

**THE ANTONINE WALL: REASONS FOR THE ROMAN RETREAT**

By

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**Abstract:**

Scotland under the control of the vast Roman Empire was composed of a patchwork of Celtic tribes, which had a society based around warfare, agriculture, and a druidic religion. To defend against rebellion by these tribes, the emperor Hadrian ordered the construction of a wall along the Roman border in Britain. This wall proved quite effective at solidifying Roman control during the period of its use; however, following the death of Hadrian, his successor, Antoninus Pius, decided to order the construction of a new wall further north. This wall was to be constructed across the narrowest stretch of land in Scotland: between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde. This paper examines the causes for the abandonment of the Antonine Wall and re-establishment of Hadrian's Wall as the northern boundary of the Roman Empire, with some of the primary factors being natural disaster, political transitions, and economic stress.

“The Doctor: The greatest military machine in the history of the Universe.”

“Amy: What is? The Daleks?”

“The Doctor: No. No no no no no. The Romans.”<sup>1</sup>

## **The Antonine Wall: Reasons for the Roman Retreat.**

By Kira Caitlin Sund

### **Iron Age Britain:**

Who are the Celts? There were several cultures present in what is today the United Kingdom, the main ones being the Celts, the Picts, and the Bretons. One of the ways to distinguish among these groups is through the spoken languages. The Celts spoke variants of the languages that form today’s Gaelic: Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Manx, and Cornwall; meanwhile the Bretons spoke the related Breton language<sup>2</sup>. The Pictish language derived from a Gallo-Brittonic dialect<sup>3</sup>. The Scottish, Manx, and Irish Celts could then be distinguished from the Welsh, Cornish, and Breton through differentiations in Gaelic pronunciation; Welsh, Cornish, and to some extent Breton are P-Celtic, while Scottish, Manx, and Irish are Q-Celtic<sup>4</sup>. These language groupings have been described for centuries on the basis of variations in pronunciation<sup>5</sup>. The primary differentiation is based on how *q* is pronounced; in Q-Celtic it is a hard sound like *k*, while in P-Celtic it is the softer *p* sound<sup>6</sup>. An example of this is a comparison of the word for four in Irish and Welsh; Irish uses the word *cethir* while Welsh uses the softened word *pedwar*<sup>7</sup>. There are similarities between these words, and they share their origin, but to the outside observer they would seem remarkably different. Within the language groups there can be some strikingly similar words as well; in Scottish, for example, to say good afternoon is *feskar mah*, while in Manx it is *fastyr mie*. These would be not as difficult for people with knowledge of the languages to understand, but might still cause trouble to those not fluent. These differences in language would add complications to any communication efforts when the Romans invaded. The Picts occurred in northern Scotland during the Roman period, but much about them is uncertain<sup>8</sup>. There are very limited records of the Picts, particularly in the time of

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<sup>1</sup> From Doctor Who Series 5 Episode 12: The Pandorica Opens

<sup>2</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *The Celts: A very short introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2003) 49-50

<sup>3</sup> Antony Kamm *The last frontier: the Roman invasions of Scotland*. (Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing Limited, 2004) 13

<sup>4</sup> Cunliffe, *The Celts*, 49-50; Kamm *The last frontier*, 13; Anne Ross, *The pagan Celts*. (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1986) 8

<sup>5</sup> Cunliffe, *The Celts*, 49-50

<sup>6</sup> Cunliffe, *The Celts*, 50; Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 8

<sup>7</sup> Cunliffe, *The Celts*, 50

<sup>8</sup> David James and Simant Bostock, *Celtic Connections: The ancient Celts, their tradition and living legacy*, (London: Blanford, 1996) 82

the original construction and abandonment of the Antonine Wall, so the extent of Roman interactions with them is unknown<sup>9</sup>.

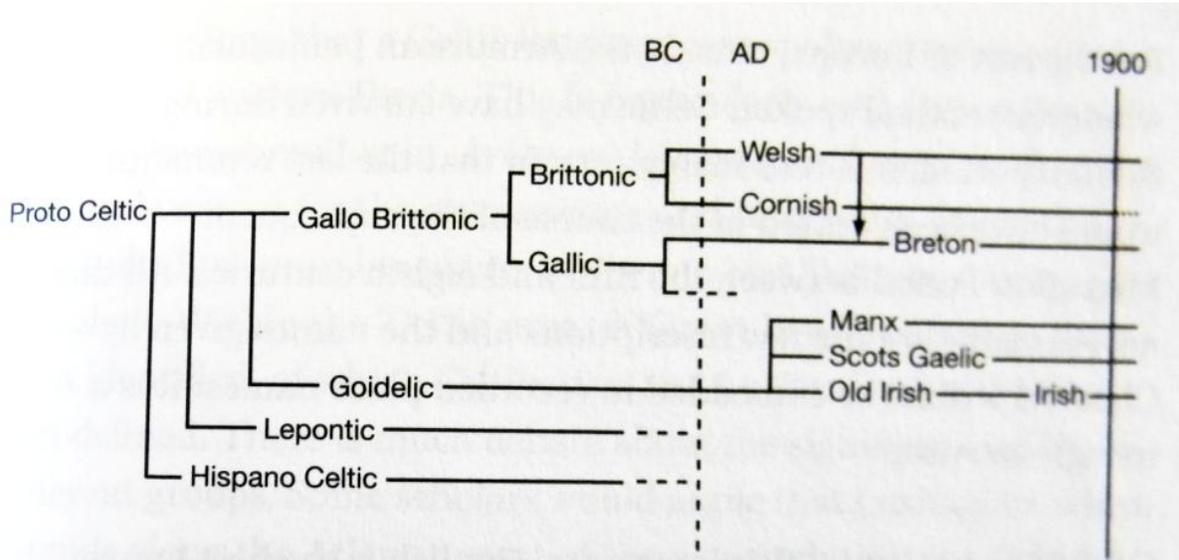


Figure 1: table showing the evolution of the Celtic languages. From Cunliffe, *The Celts* (2003)

The Scottish Celts during the time of the Antonine Wall were divided into a collection of tribes with an economy based in agriculture and a strong religious basis to society<sup>10</sup>. The tribes included the Ambrones, the Brigantes, the Caledonians, the Maeatae, the Icenii, and many others. Their legal system was quite gender equal for the time, with men and women both allowed to own property, have jobs, engage in combat, and act as the leaders of the tribes<sup>11</sup>. While the Celts are not well recorded through their own records, as of the end of the fourth century CE, they were known to have a writing system known as Ogam (or Ogham) based off of the Roman alphabet<sup>12</sup>. Ogam is a Pre-Christian and early Christian system of writing using a series of lines extending off of a central primary line<sup>13</sup>. There are examples of this writing found in parts of Scotland, England, Wales, the Isle of Man, and Ireland<sup>14</sup>. However, there is not much text, so it is of little use for historical references.

<sup>9</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 149

<sup>10</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 14-20

<sup>11</sup> Kamm *The last frontier*, 16-17

<sup>12</sup> Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 99

<sup>13</sup> James and Bostock, *Celtic Connections* 66

<sup>14</sup> Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 99; James and Bostock, *Celtic Connections*, 66



Figure 2: Ogam Script (right) and an example of Ogam Script at Clonmacnoise (left). Image on right from Ross, *The Pagan Celts* (1986). Image on left taken by author.

In other cases Greek characters have been used for some inscriptions or by some merchants, yet, as a rule, their histories were recorded through oral traditions<sup>15</sup>. Therefore much of the information on the Celts in general comes from archaeological evidence or from Classical records<sup>16</sup>. The challenge with the archaeological record is sometimes in determining which tribes or cultures different sites are associated with.

The Celts seem to have derived from the previous Urn-field culture that resided in the area<sup>17</sup>. Despite this, they also had a preference for inhumation over cremation<sup>18</sup>. In Scotland, the primary living structures were wood or dry-stone roundhouses with thatched roofs<sup>19</sup>. In some cases there were also souterrains which were underground artificial caves, possibly for storage<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 98-99

<sup>16</sup> Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 23-26

<sup>17</sup> Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 12

<sup>18</sup> Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 12-16

<sup>19</sup> Ross, *The Everyday life of the pagan Celts*, (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1970) 87-90; Kamm, *The last frontier*, 23

<sup>20</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *The ancient Celts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 156; D. W. Harding, *The Iron Age in northern Britain: Celts and Romans, Natives and Invaders*, (New York: Routledge, 2004) 99-101



Figure 3: Inside and outside an Irish souterrain. Images taken by author.

