



Prifysgol Cymru
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Everyday inscriptions

Tools, users, community in text

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives

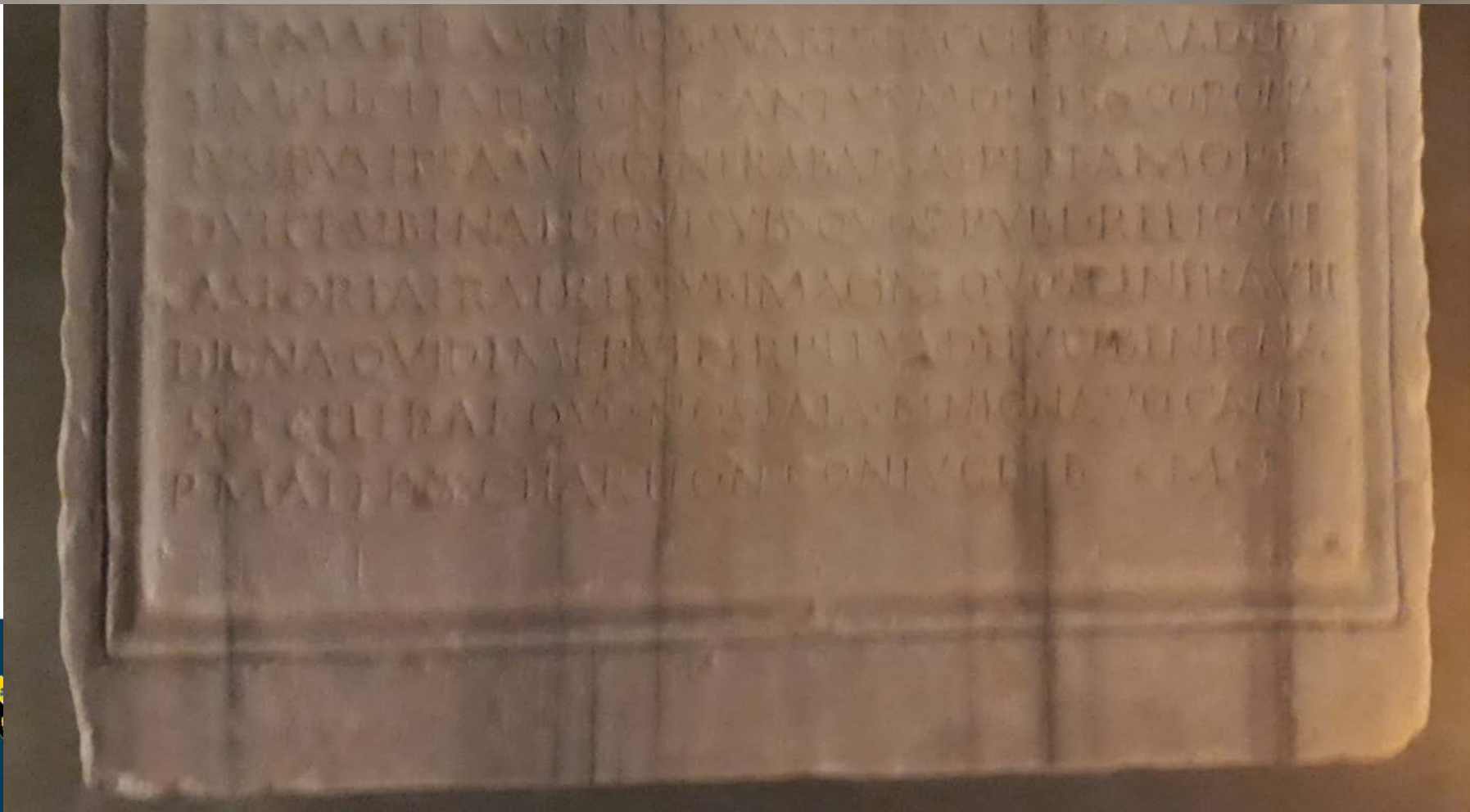


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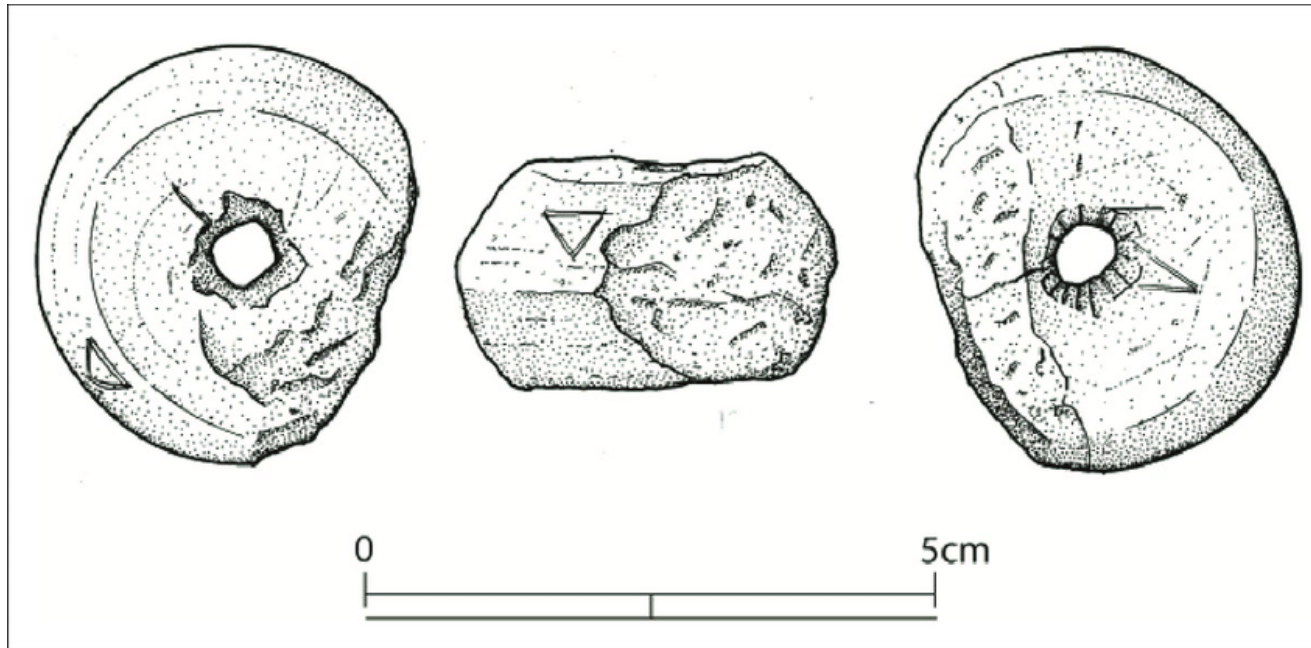


Publius Chariton fecit (are il sepolcro) per la benemerita moglie.

In this respectable tomb Glyconis lies serenely: sweet in name, but even sweeter in her soul. She never cared for splendid honors for her (*too*) austere, but rather she preferred to be wild and pleasant, to be inebriated by wine (*Bacchus*) and to perform songs with simplicity. She often amused herself by weaving beautiful wreaths of flowers with sweet love for herself and for her children, who she left in puberty; (*the sons*) she created were brothers in the likeness of Castor and Pollux. Worthy to enjoy a blessed and eternal life (*lux*), she hurried to where the good fates call (*us*). Publius Mattius Chariton saw to (*the making of this tomb*) for his well-deserving wife.



Functionality inscribed I



"Figure 6: SF12488 is a shale biconical whorl. The vertex of the triangle shaped graffito, visible on the profile of the whorl, points towards the less worn face. Drawing by Mark Hoyle." (Alberti, 2018)

Image used under CC BY-NC-ND. From: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/SF12488-is-a-shale-biconical-whorl-The-vertex-of-the-triangle-shaped-graffito-visible_fig6_325131669 [accessed 22 Aug, 2019]

Alberti, M. 2018. The Construction, Use, and Discard of Female Identities: Interpreting Spindle Whorls at Vindolanda and Corbridge. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, 1(1): 2, pp. 1–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/traj.241>.

Functionality inscribed II

- Loom weights from the Greek and Roman world sometimes have inscribed signs directing use – e.g. indicating weight range (and thus the type of weave feasible)
 - E.g. weights from Makyneia (Saranti & Nikolovieni 2018) or a weight with marks made after firing, dedicated in the sanctuary of Reitia (Cipriano 2018)
 - However: pre-firing stamps more likely to indicate the producer, with parallels in other ceramic goods

Longer inscriptions

- A far smaller proportion of textile tools are inscribed with longer texts
- Discussion of gender in relation to:
 - Authorship/commission
 - Target audience
- Readability requires direct handling of the object: text not functional when object in use
- Materiality and agency: community of tool and worker?

