



For the Emperor Caesar, son of the deified Trajan, grandson of the deified Nerva, Trajan Hadrian Augustus the Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix (built this)

Fragmentary building stone from Milecastle 47, Hadrian's Wall. Now in the GNM collection, this inscription is also discussed on the Roman Inscriptions of Britain website:

<https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1852>

The probable centre for the Imperial Cult in Britain was Colchester, where a temple to Claudius was built in the first century.

<https://www.thecolchesterarchaeologist.co.uk/?p=34817>

Emperors claimed to rule by divine right (the will of the gods), and the **imperial cult** - a state religion in which Emperors and their dynasty were worshipped as gods – was an important tool of government. This was the only religious cult which the Roman provinces were forced to accept: it was the standard by which loyalty to the Empire was tested.

This building stone illustrates these themes. The 20th Legion played a major part in building Hadrian's Wall. This stone commemorates completion of a milecastle, and honours three Emperors from one dynasty: Nerva, his adopted son Trajan, and *his* adopted son, Hadrian. Nerva and Trajan (deceased) are *deified* – that is, they are now thought of as gods.

MY RESEARCH

What was the Imperial Cult, and what purposes did it serve in the Roman Provinces?