reichert, *Lexikon der altgermanischen Namen* (1987)

RP: R. Syme, *Roman Papers* (I-II, 1979; III, 1984; IV-V, 1988; VI-VII, 1991)

VLWT: A. K. Bowman & J. D. Thomas, *Vindolanda. The Latin Writing Tablets* (1983)

<sup>1</sup>Adams-Bowman-Thomas. One may be permitted the comment that the letters in question were found *at* Vindolanda, but came there from elsewhere. Hence 'Two letters to Vindolanda' might have been an apter title.

<sup>2</sup>No doubt should now remain that the cohort commanded by Flavius Cerialis (and by others) at Vindolanda was the Ninth Cohort of Batavians; not the Eighth, as read in the first series of writing tablets by the editors, VLWT, 47 ff. and passim. Not conceded by Bowman & Thomas, *JRS* 76, 1986, 121, although already aware that cohors III Batavorum was indeed also at Vindolanda. In *Britannia* 18, 1987, 128 f., 134 they are hesitant (by then confronted with multiple reference to the Ninth Batavians from the new series) but still unwilling to delete the Eighth from the record. However, it must now be stated firmly that the reading 'viii' in VLWT nos. 2 (line 2) and 23 (line 13) must be abandoned: each can be read as 'viii'. As for no. 23, line 6, that can now be taken firmly as 'iii', cf. *Britannia* 18, 1987, 134. See also below, n. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Information from the Director of the Vindolanda Trust, Robin Birley, based on initial dendrochronological analysis and on his own assessment of the complete archaeological material, to be published in his *Vindolanda. The Early Wooden Forts London, English Heritage, forthcoming*.

Thuttena, *soror*, to be greeted (line 16)

Velbuteius, to be greeted (line 17)

Veldedeius, *equisio cos.*, the recipient (lines 1, 6, 23: in the first two cases called *Veldeius*)

Virilis, *veterinarius*, whom Veldedeius is to ask to send the promised *forfex*, *per aliquem de nostris* (lines 10, 15; in the latter place he is addressed directly)

Chrauttius: the editors had consulted two Germanists, but, wisely no doubt, decide that "this is a question to be left to specialists in Germanic philology to pursue further if they wish". They compare two names from inscriptions in Britain, *Crotus* from Carrawburgh (RIB 1525, 1532) and *Rautio* (RIB 1620). It might be worth adding that the former is *Aurelius Crotus German.* in his first inscription; and that both come from Carrawburgh (Brocolitia) on the Wall, garrisoned by cohorts I Batavorum. *Crotus* was thus likely to have been a Batavian German. (The second name is less helpful, an inscription from Housesteads commemorating a group of persons from Upper Germany, one of whom has *Rautionis* as patronymic). Cf. Reichert 214 ff. on Chrod-names, of which *Chrauttius* may be supposed to be one.

Quot.s: if this was intended as *Quotus*, it is unexampled, but cf. *Quito*, CIL XIII 6258, Worms and *Quita*, III 3621, Pannonia. It is conceivable that the writer intended *Quietus*, often enough misspelt *Quetus*, and was led astray by *quod* a few words earlier and *quo* which follows (*in quo numero sit*). For *Quietus*, cf. Mócsy 238, who registers 15 examples in Belgica and the Germanies.

Thuttena: the editors comment ad loc. that the first letter could be C or P, although T is far more probable (it matches well the initial T in *te* in the previous line). They do not discuss the name as such, which, whether Thuttena or Chuttena, is surely Germanic. Cf. Reichert on names in Teud-, 654 f., Teut-, 656 f., Theod-, 660 f., Theud-, 681 ff., Thiud-, 695 ff.

Velbuteius: the editors cite Holder III 139 ff. and Evans 272 ff. for Celtic Vel- names. But Reichert 770 f. seems to regard the Texuandrian Veldes (CIL III 14214) as Germanic. Cf. id. 164 on Buti-.

Veldedeius: Cf. above on Velbuteius. The editors also adduce *Vilidedius* on RIB 1420, reported as coming from Housesteads: "this might be the same name, and even the same person". They might add that the stone reads *[Dis M]anibus Vilidedius heres posuit*, hence an early second century date is plausible: *D. M.* became standard in this period and *Dis*

*Manibus* unabbreviated can hardly be post-Hadrianic. Further, the commentary in RIB on this stone cites a Germanist for the view that *Vilidedius* is a Germanic name<sup>4</sup>.

Virilis: no comment from the editors; but the name is surprisingly uncommon. Kajanto 257 only registers 30 for the whole empire, 20 of which are in CIL XII and XIII. Mócsy 315 counted 27, five of them in Belgica and the Germanies. It may well conceal or mask a Celtic original, cf. Holder III 385 ff. and Evans 288 f. for Viri- names (Inv. 88/935, unpublished, yields *Viriocus*, cf. BRGK 27 no. 137, Belgica, *Viriaucus*). Note also the Batavian corporis custos at Rome called *Virus* (CIL VI 8807). *Virilis*, it may be added, was the name of a Central Gaulish sigillata potter (Oswald, Index, s. v.).

The letter was evidently written from London, since the address side is headed *Londini*, unambiguously locative. Two out of the three editors nonetheless find this puzzling: if Veldedeius "received the letter at Vindolanda, we must presume that the governor was in the region. While this is no doubt possible, it is more likely that he would be in London."<sup>5</sup> Such doubts seem excessive. The published material from Vindolanda already indicates, even if it does not prove, that the governor was in the offing. Niger and Brocchus wrote to Flavius Cerialis: *consulari n̄. utique maturius occurre;*<sup>6</sup> and the long draft letter to Crispinus, now identifiable as written by the Vindolanda commander Flavius Cerialis, perhaps indeed in his own handwriting<sup>7</sup>, suggests that he was indeed hoping for a meeting with *consularis meus*, Neratius Marcellus<sup>8</sup>. To be sure, this need only have meant that he was going to London (or elsewhere) to meet him. But it ought to be axiomatic that the governor of Britain would need to tour his province, like any other governor; and in Britain the northern frontier would require regular inspection. It is therefore logical to suppose that teams of horses, remounts for the governor and his party, were distributed at suitable points. Veldedeius, *equisio consularis*, may have been based for some time at Vindolanda, in readiness<sup>9</sup>. At all events, as the editors themselves report, he was actually at Vindolanda: "the name Veldedii appears on a leather offcut" found close to this writing-tablet in the same period. It may be noted further that the leather inscription reads, apparently, VIILDIIDII SPONDII, i. e. *Veldedii Sponde*. *Sponde* might be the name of his horse, or rather mare - hardly his wife, as he was

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<sup>4</sup>Viz. G. Werle, Die ältesten germanischen Personennamen (Beih. zu Bd. xii der Zeitsch. f. deutsche Wortforschung, 1910) 61. Cf. also Reichert 770 f. on Vel- names. He regards *Vilidedius* as "mögl.G.", 779.