There were defensive structures called crannogs, islands built of branches, moss, and earth, constructed in a lake<sup>21</sup>. The island could only be reached via a wooden bridge which could be defended or made impassable, and on the island a roundhouse would be erected<sup>22</sup>. They also constructed the imposing brochs; whether these were used defensively is uncertain, yet they had a striking appearance while also protecting against the elements<sup>23</sup>. By 100 BCE brochs were constructed as sizable circular towers with walls over 5 meters thick at the bottom; this would provide quite thorough protection against incoming threats<sup>24</sup>. The full forms of these buildings are unknown since there are no fully intact brochs still in existence<sup>25</sup>.

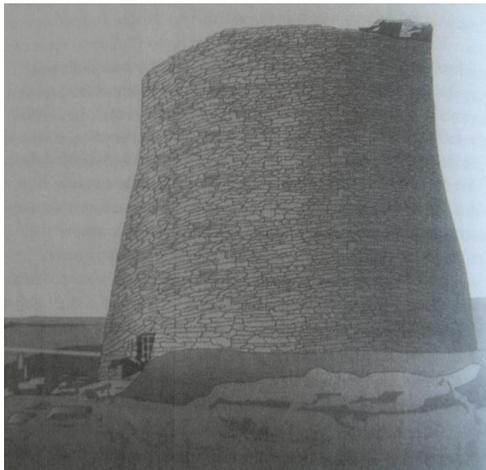


Figure 4: Image of Isle of Mousa Broch in Scotland. Image from Alcock, *The daily life of the pagan Celts* (2009)

<sup>21</sup> Joan P. Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2009) 50-51; Harding, *The Iron Age in northern Britain*, 72, 103-106

<sup>22</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 50-51

<sup>23</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 47-50

<sup>24</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 47

<sup>25</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 47

Celtic society featured a very structured hierarchy, with the two highest ranked classes being the druidic class and the knight or noble class<sup>26</sup>. The Celts followed an elaborate druidic system of belief which also factored heavily into their preserved oral tradition<sup>27</sup>. Druids would often train for 20 years or more to learn their craft and to learn long sets of poems of history<sup>28</sup>. By not writing down their doctrine druids were able to keep their teachings a secret and maintain a greater influence on society<sup>29</sup>. Druids were extremely important and well respected within Celtic society<sup>30</sup>. Beyond their most obvious function as religious leaders and historians, they also acted as judges in religious and civilian conflicts<sup>31</sup>. They were responsible for land disputes and murder cases, among other disputes; Strabo suggested that druid decisions were typically upheld on the basis of their assumed integrity<sup>32</sup>. There could also be sanctions if their decisions were challenged, a harsh punishment in a society where sacrifice was considered an important part of a healthy growing season<sup>33</sup>. There would also be the risk of hostility or even ostracism within the societal group; a dangerous possibility is a society marked by warfare<sup>34</sup>. The ruling of druids even held sway over kings and chieftains; they would not risk the disapproval of the druids and would even seek the council of druids before some major decisions such as engaging in battle<sup>35</sup>. Tacitus wrote that even when battles were about to begin druids were capable of stepping between the battle lines and stop the confrontation<sup>36</sup>.

They were also known for their medical abilities, their knowledge of astronomy, as well as more mystical abilities: control of the weather, divination and augury<sup>37</sup>. The Romans were troubled by some of the methods of druidic divination since they included reading the future from human death throes and entrails<sup>38</sup>.

Furthermore, druids were exempt from a two of requirements that were expected of much of the rest of society; they were exempt from military service and taxation<sup>39</sup>. The tax exemption in particular made druidic service a popular option for many men and families<sup>40</sup>. Druids were also not limited to male membership; there were also dryads or druidesses

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<sup>26</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 19; T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc, 1958) 75

<sup>27</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 19-23

<sup>28</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 21

<sup>29</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 21

<sup>30</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 19; Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 28

<sup>31</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 19-20; Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 28

<sup>32</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 20; Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 28

<sup>33</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 20; Ross, *The pagan Celts*, 28

<sup>34</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 20

<sup>35</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 20-21

<sup>36</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 21

<sup>37</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 21-22

<sup>38</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 22

<sup>39</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 21-22

<sup>40</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 21

recorded by Greek authors, who were also able to participate in such significant public activities such as Celtic assemblies and were attributed the same divining skills as druids<sup>41</sup>.

The noble classes were headed by kings and chieftains; they were selected by the tanistry rather than by primogenetry so they were still kin to the king, but the tribes were not committed to unqualified leaders<sup>42</sup>. It was considered more important to have strong, capable leaders than retaining leadership for direct descendants; without strong leadership a tribe might weaken and fall to a rival<sup>43</sup>. Beneath the kings and chieftains came the nobles who were in warrior bands and were commonly related to their lord or had been adopted through long standing tradition of fosterage, forming strong ties of loyalty and blood<sup>44</sup>. There were other classes as well, such as charioteers, bards, craftsmen, freemen, and slaves<sup>45</sup>.

Celts were considered fierce combatants, reckless and heavy drinking, and were frequently hired as mercenaries<sup>46</sup>. Theirs was a warrior society structured to accept challenges from enemy combatant to gain status, as well as demonstrate heroism on the field of battle<sup>47</sup>. They were renowned for their strength and courage, as well as efforts to maintain their fighting form<sup>48</sup>. According to Strabo, any young man unable to wear the standard girdle length would be fined; after all, this could indicate sloth on the part of the warrior in question<sup>49</sup>. Martial training began at a young age<sup>50</sup>. Warriors worked on their skills through board games for strategy and mental acuity, and through sports for physicality<sup>51</sup>. The sports they played might have borne a striking resemblance to the “modern day” sports of field hockey and hurley, and would have been played with a ball and a curved stick of some form<sup>52</sup>. These types of sports could aid in weapons skills and coordination.

The primary weapons used in Celtic societies were swords, coming in at least two major varieties; the short Hallstatt swords which were good for thrusting, and the longer La Tène style which were better for slashing<sup>53</sup>. Along with these, a dagger was frequently carried for use close combat where a sword might prove unwieldy<sup>54</sup>. There was also a custom in some tribe of testing the quality of swords outside of battle by burying them; should the sword rust it was

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<sup>41</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 22-23

<sup>42</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 24; Powell, *The Celts*, 75

<sup>43</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 24-25

<sup>44</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 25, 29

<sup>45</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 30-33

<sup>46</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 15-16, 21

<sup>47</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 57

<sup>48</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 57

<sup>49</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 57

<sup>50</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 58

<sup>51</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 58

<sup>52</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 59

<sup>53</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 60

<sup>54</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 60

considered to have lower quality iron and would be reforged<sup>55</sup>. Spears and javelins were also fairly common and used to great effect, as were slings<sup>56</sup>. Archery, however, was far less commonplace<sup>57</sup>.

For defense, a wide variety of shields were employed, ranging in material from wicker to wood and leather all the way to metal, varying in shape from oval to rectangular, and having size from small to as tall as a person<sup>58</sup>. Celtic shields often had prominent bosses to protect the hands of the person using it from direct blows that could otherwise force the dropping of the shield<sup>59</sup>. There were also helmets of metal and leather and in some areas body armor was used, but there were also regions where the Celts would enter battle wearing nothing but a torc, as in the statue "The Dying Gaul"<sup>60</sup>. These were the people encountered by the Romans as they expanded their territory northwards.

### **Celts: Major Tribes and Leaders**

There was wide reaching influence within the Celtic world; there is evidence that some of the Celtic leaders of Gaul had some measure of control in Britain<sup>61</sup>. Therefore it is not wholly unreasonable to consider some of Julius Caesar's commentary on the Celts of Gaul as potentially being representative of the larger Celtic culture. Due to his campaigns in Gaul prior to becoming Roman Emperor, Caesar had numerous encounters with Celtic tribes and recorded some of his observations<sup>62</sup>.

