

## Tombstone for Marciana, aged 10, AD 200-300

Limestone from Lincolnshire

Found at Crosswall, City of London

This tombstone was found during excavations of the Roman city wall and one of its towers between 1980 and 1981. The site was Crosswall, on the eastern side of the City of London, not far from the Tower of London.

The tombstone had been broken into pieces and used as rubble to build a 4<sup>th</sup>-century Roman tower connected to the city wall. The bottom part of the tombstone was found first and then the rest was discovered in the following year, finally revealing who it was for.

Roman inscriptions are quite formulaic and include lots of abbreviations so even though parts of this one are missing, we can reconstruct much of what it said. For instance, there is the top of a capital letter D on the left-hand border and an M on the right, which stands for 'Dis manibus' or 'To the spirits of the dead'.

The inscription reads: 'To the spirits of the dead [and to] the everlasting memory of ... Marciana [who] lived ten years ...' It would originally have said ten years and the number of months and days that she lived but these numbers are missing. The ages listed on Roman children's tombstones are often very specific.

The rest of the inscription says that her relative named Aurelius, a decurion of a colonia, set up the tombstone. A colonia is a type of Roman town. Its name is missing so we don't know where Aurelius is from. However, the phrase 'everlasting memory' is typical of Roman tombstones found in areas of Europe by the Rhine and Danube rivers.

We don't know for sure how Aurelius was related to Marciana but he was probably her father as she was so young and he knew exactly how old she was. Though her name is incomplete, it is likely to be Aurelia Marciana, after him. There is a little portrait of a girl at the top of the tombstone which was meant to represent her.

Marciana and her father were probably not British. He was a decurion, which is like a town councillor, involved in running his home town, wherever that was. He is also likely to have been a wealthy businessman, which may explain why he was in London. He must have brought his family with him and sadly his daughter Marciana died while she was here.

Marciana probably died sometime in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. We think this because of her father's name Aurelius. Lots of men took the name 'Marcus Aurelius' around AD 212 when the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (who is now more commonly known as Caracalla) granted Roman citizenship to all free men throughout the Empire.

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