

Auxiliary soldiers: Romans-to-be

Hadrian's Wall

In 121 AD at the command of the Emperor Hadrian a wall was built to separate the Romans from the Barbarians. It stretched across Northern Britain from east to west and much of it still stands today. At 79 miles long and 6 metres high it was one the Romans' largest and most impressive displays of engineering skill. All the way along it, at intervals, were checkpoints, turrets and forts.



Left: stretch of Hadrian's Wall near Greenhead Lough. Right: Remains of a milecastle.

Even at its origin it was as much a symbol of political power as a line of defence. The checkpoints all the way along it were an opportunity to monitor and control trade and immigration, and allowed regular taxation on the local traders who passed across it.



This bowl shows a schematised drawing of Hadrian's Wall (originally coloured in with enamels), naming five forts at the Western end of the Wall above the drawing. It was probably made as a souvenir.

Who do you think might have bought a bowl like this, and why?

Further reading:

On the Rude Cup: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?assetId=33799001&objectId=817259&partId=1