Caesar noted that the tribes in Gaul had a striking class contrast between the lower class and the elite; the system he described resembled that found in Feudal England<sup>63</sup>. There was a poor lower class that owed obligations, possibly in the form of taxes, to the wealthier powerful elite<sup>64</sup>. In exchange for the loyalty of the lower class, the elite would provide protection for those within their lands<sup>65</sup>. There was also the use of the elite's entourage as a sign of status; those who can support a larger entourage would clearly have the greater power and influence to support them<sup>66</sup>. This also was a method of displaying status within Roman society as well<sup>67</sup>. To bind alliances between Celtic tribes, there were practices that also continued into future cultures of the region. There was the marrying off of daughters to other leaders as a method of

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<sup>55</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 60

<sup>56</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 61-62

<sup>57</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 61

<sup>58</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 62-63

<sup>59</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 62-63

<sup>60</sup> Alcock, *Daily life of the pagan Celts*, 66

<sup>61</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, (London: B T Batsford, 2004) 75

<sup>62</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 72

<sup>63</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 72-73

<sup>64</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 73

<sup>65</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 73

<sup>66</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 73

<sup>67</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 73

solidifying relationships between leaders<sup>68</sup>. There was also the tradition of fosterage, wherein sons of members of the elite would be sent to live and be educated by other elite families in different tribes or other factions within a tribe<sup>69</sup>.

Despite these methods of unifying tribes, the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE, at least according to Caesar, was a time rife with discord and political tension<sup>70</sup>. There seemed to be powerful rivalries not just among tribes, but also within every unit of division all the way down to household disputes<sup>71</sup>. Tacitus describes this as one of the strong advantages of the Romans over the Celtic tribes of Britain; the tribes seemed to have a very limited capacity for cooperation, and it was unusual for multiple tribes to come together against an external threat<sup>72</sup>. It is not quite certain if this applied to Britain as a whole or just limited to an area of the southeast<sup>73</sup>.

The Brigantes had had a neutral or pro-Roman stance early in the Roman incursion; however, around 47-48 CE there was a period of unrest<sup>74</sup>. Tacitus described this occurrence and said that the Brigantes pacified rapidly following the killing of the leadership responsible for the disturbance<sup>75</sup>. The rest of the Brigantes were pardoned<sup>76</sup>. Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes, next caused a stir through the controversial decision to turn over the fugitive war leader Caratacus who had been continuing his campaign against the Romans despite having already been driven out of his own territory<sup>77</sup>. This action increased the tension within the Brigantes, particularly among Cartimandua and her rivals. The tension turned to conflict after Cartimadua consorted with the armor-bearer of her husband, Venutias, which would have acted as both an intentional insult and as a way of weakening his authority<sup>78</sup>. Cartimandua eventually had to be removed to safety by the Romans after her struggle with Venutias<sup>79</sup>. This left the Brigantes under Venutias' control for a time<sup>80</sup>.

Other known important leaders of the time included Boudica who led several tribes in a revolt against the Romans in 60 CE, Calcagus who was a war leader during the battle of Mons Graupius in 84 CE, and Cunobelinus who was described as *rex Britannorum* in 43 CE<sup>81</sup>. There were numerous war leaders, and many others of importance; however, there are limited

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<sup>68</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 73

<sup>69</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 73

<sup>70</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 74

<sup>71</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 74

<sup>72</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 74

<sup>73</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 74

<sup>74</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 75

<sup>75</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 75

<sup>76</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 75

<sup>77</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 75

<sup>78</sup> B. R. Hartley and R. Leon Fitts, *The Brigantes*, (Glouster: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1988) 18

<sup>79</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 18

<sup>80</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 18

<sup>81</sup> Cunliffe, *Iron Age Britain*, 77, 80

records as to the identities of these individuals, so their contributions must be considered through an examination of the leaders who were recorded by the Romans.



Figure 5: Map of the Celtic tribes in Britain. Image from Kamm, *The last frontier* (2004)

### The Brigantes:

The Brigantes were a tribe commonly assumed to be composed of a confederation of smaller tribes by the late pre-Roman Iron Age; these smaller tribes may have included the Setantii of the Fylde, the Carvettii of the Eden Valley, the Gabrantovices of east Yorkshire, the Tectoverdi, the Lopocares of Northumberland, and others both named and unnamed<sup>82</sup>. In the second century CE the geographer Ptolemy said their lands extended “from sea to sea” and described the names and locations of many of the civitas which they inhabited<sup>83</sup>. The civitas he listed were York, Alderborough, Catterick, Binchester, Ilkley, Rigodunum, Camulodunum, Epiacum, and Calacum; however, while there are other sources for most of these, the last two

<sup>82</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 1-5

<sup>83</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 4; Herman Ramm, *The Parisi*, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 1978) 21

of these are otherwise unknown<sup>84</sup>. There is archaeological evidence suggesting up to four more locations based on the presence of offerings to the goddess Brigantia; one of these locations is north of the line of Hadrian's Wall<sup>85</sup>. There are difficulties to identifying specific tribes, however, because there is little distinguishing pottery and a scarcity of surviving metal working<sup>86</sup>. It is quite likely that wooden vessels were more commonly used than ceramics, and that this is the reason for the limited ceramic remains found<sup>87</sup>. There was evidence of trade with outside communities with influence with from the Hallstatt and La Tène traditions which originated in mainland Europe<sup>88</sup>. While the influence of trade is evident, it was likely not a continuous occurrence<sup>89</sup>.

The idea of a conglomeration of small tribes is consistent with the rather variable terrain faced by the inhabitants of England and Scotland; differences in region frequently lead to variations in social structure and loyalties<sup>90</sup>. One prominent natural barrier separating tribes were the Pennines; the mountains and valleys would all have a strong impact on the levels of tribal interaction<sup>91</sup>. The name Brigantes (singular Brigans) has been used to refer to all tribes of northern Britain in some Roman sources, but is most commonly ascribed to the tribe or group of tribes to the west of the Parisii<sup>92</sup>. Their name comes from a Celtic term meaning "high ones" or "hill dwellers", possibly a reference to where the tribe originally associated with the name resided<sup>93</sup>. The non-archaeological evidence for the history and culture of the Brigantes comes following the Roman invasion of Britain in 43 CE<sup>94</sup>. At the time of the Roman invasion, Roman sources described the Brigantes as being under the sole control of the Queen Regnant Cartimandua, whom Tacitus described as "pollens nobilitate" or of strong lineage<sup>95</sup>. She seemed to have arranged a treaty with the Romans by 47 CE under the governor Aulus Plautius, and she appears to have remained in power until 69 CE<sup>96</sup>. It is quite likely that it is because of this relationship with the Romans that the Brigantes declined to join the Boudican rebellion of 61 CE<sup>97</sup>. During her time as leader of the Brigantes, Cartimandua faced several rebellions and challenges to power. It was in 69 CE that challenges within the Brigantes became too much for Cartimandua to contend with; following her divorce of consort Venutias in favor of his armor-

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<sup>84</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 4-5

<sup>85</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 5

<sup>86</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 6

<sup>87</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 13

<sup>88</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 6

<sup>89</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 6

<sup>90</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 1-3

<sup>91</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 3

<sup>92</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 1, 4-5; Ramm, *The Parisi*, 25-27

<sup>93</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 1

<sup>94</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 15

<sup>95</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 2, 15-16

<sup>96</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 16-18

<sup>97</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 17-18

bearer Vellocatus, Venutias began a series of power struggles against her<sup>98</sup>. While they were likely fairly evenly matched on resources, by the last of these rebellions, Venutias prevailed, though not without outside intervention<sup>99</sup>. His success was perhaps aided by the unrest within the Roman Empire at the time. During the year of 68-69 CE, the Roman Empire had four emperors: Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian, and this rapid turn-over of leadership could have disrupted Roman activities throughout the empire<sup>100</sup>. Venutias had been considered loyal to Rome and maintained power over the Brigantes until the Romans took greater control; however, following this conflict there were tensions with Rome<sup>101</sup>. By 80 CE, the boundaries with the neighboring tribes had been declared by treaties with Rome and, during the period from 79-81 CE, all of the Brigantian territory was garrisoned under the control of Roman governor Julius Agricola who retained his position for two terms<sup>102</sup>.