INSCRIPTIONS ON SPINDLE WHORLS IN LATIN

SALVE / SOROR (CIL XII 5688 19)
'Greetings, sister'

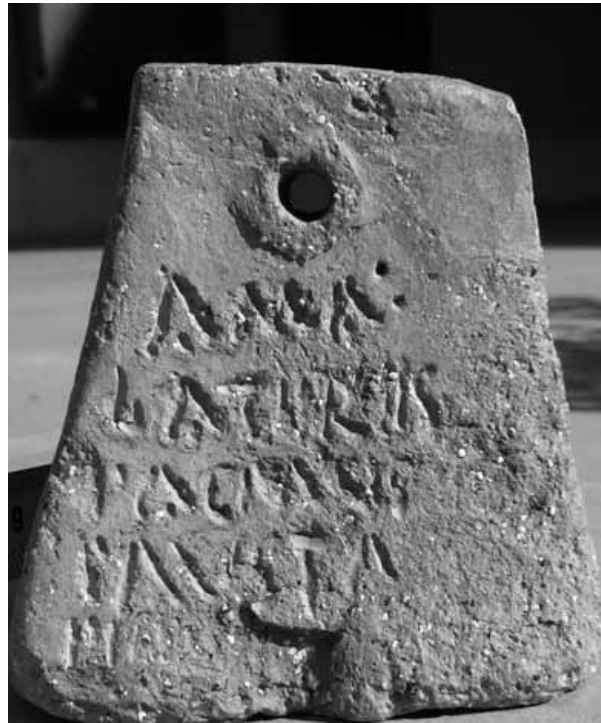
SALVE TV / PVELLA (CIL XIII 5885, 10019.19) 'Hello you, girl'

IMPLE ME / SIC VERSA ME (CIL XIII 10019.17) 'Fill me up, turn me thus'

Cf. A. Mullen (forthcoming) 'A sociolinguistic and archaeological epigraphy: translingualism, uncertainty and Roman inscribed spindle whorls'

May she weave many webs, (so that) she may find a **good** husband.
Love the loom weights! We make **happy and fortunate things**.

*Telas multas texat, uirum **bonum** inueniat
Ama lateres facimus **fausta felicia***



Platthis A.P. 7.726

Ἐσπέριον κήῳον ἀπώσατο πολλάκις ὕπνον
ἢ γρηῤσπενίην Πλατθὶς ἀμυνομένη
καί τι πρὸς ἡλακάτην καὶ τὸν συνέριθον ἄτρακτον
ἤεισεν πολιοῦ γήραος ἀγχίθυρος
καί τι παριστίδιος δινευμένη ἄχρῖς ἐπ' ἡοῦς
κεῖνον Ἀθηναίης σὺν Χάρισιν δόλιχον,
ἢ ῥικνῇ ῥικνοῦ περὶ γούνατος ἄρκιον ἰστῶ
χειρὶ στρογγύλλουσ' ἱμερόεσσα κρόκην.
ὀγδωκονταέτις δ' Ἀχερούσιον ἠΰγασεν ὕδωρ
ἢ καλὴ καλῶς Πλατθὶς ὑφηνάμενη

Leonidas of Tarent, *Greek Anthology* 7.726

Translation adapted from Jacqueline Klooster
(2019: 307-308)

Evening and morning-sleep
often the old Platthis drove
away in her battle against
penury, and a melody to go
with the distaff and **her fellow-
worker, the spindle**, she sang,
neighbour of old age. And a
melody at her loom, while she
was spinning until daybreak,
that long labour of Athena with
the Graces, or while, with
wrinkled hand on wrinkled
knee, lovely she fattened her
spindle with sufficient weft
thread for her loom. At eighty
years of age she crossed the
Acherousian stream, beautiful
Platthis, who wove beautifully.

Tools and identity

For I have also heard that the women came out of the textrina and wounded their bodies with the pins of their looms, and that some cooks poured water on them, while others poured out hot pots on them, and others still pierced their bodies with awls. (Cassiod. *hist.* 6.11, mid 4th C CE)

- “Where ancient texts comment on how users of textile tools relate to their equipment, they overwhelmingly depict these user/tool engagements as driven by functionality and need. [...]
- Yet we can also glimpse, in a handful of texts, the emotional attachments that develop among craftspeople from such reliance on their tools to meet their basic needs: the hand-worn spindle may be both income-bringer and fellow-worker, and may prompt both gratitude and frustration.”

(Öhrman ‘From Use Wear to User: Working with Literary Sources on Worn Textile Tools’, forthcoming 2021)