<sup>5</sup>Adams-Bowman-Thomas 34 n.3 (Adams alone finds no problem in taking *Londini* at face value).

<sup>6</sup>VLWT no. 21.

<sup>7</sup>VLWT no. 37, on which see Bowman & Thomas, JRS 76, 1986, 122; slightly modified in Britannia 18, 1987, 126 and n. 3.

<sup>8</sup>See further below, section 3.

<sup>9</sup>It may be relevant to note that Inv. 85/248, unpublished, from the same period (III) lists the despatch of thirty *structores* to build a *hospitium*. Perhaps this could have housed Marcellus himself. (Veldedeius seems to have stayed in Flavius Cerialis' praetorium, to judge from the finding there of his letter and leather).

a serving soldier. (But it might have been his slave-girl, housed with the domestic servants of the commandant's familia during the equisio's stay?)<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Octavius to Candidus (Inv. 88/946)

This four sheet, forty five line letter, found by Robin Birley in August 1988, came from filling above period IV, in what he has now been able to identify as the centurion's quarters of a barracks<sup>11</sup>. Dating evidence for this period makes it possible to assign it to the years ca. 104-120: initial dendrochronological analysis gives a date of winter 103/4 for timber used in its construction; Tablet 87/567 (unpublished) names the consules ordinarii of the year 111; late Trajanic coins indicate that occupation continued thereafter - perhaps into the first years of Hadrian. The garrison, after the departure of the Batavians, was, as in period I, again the cohors I Tungrorum, now milliaria<sup>12</sup>. But other elements were also there: Tablet 88/944 (unpublished) names the *equites Vardulli* as owing money, evidently the cavalry from the cohors I Fida Vardullorum equitata; Tablet 88/943 (unpublished) mentions *militibus legionaribus* (sic) among those to whom frumentum was allocated.

The editors properly describe Nr. 946 as "by far the longest and certainly one of the most interesting" letters found at Vindolanda. It is by no means easy to read, not least because of the ubiquitous mirror-writing caused by the two diptyches being folded before the ink was dry, a sign of the agitation and haste of the writer Octavius, also reflected in his appalling script and various mistakes. Hence one or two passages remain uncertain, and some room for difference of opinion remains. Further, some rational conjecture, about the identity and occupation of some of the eleven persons named, seems legitimate.

A list is required:

Octavius, the writer (line 1)

Candidus, the recipient (ibid.)

Marinus (line 3), from whom Octavius has received *nervi pondō centum*, which he is going to "settle up" (*explicabo*)<sup>13</sup>;

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<sup>10</sup>The name *Sponde* is common enough, e. g. nine in CIL VI. I have not - it must be confessed - pursued equine names for the purpose of this enquiry.

<sup>11</sup>Information from Robin Birley. See the work cited in n. 3 above.

<sup>12</sup>The First Tungrians are now firmly attested in period I, from the strength report of the cohort found in the ditch, Inv. 88/841, publication by Bowman & Thomas forthcoming in JRS 81 1991. In this important document, to be assigned to the second half of the 80s, the cohort had only six centurions and should therefore still have been quingenary, even though it had over 750 men on its books. No doubt in the process of being upgraded to milliary, which it had become by January 103, CIL XVI 48. Precisely at this time, as it seems, the First Tungrians returned to Vindolanda to replace the Ninth Batavians, to remain there in all probability for several decades. Cf. R. Birley (n. 3 above).

<sup>13</sup>But see further below for an alternative explanation of *explicabo*.

- Tertius (line 21), whom Candidus is to approach about the 8 1/2 denarii which he received from  
 Fatalis (line 22), not credited to Octavius' account;  
 Frontius (line 30), an *amicus*, whose messmate (unnamed) had ordered hides but in the end did not turn up, having got some elsewhere;  
 Frontinius Julius (lines 38-9), who has evidently been selling for a high price "leather ware" (?: *coriatio* (?) - see below), which he had purchased "here" for 5 denarii apiece;  
 Spectatus (line 42), whom Candidus is to greet;  
 "Im..rius" (lines 42-3), whom Candidus is to greet;  
 Firmus (line 43), whom Candidus is to greet;  
 Gleuço (line 44), from whom Octavius has had a letter or letters.

To take first the one name of which no reading is proposed, other than *Im..rium*. Surely this is *Iañuarium*. *Januarius* is exceedingly common.<sup>14</sup> Octavius, in his great haste, has written the first A and the N together, giving an effect like some of his Ms; the U has been botched and the second A looks more like a Y.<sup>15</sup> But the impression is not so far off the *Ianuar* in *Ianuariis* at the beginning of line 35.

Not all these persons receive explicit comment from the editors; in some cases their view seems less than wholly satisfactory. On Frontinius Julius, they write (p. 51): "For the order cognomen, nomen, which is not uncommon at this period, see, e. g., R. Syme, *Historia vii* (1958), 172, 174. For Frontinius as a cognomen, see ... Kajanto ... 236".<sup>16</sup> Frontinius can certainly be a cognomen.<sup>17</sup> But it is a typical and well attested specimen of the "fabricated" gentilicia favoured in the north-western provinces;<sup>18</sup> while Julius is often enough found as a cognomen.<sup>19</sup> Hence the archaising inversion, found frequently in e. g. Tacitus and Fronto<sup>20</sup> (but not in the younger Pliny - or in the Vindolanda tablets) is an unnecessary explanation.

<sup>14</sup>Kajanto 29 f. registers 2007 examples, making it the seventh most popular cognomen in the Roman empire. The reading *Iañuarium* was suggested to me by Eric Birley.

<sup>15</sup>It may be mentioned that the RR in *arre* (line 12) was initially taken to be an M (hence a *me*) by all those who studied the letter and photographs.

<sup>16</sup>Syme's paper may also be consulted in RP I 361-377. However, it must be doubted whether the cases he discusses (Republican and Triumviral) are relevant to Vindolanda practice (*Balbus Cornelius*, *Rex Marcius*, *Pulcher Claudius*).

