

Minimusculus : Notes for Adults

Minimusculus- this means “very little mouse.” The ending -ulus, -illus or -ellus indicates a diminutive form of a word. As in English, diminutives can express affection or scorn e.g. “Dear little dog” or “silly little dog.” Roman writers used diminutives in exactly the same way. Minimusculus expresses affection.

The word “salvete!” means hello! The **v** should be pronounced as the letter **w** so “salwaytay”
The family lived at Vindolanda from approximately 100 -106 A.D. They originated from the Netherlands. Flavius was the prefect of the camp. We know about Flavius and Lepidina from the letters excavated at Vindolanda, and we know that they had three children.

In 100 AD Vindolanda was a turf and wood fort. There were workshops, a temple, a bath house and a village with shops or stalls. Sheep and cattle were grazed on the hills around the fort.

Rufus learns Latin numbers 1 – 10. These are given as words (quinque) as well as Roman numerals (V) Comparisons could be made with their equivalents in Modern Foreign languages, e.g. quattuor, (4) quatre (French) quattro (Italian) .

All the fruits and nuts on the counting pages were eaten in Roman Britain.

The sad soldier is a Batavian, from near modern Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Roman soldiers could join up at 18, so he is probably a young man on his first posting!

Everyone’s favourite foods are all attested as part of the Roman diet. There is even a little evidence for peacocks in Britain.

The board game needs one die and two or three counters (or other playing pieces). Tiny plastic Roman soldiers would be perfect!

The toys in the drawings show actual Roman toys. Rufus’ pull-along horse is based on examples in museums, and the linen doll on one found in Roman Egypt. The little wooden sword can be seen in the museum at Vindolanda. The game that Iulius teaches to Rufus was called “Knucklebones” and is much the same as the modern game of “Jacks”. It was very popular with Greek and Roman children.

Roman army doctors could deal with all sorts of injuries and afflictions, but they couldn’t do much with infections. The boiled slugs were one of the many recommended cures for headaches.

“Valetē” This word means “Goodbye!” The **v** should be pronounced as **w** “wahlaytay”

More information on the Minimus website **www.minimus.com**