### **The Parisi:**

The Parisi had a much smaller territory than the Brigantes<sup>103</sup>. Their lands extend from the coast at Scarborough west across the Tabular Hills to the Howardian Hills southeast to Stamford Bridge and south to Howden ending then west across the Hull Valley at Spurn Point<sup>104</sup>. Within this area lies the territory of the Wolds and the Chalk Downlands, with few trees and many waterless valleys traversing this central area of Parisi land<sup>105</sup>. Populations in the Wolds and on the Chalk are limited by the few water sources that can be found; there are places with 'gypsy' springs which provide for some more habitable areas, but overall, the concentration of people in Parisi territory is higher in the areas with rivers<sup>106</sup>. Also within Parisi lands are the Vale of Pickering, the Vale of York, and the Valley of the Hull, which get substantially more water; the Vale of York and the Valley of the Hull are periodically extensively flooded<sup>107</sup>. This limits some of the visible archaeological records since the water-logging of a site covers any remains with peat and alluvium, along with the impacts of erosion<sup>108</sup>. It is known that there are Roman settlements along the river valleys that have been buried under collapsed cliffs and others eroded away along the coast; however, the records of these settlements are limited in many cases, so little else is known about them<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 18

<sup>99</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 21

<sup>100</sup> Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage, *Roman art: Romulus to Constantine fifth edition*, (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc. 2009) 169

<sup>101</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 15-19

<sup>102</sup> Hartley and Fitts, *The Brigantes*, 21-22; Kamm, *The last frontier*, 109-110

<sup>103</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 26-27

<sup>104</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 1-2

<sup>105</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 3

<sup>106</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 3

<sup>107</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 3-4

<sup>108</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 4-6

<sup>109</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 5

The Parisi were a series of widely distributed settlements at the start of the Iron Age<sup>110</sup>. They likely developed from the previous inhabitants of the area, the Arras culture<sup>111</sup>. There is evidence of outside influences such as Hallstatt C, but whether the new influence was caused by some small scale migration or simply through trade, these were assimilated into the local population without massive effect on the local culture and the previous Bronze Age culture continued its affect<sup>112</sup>.

Little is known for sure of the structure of the tribe; Ptolemy mentioned two sites that are specifically Parisi<sup>113</sup>. These site fall within the range of the Arras culture as determined through records of their square barrows, the mortuary practice embraced by that culture<sup>114</sup>. Within this region are two other locations named in other textual records<sup>115</sup>. There are perhaps four different subsets of the Parisi<sup>116</sup>.

There is not much evidence of Parisi impact on the development of Roman settlements to the south, and to the north the primary tribal influence on the Romans would have been the larger and more powerful Brigantes<sup>117</sup>. For this reason, most of the writers, such as Tacitus, describe the events regarding the Brigantes with little to no discussion of the Parisi<sup>118</sup>. To this end, any examination of the interactions of the Parisi and the Romans must be looked at through the interactions of the Parisi with the Brigantes<sup>119</sup>.

There is evidence of trade between the Parisi and the Brigantes to the north; there are archaeological remains of Belgic goods in sites within the Parisi territory east of Cartimandua's control, with the objects extending north into Brigantes territory under Venutius' control<sup>120</sup>. This suggests that the Parisi were trading with Venutius but not with Cartimandua<sup>121</sup>. They are usually thought to be pro-Roman, but there is too little evidence to develop a concrete stand on this; the primary support for this is based on the acceptance in the tribe of Roman trade goods, in combination with their position between Roman settlement and the Brigantes<sup>122</sup>. During the conflict between Cartimandua and Venutius, it is improbable that the Parisi would have taken any action prior to 69 CE; however, after that time, it is possible they may have aided Venutias, though, as with most actions of the Parisi, it cannot be known for sure<sup>123</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 11

<sup>111</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 13-21

<sup>112</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 11

<sup>113</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 23

<sup>114</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 23

<sup>115</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 23

<sup>116</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 24

<sup>117</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 26

<sup>118</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 26

<sup>119</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 26

<sup>120</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 27-28

<sup>121</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 27-28

<sup>122</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 27-28

<sup>123</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 29

When Quintus Petillius Cerialis took action during the conflict, his route of attack travelled through Parisi territory rather than traversing Brigantes territory, and following this act Cerialis seems to have decided that the Parisi needed a substantial garrison; the garrison at Malton seems to have been focused on maintaining control of the Parisi<sup>124</sup>. After Agricola took control, he proceeded to remove all but one of the Parisi garrisons, which could mean that a lower level of control was necessary at this point<sup>125</sup>. Agricola was recalled in 84 CE, leading to some alterations in policy in Britain<sup>126</sup>. Later Trajan ordered the rebuilding of the fortress at York in 107-8 CE; possibly an indication of rising tensions in the Parisi territory, though this seems unlikely since Malton was without a garrison for about 40 years until the abandonment of the Antonine wall in 155 CE<sup>127</sup>. With the reuse of Hadrian's Wall in 158 CE, the fort at Malton was likely re-garrisoned to re-strengthen roman control<sup>128</sup>.

## The Roman Influence:

### Hadrian:

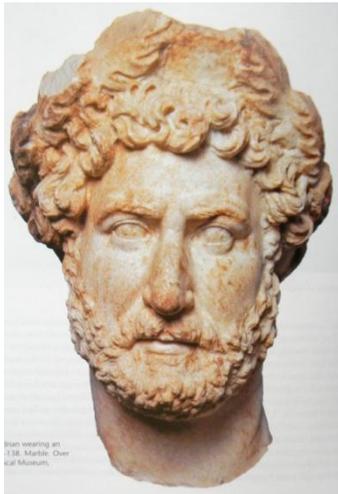


Figure 6: Bust of Hadrian. Image from Ramage and Ramage, *Roman art: Romulus to Constantine* (2009)

To consider the reign of Antoninus Pius, one must first consider the state of the Roman Empire left behind by Hadrian. Hadrian was Emperor of Rome from 117 CE to 138 CE and led a number of successful enterprises in England, including the construction of the now famous Hadrian's Wall<sup>129</sup>. At the end of his reign he left more stabilized country behind, even as he became more unstable himself<sup>130</sup>. He became paranoid which caused some trouble in the

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<sup>124</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 29-35

<sup>125</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 38

<sup>126</sup> Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *The Celts: A History*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press) 196

<sup>127</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 38, 40

<sup>128</sup> Ramm, *The Parisi*, 40-41

<sup>129</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 97, 99, 106

<sup>130</sup> David Shotter, *The Roman frontier in Britain*, (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1996) 82

higher ranks<sup>131</sup>. His first choice of heir having died, he selected the 52 year old Titus Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus as his successor, under the condition that Antoninus adopt Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus<sup>132</sup>. Despite being Hadrian's adopted heir, Antoninus was still not fully accepted by some of the higher government officials following Hadrian's death<sup>133</sup>. Some of members of the senate, disgruntled with Hadrian's actions as emperor, put forward a motion to have all of Hadrian's acts revoked<sup>134</sup>. They also were against the deification of Hadrian; however, in a show of filial, albeit adopted, loyalty, Antoninus worked towards achieving deification for Hadrian, possibly the cause for his gaining the name Pius<sup>135</sup>. While this act may have helped Antoninus to gain some popularity, it is important to understand the occurrences of Hadrian's reign to know the issues and political climate that Antoninus was entering upon his succession.

During his time as Roman Emperor, Hadrian is known to have traveled extensively throughout the Empire<sup>136</sup>. Some of the elite were suspicious of Hadrian's rise to power following his deathbed adoption by Trajan; there were senators who believed Hadrian had intended to die without selecting an heir<sup>137</sup>. Some believed it might have been a manipulation by Pompeia Plotina, the wife of Trajan<sup>138</sup>. Four senators who might have been conspiring against Hadrian on this basis were executed early in his reign<sup>139</sup>. To build his reputation following this action, Hadrian embarked on a series of elaborate building programs; he seemed to be attempting to liken himself to a new Augustus<sup>140</sup>.

Hadrian chose to not follow the strategies of his predecessor; instead of working to continue expanding the Roman borders, he chose to abandon some of the areas Trajan had taken control of in favor of strengthening Rome's hold on the territories they had held longer<sup>141</sup>. In Britain, this took the form of Hadrian's Wall, a wall extending from the river Tyne to Solway, built of stone, wood, and turf, with a series of trenching along the far side<sup>142</sup>. This was used to gain a more secure hold on the territories already held by Rome through reducing the contact between different Celtic tribes, while providing additional defenses against the Celts to the north.