<sup>17</sup>Kajanto 236 can only cite one case of Frontinius as cognomen, CIL XIII 8162.

<sup>18</sup>Mócsy 129 can count 15 cases of Frontinius as gentilicium, ten of them in Belgica and the Germanies (and one in Britain: RIB 501, a legionary of XX V. V.).

<sup>19</sup>Kajanto 61 gives no figure; but Mócsy registers nearly 150 cases. Cf. from Britain RIB 672 (York: Bassaeus Julius), 1914 (Hadrian's Wall: the governor Modius Julius).

<sup>20</sup>E. g. Tacitus, Ann. 12. 42. 1 (Burrus Afranius), 53. 2 (Scipio Cornelius), 13. 43. 2 (Sabina Poppaea), etc.; Fronto, ed. van den Hout (1988) 162, 164 (Niger Censorius); 170 (Cornelianus Sulpicius), 172 (Montanus Licinius), 204 (Cato Porcius), etc. etc.

Marinus: the editors "have considered and rejected the possibility of reading a name like Amarino". No doubt rightly, since *Amarinus* is unattested, albeit a predictable formation from *Amarus*. *Marinus* is common everywhere in the empire.<sup>21</sup> What follows the name is a little odd: *nervi pondō centum*: 100 pounds of sinew "seems a considerable quantity", but perhaps "is not out of keeping with the quantities of other commodities mentioned in this letter". The editors do not comment on the traces after the *I* of *nervi*, which could be either *O* or *A* (but may of course be mirror writing from p. 2). If *nerviō* could be read, then we might have an ethnic, *Nervio*, Marinus the Nervian - to distinguish him from some other Marinus, or because he was, by exception, a Nervian in a Tungrian unit. *Sabinus Trever* occurs in 88/947 (unpublished) and 88/935 (unpublished) was addressed to *Cessaucio Morin[o] dup(licario)*. In that case, the "100 pounds" are of unspecified material; but since Octavius goes on to write that "*e quo tu de hac re scripseras, ne mentionem mihi fecit*", it was perhaps not necessary to spell out what he was referring to.

Accepting, however, that "one hundred pounds of sinew" was meant (and dismissing the notion of an ethnic), should it not be asked if the editors' interpretation of *explicabo* in a financial sense, which they themselves describe as "a problematical usage", is necessary? *Explicare* normally means "to uncoil, unfold, unravel, disentangle", in its primary sense (TLL V.2 1724 ff.). If one asks what was going to be done with large quantities of sinew, the answer surely is: to make sinew-cord. Exactly how the sinews, none longer than 20 cms., were split open and the fibres spun into this cord, is unfortunately not described by ancient technical writers. But *explicare* looks as if it is the term for this process. As to the use to which this seemingly large quantity of sinew and the resultant sinew cord were to be put, it must surely be for catapults, of which each legion regularly had ten, it seems.<sup>22</sup> *Explicabo* can thus be understood in the primary sense - albeit still slightly forced. The business of pulling apart sinews, which are exceedingly tough, into their component fibres required some kind of machine - which Octavius no doubt possessed.<sup>23</sup>

Frontius: no comment from the editors. Uncommon; but found either as cognomen or as gentilicium, cf. CIL XIII 3169 (Lugdunum), where it appears as both, in the Celtic fashion.<sup>24</sup> The way the name occurs in this letter is slightly odd: "a messmate of friend Frontius has been here. He wanted me to allocate (?) him hides ...", *contubernalis Fronti*

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<sup>21</sup>Kajanto 308 (well over 250 known); Mócsy 178 (counted 118).

<sup>22</sup>Cf. e. g. J. G. Landels, *Engineering in the Ancient World* (1978) ch. 5; D. Baatz, *Ein Katapult der legio IV Macedonica aus Cremona*, MDAI (R) 87 (1980) 283-299. I am grateful to Professor Baatz for some illumination on a subject well beyond my powers of comprehension.

<sup>23</sup>I am glad to register my indebtedness to Dr. Otfried v. Vacano (Düsseldorf) for putting me on the track of this interpretation.

<sup>24</sup>Mócsy 130 knows only this case of Frontius as a cognomen and this plus one other example of it as gentilicium.



*amici hic fuerat; desiderabat coria ei adsignarem ....* The editors interpret *ei = sibi*, citing parallels. But should one not understand that the *contubernalis* asked for *coria* to be assigned to Frontius? (Incidentally, *amici* might conceivably be a cognomen: *Amicus* is admittedly not very common).<sup>25</sup> Why Octavius writes in this way is not clear; but perhaps he had forgotten the *contubernalis*' name, or thought Candidus did not need to know it.

Firmus and Spectatus: as the editors note, these two are named in the account, from the same level (88/943; found half an hour before 946) and, what is more, *frumentum* was issued by their *iussu*, in the case of Firmus to the aforementioned *militibus legionaribus*. The same account also names a Candidus, as a recipient. As the editors note, the name is rather common.<sup>26</sup> Still, given that the tablet was found in what now seems to be the centurion's quarters of a barrack-block,<sup>27</sup> and that legionary troops are seen to have been in the vicinity, it is worth asking whether these men, and perhaps some of the others named by Octavius, were legionary centurions.<sup>28</sup>

A promising candidate is Fatalis, who had paid back 8½ denarii. The name is rare in general and in the northern and western part of the empire only four specimens have been counted.<sup>29</sup> It is thus tempting to suggest identification with a man who had three terms as a centurion in British legions, Ti. Claudius Ti. f. Pop. Fatalis, Roma, a centurion of X Fretensis, who died at the age of 42 after twenty-three years service. His career in the centurionate began in Britain, in II Augusta, followed by a commission in another British legion, XX Valeria Victrix, another term in II Augusta, postings on the Danube, in XI Claudia and XIV Gemina, and in Cappadocia, in XII Fulminata, before the final post at Jerusalem, where he died (AE 1939, 157). The career of Claudius Fatalis has been assigned to the "Hadrianic-Antoine period".<sup>30</sup> Why not suppose that this is the man in Vindolanda Inv. 88/946?

Once the possibility is recognised, the chance of detecting traces of some of the other persons in this letter cannot be passed by. Inscriptions from Hadrian's Wall and the frontier zone of Britain deliver the following:

Candidus: Congaonius Candidus (RIB 1917, probably II Augusta); Julius Candidus (RIB 1632, 1646, 1674), both men centurions engaged in Hadrian's Wall-building.

