

# Gaius Valerius – A Roman Soldier

Salvete! My name is Gaius Valerius and I'm a soldier in the 9<sup>th</sup> Legion here in Lindum, or Lincoln as you call it. I thought I'd tell you a little about life in the Roman army.



## Joining the army

- First, you must be a Roman citizen – you can't be a slave or a criminal either! The best age to join is 17-20, although I was 21. You mustn't be married!
- Next you need to ask a family friend to write a letter saying what a good soldier you would be and have an interview.
- Then a doctor checks you are healthy.



## Training

After 4 months training you have to be able to:

- march 27 miles in 5 hours, whilst carrying 60 pounds of equipment (that's the weight of a large dog!)
- fight with a sword and throw a spear
- use your shield to protect yourself
- build a camp (dig a ditch, cut down trees, build a palisade and put up a tent)
- bandage a wound

Salve mum,  
I have great news – I've been promoted to signifer. It means I carry the legion's standard into battle. It's a very important job because I give signals to the soldiers so they know what to do whilst we are marching. During battle the soldiers will group around the standard and I must make sure that it is not captured or lost.

Life here is good, I spend the mornings training and doing chores, then after cena (our afternoon meal) I can relax and go to the baths, or visit the tavern outside the fort. My centurion, Hospes, is a good leader and rarely needs to punish the men with his vine rod.

Vale!

Gaius

# The real Gaius Valerius

In 1909 some workmen came across the tombstone of a soldier near the South Common in Lincoln. It was in three parts, with the other sections still missing. Luckily the parts that survived have all the information on them. Below is a translation of what it says:



Gaius Valerius, son of Gaius, of the Maecian voting tribe, soldier of the ninth legion, standard bearer of the century of Hospes, aged 35, of 14 years service, left instructions in his will for this to be set up. Here he lies.



## What do we know?

**His name:** Only the initial 'G' is given but we think his name was very likely to be Gaius

**His role in the army:** He was a standard bearer and legionary in the 9<sup>th</sup> Legion

**His centurion's name:** Hospes - a centurion was an officer in charge of 80 men.

**How old he was when he joined the army:** If he was 35 when he died and had served 14 years we can work out that he was 21 when he joined.

**When he died:** We know the 9<sup>th</sup> Legion built the fort in Lincoln around AD60 and left around AD70. We also know that after AD 70 military graves included a third name but Gaius only had two. He must have died between AD60 and AD70.

# Activities to try at Home

## Design a Roman legion standard

We have used coloured paper and card and some old polystyrene packaging we found around the house to make the pole and the top but you could use cardboard tubes or an old broom handle.

A Roman standard was a flag or banner attached to a pole.

Each legion was represented by a symbol - the 9th Legion had a bull on their banner.

They were used as a method of communication as the standard bearers could move them in different ways to give orders. Roman standards were fiercely protected on the battlefield and if lost would bring disgrace to the Legion.



## Try speaking latin

Orders were given in Latin in the Roman army so no matter where you came from you had to learn some words. Here is a song that you might already know the tune for:

nam comes est iucundus,  
nam comes est iucundus  
nam comes est iucundus,  
sic omnes dicimus

*(For he's a jolly good fellow,  
For he's a jolly good fellow,  
For he's a jolly good fellow,  
So say all of us)*

## Share Your Creations!

We would love to see what you make (or hear you singing our Latin song!)



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