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<sup>131</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>132</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>133</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 108

<sup>134</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>135</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>136</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 98-99

<sup>137</sup> Anthony R. Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, (London: Routledge, 1998) 77-78; Kamm, *The last frontier*, 97-98

<sup>138</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 1; Kamm, *The last frontier*, 98

<sup>139</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 1

<sup>140</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 1-2

<sup>141</sup> P. R. Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004) 7-8; H. D Rankin: *Celts and the Classical World*, (Portland: Timber Press) 223

<sup>142</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 19

The end of Hadrian's reign was marked by a series of decisions that left him deeply unpopular among the Roman elite<sup>143</sup>. One of these decisions, and one of the ones with the most significant impacts on Hadrian himself was his relationship with Antinous<sup>144</sup>. Hadrian was a proponent of Hellenisation, and likely considered this relationship to fall within Classical Greek tradition, where it was considered acceptable for there to be such a relationship between "the older man, the erastes, and the beautiful youth, the eromenos"<sup>145</sup>. However, the Romans as a whole did not share the views of the Greeks and, while some may have been influenced enough by the Greeks to accept the relationship, the wider Roman elite had greater reservations<sup>146</sup>. In October of 130 CE, this relationship came to an end with Antinous drowning in the Nile<sup>147</sup>. The exact circumstances of his death are uncertain; was it an accident? A suicide? Or was it perhaps something more sinister, a sacrifice in some form of ritual? It is even possible that Antinous volunteered his life for some purpose, to avoid the shame that would come of his continued relationship with Hadrian as his age exceeded that acceptable of the "beautiful youth"<sup>148</sup>. It can be assumed that Hadrian intended to continue his relationship with Antinous, and, to Antinous, this might have been considered a disgrace, as Hadrian had already been accused of "debauching adult males" by Aurelius Victor<sup>149</sup>. It was noted that Hadrian had a fascination with the "curious arts" along with "divinations and incantations of all kinds", which could have provided the basis for the rumors of Antinous being a sacrifice<sup>150</sup>. Regardless of the nature of Antinous' demise, Hadrian was overtaken with grief<sup>151</sup>. He accorded Antinous substantial honors with statues and sacred images erected across the Roman Empire, a city named after him at the location of his death, and Hadrian even claimed to have seen a star brought about by Antinous; this was a very strong reaction for an emperor to make so quickly<sup>152</sup>. This led to ridicule of Hadrian, since this immediate response to Antinous' death was not mirrored by the previous response to the death of Hadrian's sister; that she was not granted the same honors as the affair of Hadrian did not sit well with all<sup>153</sup>.

Next Hadrian adopted Ceionius Commodus as his heir and successor, renaming him Lucius Aelius Caesar<sup>154</sup>. This was not a welcome decision and brought about angry responses, notably from Pedanius Fuscus, Hadrian's grand nephew and closest blood relation; as such a close relation to Hadrian, he may have had aspirations to the throne, though his response may

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<sup>143</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>144</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 2, 241-248

<sup>145</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 2

<sup>146</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 2

<sup>147</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 2, 241-248

<sup>148</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 241, 249

<sup>149</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 248-249

<sup>150</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 247-249

<sup>151</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 247-249

<sup>152</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 247-249

<sup>153</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 247-249

<sup>154</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 3

have merely been related to the incompetence of Commodus<sup>155</sup>. Pedanius was put to death in 137 CE as a result of his actions; furthermore, his grandfather, Hadrian's brother-in-law Julius Servianus, was forced to commit suicide as a further result<sup>156</sup>. After all this occurred, Ceionius Commodus died leading Hadrian to adopt a new successor, the more able Antoninus<sup>157</sup>. This selection was made under the condition that Antoninus adopt Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, a requirement that he acquiesced to<sup>158</sup>. It is quite plausible that both of these selections were merely intended as placeholders for Marcus Aurelius who was at the time 16 years of age and too young to be an accepted Roman Emperor<sup>159</sup>.

All of this led to Hadrian's low popularity at the time of his death, and the Roman elite quickly buried his body near the location of his death as Antoninus rose to power<sup>160</sup>.

### Hadrian's Wall:

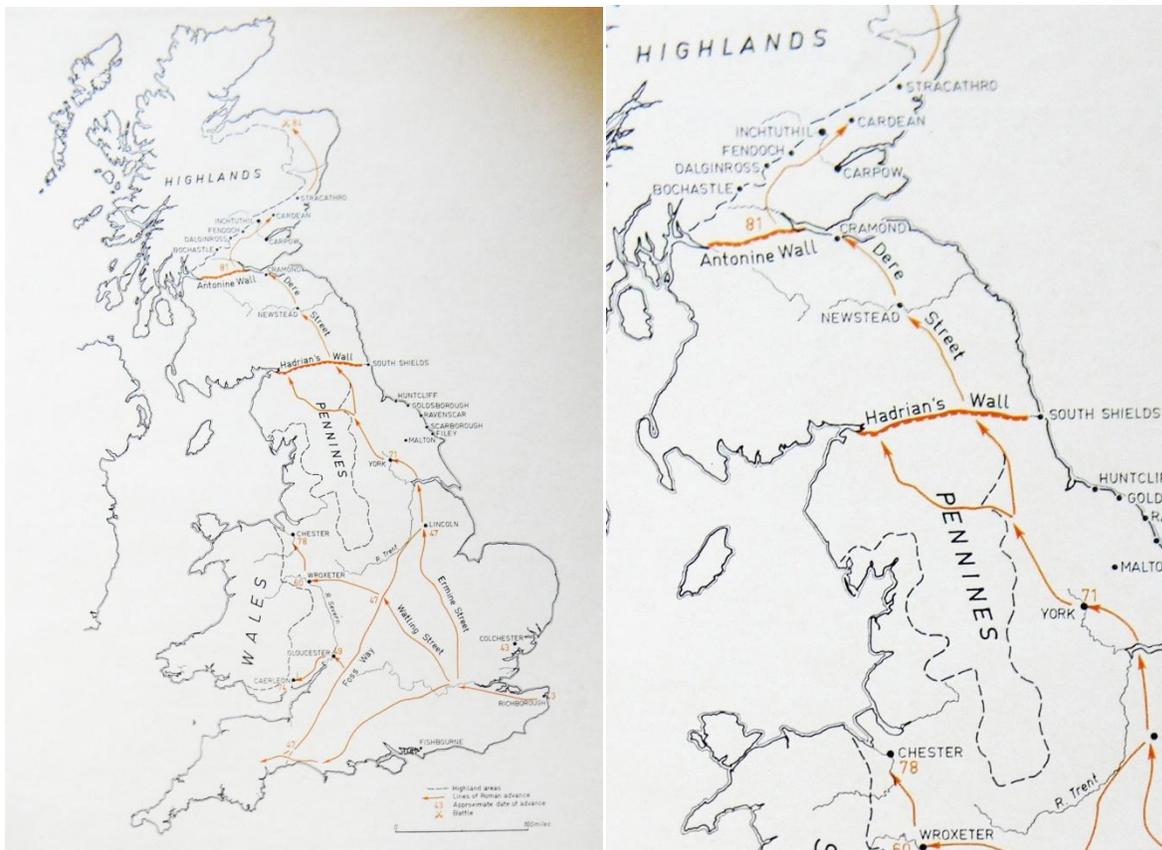


Figure 7: Map of Roman roads and walls in Britain (right) and expanded image focusing on the Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall (left). Image from Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain* (1967)

<sup>155</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 3

<sup>156</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 3

<sup>157</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>158</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>159</sup> Shotton, *The Roman frontier in Britain*, 82

<sup>160</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 300

In 122 CE, Hadrian installed Platorius Nepos as governor in Britain<sup>161</sup>. Hadrian had the area surveyed to determine the placement of the future Hadrian's Wall<sup>162</sup>. Hadrian's Wall is distinctive for being one of the most intensive Roman frontiers<sup>163</sup>. The wall was placed to take advantage of the natural landscape, while also being close enough to use old forts for troop garrisons<sup>164</sup>. However, utilizing natural obstacles meant at times shifting the line of the wall up to 2.5 miles north of the forts<sup>165</sup>. The decision to shift the line of forts onto the wall was a massive endeavor, one that implies the direct involvement of Hadrian with the project<sup>166</sup>. On the other hand, despite Hadrian's interest in architecture, there is no specific evidence to suggest that Hadrian was directly involved in the design of the wall<sup>167</sup>. While Hadrian's Wall may have formed an official Roman frontier in Britain, it was by no means the limit of the range of Roman control and influence in the area; several of the forts along the wall received water from aqueducts from the north of the barrier<sup>168</sup>. If Rome did not have control to the north of the wall it would be unlikely that such a water source would be relied upon.