<sup>25</sup>Kajanto 305: 31 specimens, 13 of them in Africa (cf. further A. R. Birley, *Names at Lepcis Magna*, *Libyan Studies* 19, 1988, 1-19, p. 14 f.).

<sup>26</sup>Kajanto 227 gives over 300 and Mócsy 64 has over 150. At least two occur in the Vindolanda writing tablets, a slave (period II, Inv. 88/748) and an optio (period III, Inv. 86/343, 426, in the Ninth Batavians).

<sup>27</sup>Information from R. Birley, cf. n. 3. above.

<sup>28</sup>What follows was briefly suggested by A. R. Birley, *Officers of the Second Augustan Legion in Britain* (3rd annual Caerleon Lecture, 1990) 24 f.

<sup>29</sup>Kajanto 214 registers 39 specimens; only four in the Latin provinces and N.Italy, Mócsy 124.

<sup>30</sup>E. Birley, *Roman Army Papers* (1988) 197.

Firmus: M. Cocceius Firmus, centurion of II Augusta on the Antonine Wall (RIB 2174-2177), by definition no earlier than the 140s in date.<sup>31</sup>

Gleuco: cf. the centurion Glico at Croy Hill (Antonine Wall, RIB 2164). The name is Greek, more often spelled *Glyco*, Mócsy 137 (8 examples, including *Glico*).

Marinus: [J]ul(ius) Marinus, *ordin[atu]s* at Maryport (RIB 858), should belong to the first part of the second century, since his tombstone has *Dis Ma.*, not *D. M.* Cf. also the centurial stone of *Mar[ ]* from Hadrian's Wall sector 37-42A (RIB 1650).

Octavius: it is a matter for speculation why he used this name. It might have been a cognomen;<sup>32</sup> otherwise, somewhat exceptionally, he preferred to be called by his gentilicium. If so, he might be the centurion Octavius Sebanus from an unknown sector of Hadrian's Wall (RIB 2082). The cognomen should perhaps be read as Seranus, as in CIL VII 1027: this was fairly common (Mócsy 262 registers 60 examples); Sebanus is otherwise unknown.

Spectatus: no cases known in Britain; the name was popular in Noricum (Mócsy 272).<sup>33</sup>

Tertius: centurial stone from between Milecastle 49 and Turret 49A (JRS 47 (1957) 229).

But the name is extremely common (Kajanto 292: over 1000 in the whole empire; Mócsy 285: over 500).

The above considerations cannot be regarded as conclusive identification of the persons concerned. But they encourage reflection on the activities revealed by the letter: operations of a considerable scale were afoot. The archaeological evidence for the dating of Vindolanda's Period IV would not conflict with the hypothesis that it coincided with the start of work on Hadrian's Wall - which may well have begun before Hadrian's visit in 122.<sup>34</sup> But, for that matter, the military measures that were required immediately after Hadrian's accession are likely to have brought masses of troops north to what was already in effect the frontier zone. Octavius was writing from somewhere to the north or east of Vindolanda, it may be inferred, since Vindolanda was a staging-post for material he was expecting from Catterick.<sup>35</sup> That

<sup>31</sup>E. Birley, Marcus Cocceius Firmus: an epigraphic study, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scotland* 70, 1936, 363- 377 = *Roman Britain and the Roman Army* (1953) 83-103.

<sup>32</sup>Kajanto does not include it. Mócsy 206 registers over twenty examples.

<sup>33</sup>It was not very common: Kajanto 277 (41 specimens); Mócsy 272 (29, of which 16 in Noricum).

<sup>34</sup>As argued above all by C. E. Stevens, *The Building of Hadrian's Wall* (1966) esp.39 f. Not regarded with favour by D. J. Breeze & B. Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall* (1987<sup>3</sup>) 64, although not disproved (or on present evidence disprovable). At all events one has to register HA Had. 6. 6, Britons in revolt on Hadrian's accession; and H. Mattingly inferred a war from the coinage of 119, RIC II nos. 577a, b; 561-2, 572, discussed *ibid* pp.315, 322.

<sup>35</sup>Lines 15 ff.: *coria qu(a)e scribis esse Cataractonio scribe dentur mi et karrum de quo scribis et quit sit cum eo karro mi scribe. iam ill(a)ec cepissem (or: petissem), nissi iumenta non curavi vexsare dum viae mal(a)e sunt.* Catterick/Cataractonium lies just south of the fork in the road north from Eburacum (close to modern Scotch Corner), where alternative routes go across Stainmore to Carlisle/Luguvallium and straight on to the

Vindolanda was a major base at this time is no surprise; and its role must have continued to be important well on into the twenties - the men who built the Wall, and the troops who supplied military cover, needed more than tented accommodation. But vast quantities of tents were no doubt required, hence large numbers of hides. This leads to the crux in line 40:

*Frontinium Julium audio magno licere pro coriatione, quem hic comparavit ✕ quinos;*

"I hear that Frontinius Julius is asking a high price for the leatherware which he bought here for 5 denarii apiece."

This requires a new word, *coriatio*, and *quem* = *quam*. Neither impossible, as the editors' learned commentary shows. However, it might be preferable to read *pro cori <r>atione*. Octavius was writing very fast and carelessly; his As and his Rs are very alike, in any case; in line 20, the A and R of *vexsare* are hardly more than one letter, so that one might read "vexsre". Likewise, in line 40, one might read *cori r<a>tione* or *cori <r>atione*. Then one would have: "for the leather account, which", *quem* going with the word *cori* -admittedly a neuter, but perhaps less drastic an error than *quem* for *quam*.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. Flavius Cerialis, the governor Neratius Marcellus, and some others

As was mentioned above in connection with the new letter belonging to period III, the writer of the letter mentioning the governor Marcellus has now been identified as Flavius Cerialis, prefect of cohort VIII Batavorum.<sup>37</sup> Some comments on this man, his background and correspondents may here be offered, by way of a stimulus to the editors as they prepare the publication of remaining material from his praetorium.<sup>38</sup>

First, a comment on the reading in the "Marcellus" letter, addressed to one Crispinus.<sup>39</sup> The editors render lines 13-15 as follows:

Tyne at Corbridge/Coria (as we may now with virtual certainty name that site, cf. Inv. 88/841, JRS 81, 1991).

