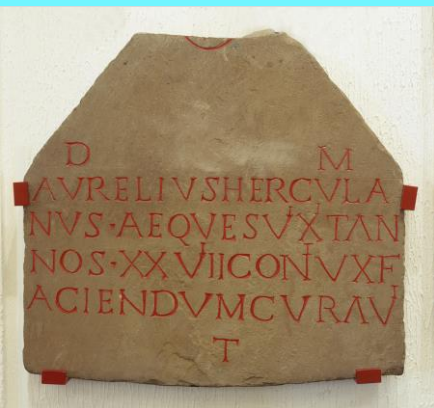


# Reading Roman Inscriptions

The Roman Latin alphabet is still widely used and Roman inscriptions often follow similar formulae, making them easy to read if you know how.

These examples are displayed at the National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon.

Find more archaeology guides or get in touch with our museum archaeologists for help with identification: [museum.wales/collections/on-your-doorstep](http://museum.wales/collections/on-your-doorstep) or on Twitter @SF\_Archaeology



## General Formula

**D M** is an abbreviation for *Dis Manibus* 'to the spirits of the departed'. This dedicates the grave to the friendly spirits (*Manes*) of the deceased.

**Name** - in this case *Aurelius Herculanus* - remember that there is no **U** in the Latin alphabet, **V** being used instead.

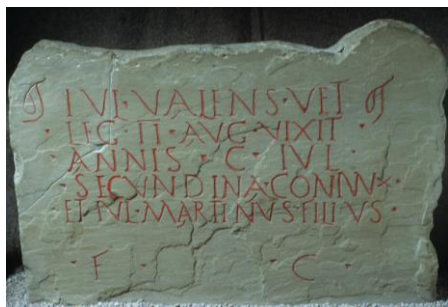
**Rank, voting tribe or place of origin** - here **AEQVES** - 'horseman' or 'trooper'.

**Age** - **VIXIT ANNOS XXV<sup>II</sup>** - 'lived ..28.. years'.

Also look out for **STIP** for '*stipendiorum*' meaning 'served... years'

**CON<sup>IX</sup>VX** (or *coniunx*) - (his) 'spouse' (his wife)

**FACIENDUM CVRAV<sup>IT</sup>T** - 'had this made'.



## VETERANVS

Some legionary soldiers lived long enough to retire and enjoy their army pension.

**D M** is missing from this memorial.  
**IVL.VALENS** - 'Julius Valens' was a **VET(eranus)** 'a veteran' (a retired soldier) 'of the Second Augustan Legion' - **.LEG.II.AVG.**

**VIXIT.ANNIS** - 'He lived'  
**C** - '100 years'

**IVL.SECVNDINA**  
'Julia Secundina', **CONIVNX** - 'his spouse', literally meaning 'co-yoked', so, 'joined together', i.e., conjugated), and **IVL.MARTINVS** 'Julius Martinus' **FILIVS** - 'his son'

**.F. .C.**

(an abbreviation for *faciendum curaverunt*) 'had this set up'.



## Imperial Dedication

This Italian marble inscription has the *ansae* or 'handles' of a Roman *tabula ansata*. It dedicated the fortress, or part of it, to the emperor. It reads

**IMP** 'For the Emperor' (*Imperator*)  
**CAES** 'Caesar'

**DIVINERVAE.F.** 'Son of the deified Nerva'

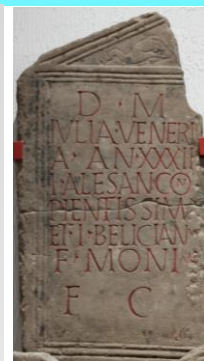
**NERVA.TRAIANO.AVG.** 'Nerva Trajan Augustus' Remember that there is no **J** in the Latin alphabet.

**GER** 'conqueror of Germany'  
**PONTIF.MAXIMO.** 'chief priest'  
**TRIB.POTEST.** 'with tribunician power'

**P.P.** (*Patri Patriae*) 'father of his country,

**COS III** 'consul for the third time' (for Trajan this was AD 100)

**LEG II AVG** 'the Second Augustan Legion (erected this)'.



## Families

'To the spirits of the departed; Julia Veneria, aged 32; Julius Alesander, **PIENTISSIMVS** - 'her devoted husband', and Julius Belicianus, (**F.** is an abbreviation for *filius*) 'her son' **F C** - 'set this up'.

Different words are separated by stops. Julius and Julia are the most common Roman names at Caerleon

## Numerals

Roman numbers, easy to carve or scratch, were based on Latin letters.

**I** = 1 e.g., **III** = 4

**V** = 5 e.g., **VIII** = 8

**X** = 10 e.g., **XXXVII** = 37

**L** = 50 e.g., **LXV** = 65, **LXXX** = 80

**C** = 100

**S** (*semis*) = half e.g., **XXXIIIS** = 33.5

**MESSE(S)** = 'months' (*mensis* month'), **DIES** = day'.



## Look for ligatures

Ligatures (joined letters) are an art form.

On Tadia's stone (above) a small **I** is added to the top of a **T** to form a **†**. It can then be read as '-it' and '-ti-'.

**I** is also added to **D** and **N** in **EXPEDITIONE.GERMANICA** - 'German expedition'. In numerals, a small **I** can be added to the top of another numeral, such as a **V** to make **V<sup>I</sup>**(six), as on the Aurelius Herculanus stone on this sheet, where **XXV<sup>II</sup>**=28.

Study Tadia's stone for the backwards **P** joining an **E**, the joined **E** and **T** to form the Latin word **ET** ('and'), the joined (ligatured) **N** and **E**, the joined reversed **E** and **R**, and the **M** and **A** created by just placing a crossbar on the **M**. For a full translation of this and other British Roman inscriptions visit <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/>