The wall was constructed of different materials depending on the location; in some places it was a stone wall, at others a turf wall<sup>169</sup>. Originally the wall was intended to be around 10 Roman feet wide and built of stone from the river Tyne to the river Irthing, and of turf from the river Irthing to Solway; however this intended width was soon decreased, though not before the construction of the wall was already underway<sup>170</sup>. This has led to the sections of the wall known as the Broad wall, where this original width was used, and the Narrow wall with the later width<sup>171</sup>. Along portions of the wall's north side, wide ditches were dug as an extra defensive structure.

Hadrian's Wall used a standardized layout for the arrangement and size of forts and camps along its length<sup>172</sup>. The forts, fortlets, and milecastles tend towards a fairly consistent sizing, with very few fortlets the same size as milecastles<sup>173</sup>. The small fortlets appear to have been designed to house a garrison of about a century, while the milecastles seem to have been

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<sup>161</sup> R. W. Davies, *Hadrian's Wall: a practical guide to the visible remains*, (Sunderland: Sunderland College of Education, 1972) 9

<sup>162</sup> Davies, *Hadrian's Wall*, 9

<sup>163</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 7

<sup>164</sup> Davies, *Hadrian's Wall*, 9

<sup>165</sup> Davies, *Hadrian's Wall*, 9

<sup>166</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 11

<sup>167</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 19

<sup>168</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 11

<sup>169</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 33

<sup>170</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 19-23

<sup>171</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 19-23

<sup>172</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 23-25

<sup>173</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 23-25

constructed to a far smaller size retaining a mere 8 to 12 men<sup>174</sup>. However, there were exceptions to this size, which were set up along the Stone Wall; milecastles MC47 and MC48 were much larger and could have housed 32 men<sup>175</sup>. There were also milecastles along the Turf Wall that differed from the standard set by the Stone Wall milecastles; MC49TW and MC 50TW both deviated from the standard in form and MC 50TW by increased size<sup>176</sup>. Fortlets and milecastles had distinctive structural differences beyond the differences determined by size alone<sup>177</sup>. Most fortlets were constructed with only a single gate, rather than two gates with a road between them allowing for passage between the sides of the wall as was characteristic of the milecastles<sup>178</sup>. Milecastles probably served multiple purposes, but the most likely standard uses were as defensive structures to house gate guards and to house lookouts<sup>179</sup>.

The Antonine wall deviated from the layout of Hadrian's Wall; one way was in the size of fortlets<sup>180</sup>. Fortlets along the Antonine Wall were commonly significantly larger than those of Hadrian's Wall, though they were still smaller than those elsewhere in the Empire<sup>181</sup>. It could be that these were constructed to increase the defensive capacity of the wall against tribes that were not keen on this latest Roman incursion. It could also have been a way to compensate for the elimination of milecastles during the construction of the Antonine Wall; expanding the fortlets would still allow for the housing of comparable troop levels per length of the wall.

#### Antoninus Pius:

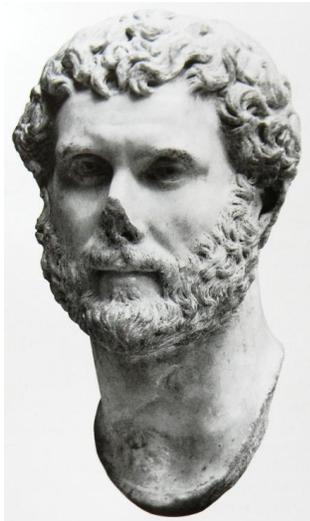


Figure 8: Bust of Antoninus Pius. Image from Ramage and Ramage, *Roman art: Romulus to Constantine* (2009)

<sup>174</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 23

<sup>175</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 23

<sup>176</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 23

<sup>177</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 23-26

<sup>178</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 25-26

<sup>179</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 27

<sup>180</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 26

<sup>181</sup> Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 26

Following Hadrian's death Antoninus began his tenure as Roman Emperor. With the senate efforts to damage Hadrian's legacy, Antoninus was able to develop popularity through his display of filial loyalty<sup>182</sup>. However, while this might have curried favor with the general populace, this did not necessarily help him to earn the loyalty of the military leaders who expected a more experienced tactician in the highest command. Antoninus did however, have experience in other fields of politics.

Antoninus had an earlier political career as consul in 120 CE<sup>183</sup>. In this capacity he built a name for himself and later got himself a position as proconsul of Asia in the mid 130s CE<sup>184</sup>. He had earned a reputation for honesty and as a reliable administrator during this time<sup>185</sup>. After becoming Roman Emperor, Antoninus spent most of his time in Rome working on organizing the economy even though his family had come from Gaul, possibly to avoid the expenditures involved in serious travel<sup>186</sup>. This contrasted sharply with Hadrian's extensive and costly traveling<sup>187</sup>. Throughout this time, however, he never gained experience as a military leader<sup>188</sup>. This was experience expected of a Roman Emperor, since he was expected to maintain the vast holdings of Rome or to expand upon them. This left him with a need to appeal to the legions upon taking power, though he also seemed to prefer not actively seeking war<sup>189</sup>. Conflict arose in several regions such as Mauretania, Achaëa, Dacia, Egypt, and Germania, but these were quickly controlled by the local governments<sup>190</sup>. The main possible reasons for Antoninus' actions in Scotland are that Antoninus needed an immediate high-profile military action to strengthen his position in Rome and provide him with the additional standing to quell his rivals and those who had objected to his actions in support of Hadrian; that a northern tribe such as the Selgovae attacked and overran part of the territory occupied by the Votadini, a tribe who had a treaty with Rome, who then appealed to Rome for help; or a combination of these two<sup>191</sup>. There are several records at the time that indicate his actions in England and Scotland were intended to quell rebellions and were undertaken out of necessity rather than desire<sup>192</sup>. Antoninus' biographer described him thusly: "he was almost the only ruler of Rome who lived, insofar as it was possible for him to do so, completely without shedding the blood of citizen or enemy; he was rightly compared to Numa, to whose fortunate disposition, piety, equanimity,

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<sup>182</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106

<sup>183</sup> Shotter, *The Roman frontier in Britain*, 82

<sup>184</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 282

<sup>185</sup> Shotter, *The Roman frontier in Britain*, 82

<sup>186</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 106-107

<sup>187</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 98-99

<sup>188</sup> Shotter, *The Roman frontier in Britain*, 82

<sup>189</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107-108

<sup>190</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>191</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107; Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, 7; William S. Hanson and Gordon S. Maxwell, *Rome's north west frontier: The Antonine Wall*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983) 60

<sup>192</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

and reverence he always adhered”, while Pausanias in his late 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE *Descriptions of Greece* comments that Antoninus never willingly went to war, although this account is not as clear<sup>193</sup>. There was also no exploitation of the gold and copper deposits south of the Tay estuary; it cannot be certain whether the Romans knew about these deposits, but if they had the knowledge and didn’t act upon it, the evidence would support the concept of the military action to suppress a rebellion rather than seeking glory and greater wealth<sup>194</sup>. On the other hand, Antoninus took little time in considering frontier policy in Scotland, sending Lollius Urbicus as his governor and representative in Britain within a year of his ascension to Emperor of Rome<sup>195</sup>.

Quintus Lollius Urbicus was born in Africa and served as part of Hadrian’s military staff, gaining military experience during the 132-135 CE revolt in Judea<sup>196</sup>. He had also acted as governor of lower Germany, giving him the military and leadership skills needed by Antoninus in his governor of Britain<sup>197</sup>. An inscription indicates that Lollius had already begun massive construction projects at Corbridge as early as 139 CE<sup>198</sup>. Corbridge was along the route of Dere Street; this construction, along with that found at at Risingham and High Rochester, also along Dere Street, suggests an early planned military incursion into Scotland<sup>199</sup>. Soon Lollius Urbicus was sent with orders to retake southern Scotland and re-establish the frontier along the Clyde-Forth line<sup>200</sup>. By 142-143 CE Lollius had succeeded in taking the Scottish Lowlands; this triumph is recorded in coins issued that year<sup>201</sup>. This was recorded through the issuing of commemorative coins bearing the image of Britannia in armor celebrating Antoninus’ triumph; Antoninus publicly claimed triumph in Britain, but chose not to do so at other locations<sup>202</sup>. At this point Antoninus ordered the construction of the Antonine Wall along from the Firth of Forth at Bridgeness following river valleys and crossing over the river Kelvin to conclude along the northern shore of the Firth of Clyde at old Kilpatrick<sup>203</sup>. Lollius may have been allowed two terms as governor to work towards setting up this new frontier and constructing the wall, just as Agricola had been allowed two terms when he had been working on the frontier<sup>204</sup>. There was no inscription discussing a new governor until 146 CE with Papirius Aelianus taking over the role<sup>205</sup>. The Antonine Wall was meant to provide a similar function to Hadrian’s Wall, but in a

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<sup>193</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>194</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 108

<sup>195</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>196</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>197</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>198</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>199</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>200</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 108

<sup>201</sup> W. S. Hanson and D. J. Breeze, *The future of Roman Scotland*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991) 61

<sup>202</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 107

<sup>203</sup> D. R. Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1967) 40-41

<sup>204</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 109-110

<sup>205</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 109

different location and of a differing construct<sup>206</sup>. There was less concern put into dealing with the vulnerabilities to assault by sea with the Antonine wall, possibly because none of the tribes to the north of the wall were skilled enough seafarers to constitute a substantial risk to the Romans; the Caledonians later became a strong seafaring tribe, but might not have had the skill during the Roman occupation<sup>207</sup>.