<sup>36</sup>There was at any rate a masculine form, *corius* (TLL IV 951). Octavius, who could write *nisi* in line 10 and *nissi* in line 20 was capable of making this word masculine in the genitive singular even after writing *coria*, accusative neuter plural, five times.

<sup>37</sup>N. 7 above.

<sup>38</sup>A good fifty letters (some drafts by Cerialis, as VLWT no. 37) may now be assigned to the "archive" of Cerialis and his wife Sulpicia Lepidina; and most if not all of the numerous other writing tablets from period III derive from Cerialis' prefecture.

<sup>39</sup>Unidentified. He ought to be a high official, conceivably a legionary legate. One may note the Trajanic consuls A. Caepio Crispinus (a. inc.) and C. Clodius Crispinus (ord. 113), either of whom might theoretically have been e. g. a legionary legate c. 100; but the latter was probably patrician and therefore too young, cf. A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (1981) 65, conjecturing that he was a son of Vettius Bolanus (cos. suff. 66), adopted into another family after disagreeable family problems, Statius, *Silvae* 5. 2. 76 ff. If so, he was tr. mil. c. 95, the date of Statius' poem. It may be noted, further, that the same letter of Cerialis names another Crispinus, whose "return" (to London?) presumably would provide Cerialis with a reliable carrier. The cognomen is common: Kajanto 223 registers 250 bearers. But [*G*]rattius - for this

[ ca. 4 ] . . [ ca. 6 ] . c`ut' . . e . il[ . . .  
 . . . . ]m Marcellum clarissim[um vi-  
 rum] consularem meum. quar .[ . . . ]

Their comment ad loc. is: "We are sure that there is not room at the beginning of line 14 for the whole of *[Neratiu]m* ... and we think that the best solution would be to read *[Luciu]m*. The use of praenomen plus cognomen for men from the higher classes is commonly found in Ciereo's letters ... We might then take *il[lum]* in line 13 with this as meaning 'the well-known Lucius Marcellus'. For this usage they cite Cicero, Verr. 2. 5. 84: *ille vir clarissimus summusque imperator M. Marcellus* but concede that they "are not entirely happy with the use of *ille* in this context; it ought perhaps to imply that Marcellus has already been mentioned, and there seems to be nowhere in lines 2-12 where this can have occurred." It would, indeed, be rather delightful to suppose that Flavius Cerialis was echoing Cicero on Marcus Marcellus when referring to "my consular" Lucius (Neratius) Marcellus. After all, Virgil was being read and - albeit rather imperfectly - copied at Vindolanda in his praetorium.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps he had been reading the Verrines. But the usage is not very plausible. At Vindolanda the regular practice with persons who had the citizenship was to use gentilicium + cognomen; cognomen alone; or, occasionally, only gentilicium. So far only one case has occurred of the tria nomina, *Marcus Cocceius V...*, where the writing out of the praenomen is itself notable: this is surely a case of a relatively new citizen (Inv. 86/ 433, unpub.). As for the form *Lucius Marcellus*, praenomen + cognomen, this is not Pliny's practice: "the use of prenamen (sic) - cognomen is rare (1. 17. 2, III. 7. 12), mostly of historical figures"<sup>41</sup> (L. Silanus and L. Piso respectively, both figures from the Julio-Claudian era).

The explanation is simple. For *il[lum Luciu]m Marcellum* read *N[eratiu]m Marcellum*. Study of the photograph shows that several of the writer's Ns are indeed very similar to IL. Cf. N in *[li]benter* (line 4), *salutandi* (line 6), *hanc* (line 11), the second N in *nunc* (line 16), etc., and IL in *illius* (line 19). Precisely where *Neratium* was divided, between the end of line 13 and the beginning of line 14, is not quite certain. Octavius divides *Frontinium* after the first *I* (Inv. 88/946, lines 38-9). Here, *N[eratiu]m*, suitable from the spacing point of view, would fit this pattern.

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Crispinus is given a gentilicium as well - is rare: only ten in Italy (outside Rome), 3 in Narbonensis, 2 in Africa and 1 in Dalmatia; but 17 in Spain, concentrated round Saguntum, cf. Syme, RP V 606. Note CIL II 3784, *ager Valentinus*, for a *Grattia Crispina*.

<sup>40</sup>Inv. 85/137, a shot at copying - in rustic capitals - Aeneid IX 473, published by Bowman & Thomas, *Britannia* 18, 1987, 130-2. After the quotation occurs, in cursive, *seg.*, on which they comment "some kind of notation added by the instructor". They do not elaborate, but presumably envisage *segnis* or *segniter*. If so, read *segn'*. As H. D. Jocelyn kindly informs me, *segnis* etc. would have been abbreviated *segn.* not *seg.*

<sup>41</sup>A. N. Sherwin-White, *A Historical Commentary on the Letters of Pliny* (1966) 113.

Neratius Marcellus, consul suffect in 95, was in some respects a slightly odd choice for the governorship of Britain.<sup>42</sup> He had, to be sure, had a military tribunate in his youth, but, apparently, no other appointments in the imperial service. On the other hand, his uncle, L. Neratius Priscus (suff. 87), adoptive father, M. Hirrius Fronto Neratius Pansa (suff. ? 75), and brother L. Neratius Priscus (suff. 97), all governed military provinces.<sup>43</sup> Further, Britain was in any case of reduced importance militarily, for the time being at least. Marcellus was perhaps appointed in 101, if one may date to that year Pliny's letter (Ep. 3.8) to Suetonius, mentioning how Pliny had secured a tribunate for his young friend in Marcellus' army (unnamed; but the Saepinum cursus inscription gives only Britain).<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the letter might be later; it is not necessary to assume that a governor of Britain would have vacancies only at the beginning of his tenure. Marcellus could have succeeded Avidius Quietus in 100 or even earlier, for all that Quietus himself cannot have been appointed earlier than 97 (second half).<sup>45</sup> The evidence from elsewhere indicates several "curtailed tenures" at this time.<sup>46</sup>

Flavius Cerialis' reference to Marcellus as *consularis meus* may have been perfectly standard. Still, one may suppose that he owed his appointment to Marcellus. In that case one may note that Marcellus' brother Priscus apparently had a short term as governor of Germania Inferior just before 100.<sup>47</sup> Flavius Cerialis' names strongly suggest that he was himself Batavian<sup>48</sup> and that, as in the Julio-Claudian period, the *nobilissimi popularium* (Tac. Hist. 4. 12. 3) continued to command the Batavians. Further, it seems perfectly plausible to suppose that the commanders of the Batavian cohorts were still called *praefecti* rather than *tribuni* when their units were military, as was the case with the prefects of the

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<sup>42</sup>A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (1981) 87 ff. (By the courtesy of the editors, I was able there to print an excerpt from an early reading of the relevant part of VLWT no. 37.).

