

Why was it so important to Claudia Severa that her friend Sulpicia Lepidina came to visit her?

HOW DID THE ARRIVAL OF THE ROMANS CHANGE BRITAIN?

A note from history



This item was discovered in 1973 by an archaeologist excavating a Roman fort.

It's a short letter written on a thin piece of wood – the size of a postcard.

It was written around AD 100 (how many years ago is that?) by Claudia Severa – a wife of a fort commander, to another woman Sulpicia Lepidina.

It is the oldest surviving handwritten document ever discovered in Britain.

Written in the history books



The letter was found along with 751 others written in the same way at Vindolanda (left). Vindolanda would have looked similar to the reconstructed gatehouse and fort (right) in it's prime .

Latin letters

Claudia wrote the letter in Latin (the language of ancient Rome and its empire).

Here is a translation...

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. I shall expect you, sister.

Farewell, sister my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper, and hail.”

To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Flavius Cerialis, from Severa.”

Unanswered questions

Why was it so important that Sulpicia came to see her?

Was she ill or in danger?

Was it something to do with the fort or her husband the fort commander?

Make some suggestions – don't forget it was 1,900 years ago and most of Britain was under Roman rule.

Return to sender

Your task is to write a return postcard (as if you're Sulpicia) in the same language style as the original.

Just be thinking; What might she have written in response? Would she need to know the time? Perhaps if to bring anything – a gift?

Giving a gift



Claudia would have been a very wealthy woman due to her marriage to a fort commander, she would've had slaves and owned much jewelry such as necklaces, earrings, bracelets and brooches (much like this one).

Your task is to design a brooch that Sulpicia could take as a gift to Claudia.

Most sought after brooches had animals, birds or fish in the designs.