### Building the Antonine Wall:

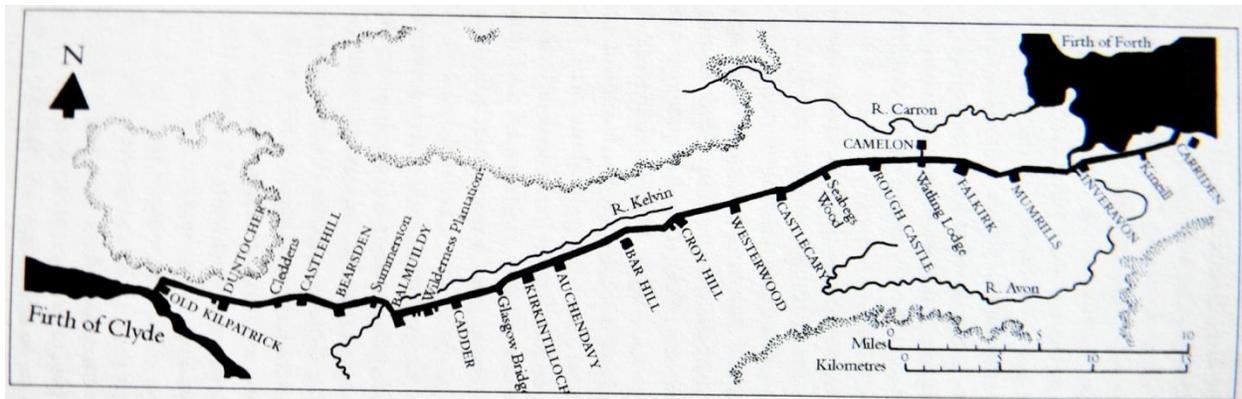


Figure 8: Map of the Antonine Wall and its forts. Image from Kamm, *The last frontier* (2004)

The development of the Antonine wall marked the definite implementation of a continuous frontier wall in Britain; troops were brought in from garrisons to the south to construct and man the new barrier<sup>208</sup>. Hadrian's Wall was still in use at the time, which provided a layer of security against any potential incursions occurring while the new wall was going up, enabling safer construction<sup>209</sup>. Hadrian's Wall had seemingly been effective at pacifying the Pennine tribes under Roman control; it is possible that shifting the location of the border wall northwards was an attempt to repeat this success with more tribes<sup>210</sup>. However, this also meant a greater reliance on the loyalty of the tribes who would now be both within the bounds of the wall and in contact with the subdued tribes. This change in policy may have been the result of unrest in southern Scotland spurred on by the changing of Emperors; the death of Hadrian may have terminated treaties with tribes that had been passive, leading to the need for new methods of control. The new wall was almost equivalent to half the length of Hadrian's Wall and featured a simpler design<sup>211</sup>. The smaller size necessitated a much smaller

<sup>206</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 111

<sup>207</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 112

<sup>208</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 40

<sup>209</sup> Geraint Osborn, *Hadrian's Wall and its people*, (Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006), 8

<sup>210</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 41

<sup>211</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 41

garrison, and the wall was constructed by legions with construction starting in the east<sup>212</sup>. The work groups were taken from entire legions rather than organizing them by centuries, with each group assigned the construction of segments about 3 miles in length as recorded on distance-slabs<sup>213</sup>. The distance-slabs were of higher quality than the centurial stones found along Hadrian's Wall, featuring ornamental carvings recording some of the Urbicus campaigns on the Scottish lowlands prior to the start of construction<sup>214</sup>. An example of this is the Bridgeness slab constructed by the second legion, which features a carved image of a Roman Cavalryman riding over four defeated tribal warriors, one of which has been beheaded<sup>215</sup>. The image also features, to the right of the inscription, a *suovetaurilia*: a traditional Roman sacrifice of a pig, a ram, and a bull to the god Mars to gain his blessing on the land<sup>216</sup>. The slab also features an inscription describing how for Antoninus Pius the Second Augustan Legion constructed part of the wall for a length of 4652 paces<sup>217</sup>.



ILLUS 1 The Bridgeness distance slab. Reproduced by kind permission of the National Museums of Scotland

Figure 9: Bridgeness distance slab. Image from Breeze, *The flag of legion II Augusta on the Bridgeness distance slab* (1989)

Forts and fortlets were constructed as the wall was being built; however, since the construction of the forts and fortlets outpaced the construction of the wall itself, only the forts towards the eastern side were actually incorporated into the wall directly<sup>218</sup>. The Wall was built of wood and turf with some stone used as well<sup>219</sup>. The wood available was limited by the earlier clearing of the woodland areas by the Iron Age descendant communities of the original

<sup>212</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 41

<sup>213</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 41

<sup>214</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 41-42

<sup>215</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 42-43

<sup>216</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 42

<sup>217</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 42

<sup>218</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 43-45

<sup>219</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 42

settlers of the area<sup>220</sup>. The clearing of the land provided additional grazing area for livestock, which had the side effect of providing plenty of available turf for the builders<sup>221</sup>. The favored wood for construction, oak, and one of the other commonly used woods, birch, were both largely eliminated due to the harvesting by prior communities; these woods were preferred since they were quite strong and durable<sup>222</sup>. The remaining woods available to the builders were the less favorable alder and willow in areas of wetter soil conditions, and the also less desirable hazel in areas of drier soil conditions; these are often softer, and by extension less durable, than oak<sup>223</sup>. Clay was used in the place of turf for large stretches of the first ten miles because there was a lack of suitable turf in those areas<sup>224</sup>. The foundations of the wall were constructed of a rubble course contained by kerb-stones with stone-culverts in portions of the foundation to eliminate excess water<sup>225</sup>. The foundation had a width ranging from about 14 to 16 feet, with a height to the wall of likely 12 feet to the rampart and 18 feet to the timber works, though now the wall has a maximum height of 6 feet<sup>226</sup>. There was a large ditch dug in front of the wall extending to a 40 foot width and a 12 foot depth, with the spoil from the digging spread on the northern side to avoid providing any cover near the fortifications<sup>227</sup>. The ditch had to be dug through stone in areas, and for one 80 foot section the ditch was not completed<sup>228</sup>.

### **Marcus Aurelius:**

Marcus Aurelius was the last of the “Five Good Emperors” together with Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus. He attributed many of his values to his family and upbringing in his *Meditations*; he said that he learned “modesty and manliness” from his father who died when Marcus was three, that he learned “religious piety” and to avoid the “ways of the rich” from his mother, and “good character and avoidance of bad temper” from his paternal grandfather, who had taken him in after his father’s death<sup>229</sup>. He was known to be a stoic and studious youth, and would wear a rough Greek cloak during his studies, sleeping on the floor until his mother managed to convince him to sleep on a small and simple bed<sup>230</sup>. These values and this approach to life would serve him well upon his becoming emperor.