<sup>43</sup>For the Neratii one will now consult with profit L. Vidman in *PIR*<sup>2</sup> N nos. 50 ff.

<sup>44</sup>ILS 1032. R. Syme, *Tacitus* (1958) 91 n., 647 (and elsewhere) confidently dates Ep. 3. 8. to 101. Sherwin-White, *Pliny* (1966) 229 f. hedges, preferring 103.

<sup>45</sup>CIL XVI 43 names Quietus and his predecessor Metilius Nepos (January - October 98); A. R. Birley, *Fasti* 83 ff.

<sup>46</sup>Syme, *RP* V 499-513, esp. 506 ff. (Curtailed tenures of consular legates, reprinted from *ZPE* 59, 1985, 265-279, esp. 271 ff.). And see the next note.

<sup>47</sup>W. Eck, *Die Statthalter der germanischen Provinzen vom 1.-3. Jh.* (1985) 157 ff.

<sup>48</sup>The gentilicium and cognomen combine to suggest birth in or soon after 70, as son of a man enfranchised through the mediation of Q. Petillius Cerialis, the man who suppressed the Batavian revolt. One may compare the Batavian soldier named in a diploma of 110, C. Petillius Vindex (CIL XVI 164). For this notion: P. A. Holder, *The Roman Army in Britain* (1980) 64 f.; K. Strobel *Anmerkungen zur Geschichte der Bataverkohorten in der hohen Kaiserzeit*, *ZPE* 70, 1987, 271-292 p. 273 n. 19; A. R. Birley, *Vindolanda: neue Ausgrabungen 1985-1986, Akten des 14. Int. Limeskongresses 1986* (1990) 333- 340, p. 335.

two Tungrian cohorts in the second and third centuries.<sup>49</sup> If so, they may have had an anomalous status within the *tres militiae*. At all events, Cerialis could have gained his appointment with Marcellus in Britain through the mediation of Neratius Priscus, whose acquaintance he could have made when Priscus was governing his native province.

Perhaps it is mere coincidence that letters of Pliny attest his efforts to secure commissions for protégés from both Neratii brothers at this time<sup>50</sup> and that the Cerialis archive from Vindolanda shows the prefect of the Ninth Batavians drafting an elaborate missive to secure a transfer. In truth, canvassing for preferment for themselves and for their clients probably occupied a sizeable proportion of their time for some senators and knights.<sup>51</sup> It is tempting to look for other traces of such activity in the Vindolanda material. Cerialis' correspondent September is promising. Inv. 85/17 (unpub.) was sent by him to Cerialis. His gentilicium is difficult to decipher, for the left-hand side of the tablet is stained. It certainly ends *-cilius* or *-silius* and the rather messy first part is compatible with the reading *Çaççilius*. Of the letter itself only the last sentence and the closing greeting is preserved: *per equitem ad te misi. vale domine ...* (pl. IIIa).<sup>52</sup> But this is enough to indicate that he had cavalry under his command. Two further letters which may have been from him are too fragmentary to add anything.<sup>53</sup> A fourth, also fragmentary, Inv. 85/118 (unpub.) is a much corrected draft of a

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<sup>49</sup>As convincingly argued by K. Strobel (n. 48) esp. 287 ff. (Zur Kommandostruktur der Bataverauxilien). It is scarcely necessary to mention that some of Dr. Strobel's remarks require modification in the light of further discoveries. Some matters may remain less than one hundred per cent certain, e. g. whether the Ninth Cohort was already milliary when at Vindolanda in 103 at latest, to go to a new station north of the Lower Danube, at Buridava on the R. Olt. Tiles from there read CIX[B] and [C]IXB (IDR II 563, 572). Buridava was then part of Moesia Inferior and was garrisoned between 102 and 106. In his *Untersuchungen zu den Dakerkriegen Trajans* (1984) 122 Strobel dates the Ninth's move to 105; in *Anmerkungen zur Truppengeschichte des Donauraumes in der hohen Kaiserzeit II: Die Trajanischen Ziegelstempel aus Buridava-Stolniceni*, ZPE 68, 1987, 282-4, p. 284 he puts it in 101, without discussion; likewise in op. cit. (n. 48) 275. Whether Buridava was the kind of *militiam .. iucundam* Fl. Cerialis was asking Crispinus to arrange (*beneficio tuo*), as he put it in VLWT no. 37, lines 22-3, one can only guess. Perhaps the weather was better (cf. his complaints about *aestates molestae* in the draft letter to Caecilius September (Inv. 85/118), discussed briefly below).

<sup>50</sup>Viz. from Neratius Priscus for Voconius Romanus, Ep. 2. 13, unsuccessful in the view of Syme, RP III 1390 (revising earlier views on the identification of Pliny's correspondent Priscus); RP IV 274 f.; V 456 f.; VII 596; and elsewhere. From Neratius Marcellus for Suetonius, revealed by Ep. 3. 8 to Suetonius, who then backed out when offered a tribunate. No letter to Marcellus was included in the collection (perhaps suppressed by Suetonius himself in an editorial capacity? Marcellus was still extant in the 120s - cos. II in 129 - and his assumed son Corellius Pansa was cos. ord. in 122, the year Suetonius finally did go to Britain, as ab epistulis, losing his job in the process, RP III 1260 ff. On Corellius Pansa, n. 58 below).

<sup>51</sup>On this engaging topic, cf. E. Birley, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army* (1953) 141 ff. = *Roman Army Papers* (1988) 153 f.; H. M. Cotton, *Military tribunates and the exercise of patronage*, Chiron 11 (1981) 229-238; R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage in the Early Empire* (1982) esp. 130 ff.

<sup>52</sup>What follows *vale domine* was probably *frater*, but the traces are a bit too faint to be sure.

