Decoding Roman religious inscriptions at the Roman Baths, Bath

Votive inscriptions follow a set pattern, since they were dedicated to a god or goddess to thank them for something they had done in response to a prayer.

The person dedicating the stone would have previously promised to do this if the god answered their prayer.

Typical pattern

P.T.O. for example

- **Name of God or Goddess**

- **The reason for the offering**
  PRO SE ET SUIS = for himself and his family
  PRO SALUTE ET INCOLUMITATE = for the health and safety of …
  EX VISU POSSUIT = following a vision, or holy dream

- **Name of person making the offering, perhaps their father's name** *patronymic* (- F or - FIL), their job and where they came from.

- **Dedication formulae such as D D (Dono Dedit)**: gave this as a gift
  V S L M (Votum Solvit Libenter Merito) = kept his promise happily and deservedly
  SACRUM F (fecit) L M = made this sacred offering happily and deservedly

Gods & goddesses

Deae Suli Minervae = to the goddess (dea) Sulis Minerva (Celtic/Roman)

Loucetio Marti = to Loucetius Mars (Celtic/Roman)
Nemetonae to Nemetona (Celtic)

Na (Diana) Sacratissima = very sacred Diana (Roman goddess of hunting)

Numin[ibus] Aug[ustorum] = to the Divinities of the Emperors *(the guardian spirit or divinity - numen - of a Roman Emperor was worshipped throughout the Empire: Marcus Aurelius shared the title 'Augustus' with his brother Lucius Verus from 161-169 AD.)*

Suleviis = to the Suleviae (an Eastern European name for a group of 3 Celtic Mother goddesses)

Virtuti et Numini Aug[usti] = to the Virtue and Divinity of the Emperor *(abstract ideas like 'virtue' were often personified and worshipped)*

People

- A name ending in "i' followed by F or FIL means the person's son or daughter: it is a *patronymic*.

- Slaves had one name, freedmen had two, and citizens three.

- Freedmen added their ex-master's name to their slave name.

Aufidius Eutuches = a freedman (ex-slave)

Gaius Curatius Saturninus = a centurion

Gaius Severius Emeritus = a centurion

Lucius Marcius Memor = a senior priest

Aufidius Lemnus = a freedman (ex-slave)

Marcus Aufidius Maximus = a centurion

Novantius = he was someone's father

Peregrinus = he was Secundus' son

Priscus = he was Toutius' son

Sulinus = he was Brucetus' son

Sulinus = he was Maturus' son

Vettius Benignus = a freedman (ex-slave)

Status, job or army rank

civis, cives = a citizen or tribesman/tribeswoman

f, fil, filius (or filia) = a son (or daughter)

l, lib, libertus/a = a freedman/freedwoman (ex-slave) N.B. freedmen took the name of their ex-master.

se suisque / se et suis = for himself and his family

haruspex = a senior priest *who predicted the future after examining the organs of sacrificed animals*

lapidarius = a stonemason

sculptor = a stonemason

> or) a centurion

> regionarius = a centurion in charge of the area

LEG = Legion

Leg II Aug(usta) = 2nd Legion 'the Emperor's' *was based in Britain from c. 74 AD*

Leg VI Vic(trix) = 6th Legion 'Victorious' *was transferred to Britain c.122 A.D. with the Emperor Hadrian*

Leg XX V(aleria) V(ictrix) = 20th Legion 'Courageous and Victorious' *named after the Boudican rebellion 60-61 A.D.*

Places

cives Carnutenus = a tribesman from Chartres, in France

civis Treveri = a citizen of Trier, in Germany

Layout		Translation
Dedication to the god or goddess *Notice the different spelling* She is usually called **Dea Sulis Minerva** – this is all in the *DATIVE* case, meaning 'TO'	DEAE SULI MINERVAE	To the goddess Sulis Minerva
Reason for dedicating this votive altar The goddess is thanked for looking after the former master of the person dedicating the stone His names end in "-i" *(GENITIVE case)* because it is the Latin equivalent of *apostrophe-s or "OF Marcus"* *"-is" and "-ae"* are also Genitive endings	PRO SALUTE Marci CURATI MODESTI > LEGionis XX Valeriae Victricis	for the safety of Marcus Curatius Modestus, a centurion of the 20th Legion 'Courageous & Victorious'
Name of person giving the stone as an offering *Notice that when the slave Lemnus was freed he was given the name of his ex-master* **His Status**	CURATius LEMNUS LIBertus	Curatius Lemnus, his freedman (ex-slave)
Formal dedication of the stone Lemnus would have sacrificed to the goddess in advance and asked her to protect his ex-master. He would have promised to give her this votive altar as a 'thank-you' present for answering his prayer	Votum Solvit Libenter Merito	has kept his promise (to the goddess) happily and deservedly

The example shown here is fictitious – purely to illustrate the format.