<sup>53</sup>VLWT no. 82 (from "Layer 8" - period III) is read as [ ] . . *septembres[ ]* on the reverse (the other side yields only [ ] *ssime*), and perhaps *id* before *septembres*. Why not [*a Caecil]io Septembre c[ol.]* (the photograph permits). Inv. 85/120 (unpublished) may read on the address side ....*bre* (another letter to Flavius Cerialis, little text surviving): i. e. [*a Septem]bre [col.]* (vel sim).

letter to September from Cerialis. It includes a personal observation: *aestates, etiam si molestae sint*.<sup>54</sup> The cognomen *September* was pretty rare. Kajanto could find only 14 cases, 4 of them servile. Mócsy's repertory of names from the northern and western provinces and from N. Italy produces only one.<sup>55</sup> Why not therefore identify Cerialis' fellow-prefect with M. Caecilius September, prefect of a cohort of *Musulamii* in Syria on 7. November 88?<sup>56</sup> There is no reason why this man, in his first militia in 88, could not have been in his third, as prefect of cavalry, a dozen or so years later.

Syria in 88 was governed by P. Valerius Patruinus (suff. 82). A native of Ticinum, he was father-in-law of Pliny's friend L. Domitius Apollinaris (suff. 97), from Vercellae.<sup>57</sup> Further, a daughter of Apollinaris was to marry Neratius Marcellus. This link was, to be sure, forged later, a good decade after Cerialis and September got their commissions in Britain under Marcellus.<sup>58</sup> At the time he was in Britain Marcellus was still married to Corellia Hispulla, daughter of Pliny's elderly friend (recently deceased) Q. Corellius Rufus (suff. 78), whose home was also in the "Pliny country", evidently at Laus Pompeia.<sup>59</sup> But,

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<sup>54</sup>Recalling inevitably *caelum crebris imbribus ad nebulis foedum*, Tacitus, Agr. 12. 3 - recently published, indeed, when Fl. Cerialis wrote to September. Perhaps he had been reading it. It would be gratifying to suppose that Neratius Marcellus and his officers equipped themselves with such useful literature. In which connection, Eric Birley suggests to me that the delightful but puzzling *memorandum* (?) Inv. 85/32 (now assigned by R. Birley to period III) dealing with the fighting habits of the *Brittunculi* - e. g. *nec residunt Brittunculi ut iaculos mittant* (published by Bowman & Thomas, Brit. 18, 1987, 135-7) might be an excerpt from the Elder Pliny's lost manual *De iaculatione equestri*, composed when he was prefect of cavalry at Vetera (Pliny, Ep. 3. 5. 3 f.). On which (and a good deal else), RP VII 496-511 (Consular friends of the Elder Pliny). I owe the reading *Septembri suo* in Inv 85/118 to Dr. A. K. Bowman.

<sup>55</sup>Kajanto 219; Mócsy 262. For the single September known to Mócsy n. 61 below.

<sup>56</sup>CIL XVI 35. E Devijver, *Prosopographia Equestrium Militarium I* (1976) C 26 ("Occidentalis?")

<sup>57</sup>Patruinus' origo: RP II 715 (his freedwoman at Ticinum, CIL V 6454). The connection with Apollinaris emerged from Xanthus (A. Balland, *Fouilles de Xanthos VII*, 1981, whence AE 1981, 826). Apollinaris, legate of Lycia-Pamphylia from 93 to 96, was married to Patruinus' daughter Valeria Vet(t)illa. However, the matter is complicated. It was Apollinaris' second marriage, contracted in 92, and suitably commemorated by Martial (7. 89) - who also supplies Apollinaris' origo (10. 12. 1 f.). But Apollinaris had been serving under Patruinus as a legionary legate, so it can be established (from the admittedly acephalous IGR III 558 = TAM II 569, Tlos). Hence the connection: he married the governor's daughter. The above reasoning is taken over from Syme, RP VII 588-602 (Domitius Apollinaris); see further the next three notes. Hence one may easily imagine that Apollinaris, as legionary legate in Syria received the request from his friend (Ep. 2. 9 and 5. 6 are addressed to him; cf. RP V 461, 464, 481) to fix Caecilius September up with a commission.

<sup>58</sup>Marcellus' wife Domitia Vettilla was "the product of a marriage contracted in 92" (RP VII 598), hence hardly nubile before 106 at the very earliest, and "in the late years of Trajan" (ibid.) seems plausible.

<sup>59</sup>Corellius Rufus was from Laus Pompeia, it seems: RP V 457, 463, 465. He was Pliny's "champion and counsellor" (RP II 715) and his daughter Hispulla was one of Pliny's very small number of female correspondents (Ep. 3. 3), as stressed in RP V 468, Pliny's closeness to Corellia is clear from the letter about her son's education (3. 3) and another in which he discusses his forthcoming appearance as her advocate (4. 17). She naturally also gets mentioned in the memorial letter about old Corellius (l. 12). And in fact, Pliny's third wife was related to the Corellii: RP V 465. There remain problems: hence some have suggested that Corellia Hispulla was married to Neratius Priscus, not to Neratius Marcellus: W. Eck, ZPE 50, 1983, 195 ff., Syme RP V 457. But revoked in RP VII 598: "To sum up the problems of matrimony and its iteration. Neratius Marcellus should have taken a wife in the early years of Domitian. Nothing forbids

as has now emerged, Marcellus was already related to Patruinus - whose wife was Marcellus' mother's sister.<sup>60</sup> Thus the Neratii, albeit from far-off Samnite Saepinum, were enmeshed with a group of northerners.

It may be conjectured that Pliny had secured a commission from Patruinus in Syria for Caecilius September in the late 80s - by the mediation of Domitius Apollinaris, if necessary, then a legionary legate under his future father-in-law. In about 100 Pliny will have intervened again, to procure September a commission in Britain. M. Caecilius September cannot be associated directly with Comum. Still, the only specimen of his rare cognomen in the entire northern and western part of the empire occurs precisely there;<sup>61</sup> and the gentilicium, although common everywhere, is after all one which Pliny himself bore from birth and retained after adoption by his uncle.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4. Notes on other tablets from the "Archive of Flavius Cerialis and Sulpicia Lepidina"

Of the numerous letters and documents from the praetorium occupied by this couple ca. 100-102, the invitation to attend a birthday party sent by Claudia Severa, wife of Aelius Brocchus, another equestrian officer<sup>63</sup>, to "her dearest sister" Sulpicia Lepidina, is the most delightful. In the initial publication<sup>64</sup> the editors read in line 9-10:

*Cerjal[em t]uum şaluta. Aelius meus . [ ]  
et filioluş salutant.*

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recognising her as Corellia Hispulla." Vidman is also in favour (PIR<sup>2</sup>, N 55, cf 50). The attraction of this solution is that it makes Corellius Pansa the cos. 122 son of Marcellus and grandson of Neratius Pansa. Cf. further next note on Marcellus's family nexus.

<sup>60</sup>Thus Syme's new - "venturesome" - hypothesis, RP VII 597 ff. (with stemma, "Domitius Apollinaris and the Neratii" on p. 599). Namely, Marcellus' mother a Vettia, daughter of M. Vettius Marcellus, imperial procurator from Teate (PIR<sup>1</sup> V 338) and Helvidia Priscilla (sister of the celebrated Stoic, ILS 1377); his aunt another Vettia, married to Valerius Patruinus, whence a daughter, cousin of Marcellus, wife of Domitius Apollinaris, Valeria Vettilla. Marcellus, by the way, is plausibly detected as the younger of the Neratii brothers, in spite of his being consul two years earlier than Priscus: he had been adopted by Neratius Pansa (suff. c. 75) and gained patrician rank (Syme, RP VII 597; cf. Vidman, PIR<sup>2</sup>, N 55-56).

<sup>61</sup>CIL V 8902, L. Sentius September.

<sup>62</sup>Pliny's father was L. Caecilius C. f. Secundus, magistrate of Comum and praefectus fabrum (Pais, Supp. It. 745). After adoption by his mother's brother he was C. Plinius L. f. Ouf. Caecilius Secundus. "Caecilius" was common to excess, it must be conceded (Syme, RP V 644).

<sup>63</sup>Brocchus, named in several tablets, must surely be the same as the prefect of cavalry at Arrabona, C. Aelius Brocchus (CIL III 4360 = RIU I 241, now lost; a dedication to Diana). When in touch with Cerialis in north Britain he was no doubt still in his first or second militia.

<sup>64</sup>Bowman & Thomas, *Britannia* 18, 1987, 137-140.



They offer no commentary on these lines. The reading *filiolus* is difficult and, it must be said, implausible. *filius* is easier.<sup>65</sup> That this results in *Aelius meus* being followed by the plural *salutant* is then a problem. But in fact the scribe's elaborate tails to the *L* of *saluta* and the *A* of *Aelius* in line 9 have combined to create the appearance of an *N* between the last two letters of *salutat*, of which the second *T* has had to be written further to the right.<sup>66</sup> Read therefore *Aelius meus [te] et filios salutat*.

That Cerialis and Lepidina had children with them in their praetorium at Vindolanda seems archaeologically likely (especially from the small shoes). That the children included sons can be inferred from the greetings in a letter to Cerialis from Justinus, a *col(lega)*, i. e. fellow-officer, to *Vindicem n̄. et pueros tuos* (Inv. 86/412, unpub.);<sup>67</sup> and, it may be added, from the line of Virgil's Aeneid, in clumsy capitals, most plausibly interpreted as a writing exercise by the prefect's son (it could have been a daughter of course).<sup>68</sup>

It is a pity that it cannot yet be discovered exactly where Brocchus and Severa were based. But a further letter from Severa to Lepidina, referring to Severa's hopes of visiting Lepidina, has at the end the remark *Brigae mansura*, to be interpreted as referring to her "remaining at Briga" (Inv. 85/42, unpublished). Briga, then, may be the fort where Brocchus was commander. The place-name was common enough in the Celtic world,<sup>69</sup> and can be assumed to have been used for one of the known sites from this period of which the ancient name is not otherwise attested.<sup>70</sup> At all events, it helps to explain an otherwise puzzling entry in the long account from period III, at the very end:<sup>71</sup>

*domini brigae ...*  
*runt*

The editors comment (inter al.): "If *runt* is a verbal ending, as it surely must be, it would follow that *domini* is masculine plural (but we do not know who these "lords" are ...). *man[se]/runt* is a possible reading but we cannot explain it satisfactorily. Is *brigae* a place-name? ... Finally, we are puzzled by the fact that all this seems to have no evident

<sup>65</sup>A diagonal break in this half of the diptych runs straight through the letters *SSA*, i. e. *filioS SALutat* (or, to follow the editors, through the *L<sup>v</sup>SSA* of *filioL<sup>v</sup>S SALutant*). This makes certainty that much harder.

<sup>66</sup>Apart from the plate in Brit. 18, 1987, cf. also the illustration in A. R. Birley, op. cit. (n. 48) 340.

<sup>67</sup>Briefly referred to by Bowman & Thomas, Brit. 18, 1987, 130 (by mishap numbered Inv. 86/514).

<sup>68</sup>Inv. 85/137, Brit. 18, 1987, 130-2, discussed above, cf. n. 40.

<sup>69</sup>A. L. F. Rivet & C. C. Smith, *The Place Names of Roman Britain* (1979) 227 f. - but the British one is in Hampshire, unsuitable for Brocchus and Cl. Severa.

<sup>70</sup>Robin Birley suggests the site at Kirkbride in Cumbria, known to have been an important base in the period of the Vindolanda tablets (brief indications in Breeze & Dobson, op. cit. [n. 34] 24 [map on p. 21]). "Bride" = St. Bridget; but could derive from *briga* = summit etc. But this Briga could have been considerably nearer, e. g. midway between Corbridge/Coria and Vindolanda, at Newbrough (Breeze & Dobson 19,10).

<sup>71</sup>VLWT no. 4 ("Layer 8" = period III), lines 44-5.

connection with the rest of the text" - which is a list of supplies of food and drink from the month of June, in one case *domino ad stipes*.<sup>72</sup> One may hazard the suggestion that the expression *domini Brigae manserunt* means "the commander and his wife have stayed on at Briga", or "are staying at Briga"<sup>73</sup> perhaps to explain why some entry which would otherwise have been normal was not necessary or possible (e. g. Cerialis' signature).

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<sup>72</sup>*axungiae (sextariorum) XV domino ad stipes per Privatum* (lines 35-7).

<sup>73</sup>D. Harvey, *Nugae Vindolandenses*, *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 10. 5, 1985, 69 wants to make *domini brigae* the local chieftains, taking *briga* as either hill or as a contraction of Brigantia. Not plausible. But in any case the existence of Sulpicia Lepidina, the *domina*, now being known, the plural *domini* can readily = the commander and his wife.



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a) Writing Tablet, Vindolanda, Inventory 85/17, Photograph by A. Rutherford. Copyright Vindolanda Trust.