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<sup>220</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 23, 109; Stuart Piggott, *Scotland before history*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

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<sup>221</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 109; Piggott, *Scotland before history*, 28

<sup>222</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 109; Stephen T. Driscoll, Peter Yeoman, and Jane Clark, *Excavations within Edinburgh castle in 1988-91*, (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries in Scotland, 1997) 197

<sup>223</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 109

<sup>224</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 42

<sup>225</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 42

<sup>226</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 42

<sup>227</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 43

<sup>228</sup> Wilson, *Roman frontiers of Britain*, 43

<sup>229</sup> Birley Anthony, *Marcus Aurelius: A biography*, (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1966) 31, 33, 35

<sup>230</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 38

Following his adoption by Antoninus, Marcus was appointed to positions that would give him some of the political and economic experience he would need. Hadrian gained permission from the senate to make Marcus a quaestor at an earlier age than was legal<sup>231</sup>. Following Hadrian's death, Antoninus also altered Marcus' betrothal so Marcus would now be marrying Antoninus' daughter, Faustina; a further connection of their relationship, though there were a few small complications since Faustina was legally Marcus' sister<sup>232</sup>. He was also made consul, again below the legal age, and *princeps iuventutis*<sup>233</sup>. All of these positions were to help prepare him for the role of emperor, particularly acting as consul; it would provide skills for politics and oratory within the high ranks<sup>234</sup>. Antoninus also required that Marcus live in the House of Tiberius and take up the lifestyle typical of his position, despite the conflicts with Marcus' philosophic ideals<sup>235</sup>. This might have contributed to Marcus' limited military experience early on. Through this time and well into the future, Marcus became close friends with his Latin tutor Fronto<sup>236</sup>. Through the letters between Fronto and Marcus there are records of Marcus' illnesses and concerns, about political pressures and life advice<sup>237</sup>. Towards the end of Antoninus' reign, Marcus was taking on more of the administrative responsibilities, particularly after the death of the praetorian prefect Gavius Maximus, who had held that position for almost twenty years and would take some effort to replace<sup>238</sup>.

Upon the death of Antoninus, Marcus was expected to take on the role of emperor; he was the clear successor, and despite his reservations, it was his duty to fulfill the job<sup>239</sup>. Yet, while the senate was prepared to appoint Marcus as sole emperor, Marcus insisted on equal power granted to Lucius Verus<sup>240</sup>.

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<sup>231</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 49-50

<sup>232</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 53-54

<sup>233</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 56

<sup>234</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 58

<sup>235</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 57

<sup>236</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 76-77

<sup>237</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 89

<sup>238</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 112

<sup>239</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 116

<sup>240</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 116

### The Joint Rule:

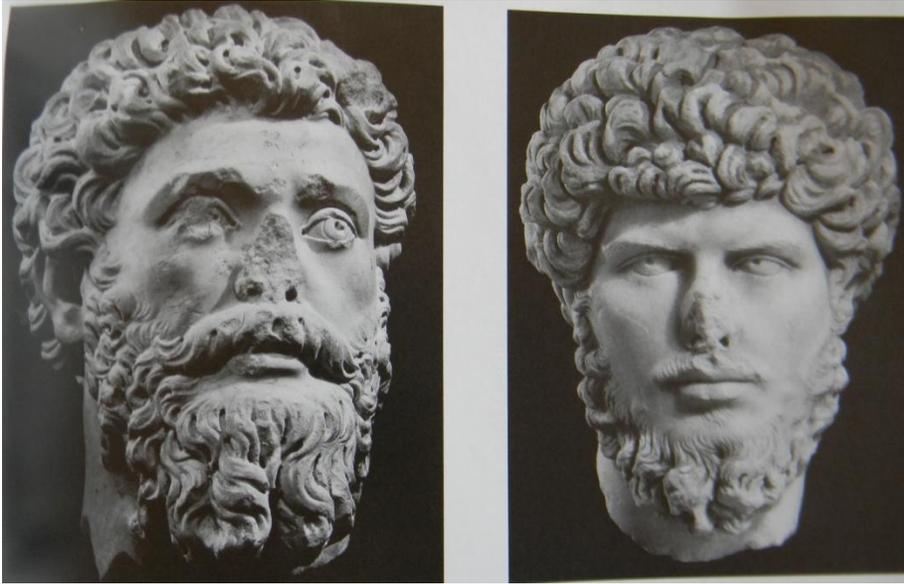


Figure 10: Busts of Marcus Aurelius (Right) and Lucius Verus (Left). Image from Ramage and Ramage, *Roman art: Romulus to Constantine* (2009)

Lucius Commodus was born in Rome the son of Lucius Aelius Caesar whom Hadrian had adopted prior to Aelius Caesar's sudden death<sup>241</sup>. He was the adoptive younger brother to Marcus Aurelius by Antoninus Pius; as such, he did not have direct claim to rule. However, Marcus Aurelius chose to maintain the succession plan set in motion by Hadrian through enacting a joint rule by Marcus and Lucius as Roman Emperors, a first time occurrence<sup>242</sup>. Upon this joint ascension Lucius changed his name to that of Marcus Aurelius' family, along with gaining the name Augustus granted him by the senate, making him Caesar Lucius Aurelius Verus Augustus<sup>243</sup>. Lucius Verus was not granted the title of Pontifex Maximus, only Marcus Aurelius was referred to by this title because Marcus was considered the senior of the Emperors, the one with higher authority and influence<sup>244</sup>. Lucius, despite his title of emperor, was second in command to Marcus<sup>245</sup>. However, this also allowed for a divided focus; when the Parthian conflict arose in 161 CE Lucius was able to personally travel there to respond, while Marcus could stay behind to deal with the other issues inherent in governing an empire and with the conflicts brewing in Britain and Germany. Before this, however, there was a serious matter to be dealt with in Rome. A major flood of the Tiber occurred, leading to widespread damage in

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<sup>241</sup> Birley, *Hadrian the restless emperor*, 3

<sup>242</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 117

<sup>243</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 116-117

<sup>244</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 117

<sup>245</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 117

Rome and devastating the food supply<sup>246</sup>. Both emperors applied themselves to this problem before determining the necessary action to deal with issue of Parthia<sup>247</sup>.

Lucius Verus was sent in 162 CE to deal with the Parthian conflict, since it was decided that one of them was needed and Lucius was the younger and physically stronger choice<sup>248</sup>. He was sent with a Praetorian Prefect, Furius Victorinus, and two senators named M. Pontius Laelianus Larcius Sabinus and M. Iallius Bassus, all of whom had prior experience with eastern politics and military<sup>249</sup>. Also accompanying them was a portion of the Praetorian Guard<sup>250</sup>. During the journey east, Lucius became ill at Canosa while traveling to Brundisum where he was to take a ship for the next leg of the expedition, but he seemed to have recovered after three days of treatment<sup>251</sup>. He ended his journey in Antioch where he spent much of his time for the next three years as he led his campaigns<sup>252</sup>. In 166 CE he returned to life in Rome, having earned several victories for Marcus and himself while gaining peace and territory from Vologases IV of Parthia; he managed to be an effective leader through the delegation of duties to more experienced commanders<sup>253</sup>. Less than three years later, however, following the start of the Marcomannic Wars, Lucius fell ill once more; this time he did not recover<sup>254</sup>. It is likely that he was struck down by the Antonine Plague that was ravaging parts of the Roman Empire<sup>255</sup>.

### **The Antonine Plague:**

The Antonine Plague was the second of three major plagues that occurred in the Classical world<sup>256</sup>. It is unknown what exactly the nature of this plague was; it is frequently suspected that it was smallpox, though this has been debated<sup>257</sup>. It began spreading through the Roman Empire during the time of Marcus Aurelius, largely influenced by the military travel from the Parthian wars<sup>258</sup>. The Roman Empire had a highly developed level of medical care for its citizens, but even still, this disease ravaged large swaths of the population<sup>259</sup>. It began around 166 CE in the Middle East, after Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus began a military

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<sup>246</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 120

<sup>247</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 120-123

<sup>248</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 123

<sup>249</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 125

<sup>250</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 125

<sup>251</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 125-126

<sup>252</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 129

<sup>253</sup> Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 145-147

<sup>254</sup> Kamm, *Last Frontiers*, 120

<sup>255</sup> Kamm, *Last Frontiers*, 120

<sup>256</sup> J. Rufus Fears, *The plague under Marcus Aurelius and the decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, (Elsevier Inc, 2004) 65

<sup>257</sup> Fears, *The plague under Marcus Aurelius*, 72-73

<sup>258</sup> Fears, *The plague under Marcus Aurelius*, 69

<sup>259</sup> Fears, *The plague under Marcus Aurelius*, 69

response to rebellion by Parthia<sup>260</sup>. There would continue to be future conflicts, and Rome suffered from illness brought back<sup>261</sup>. According to some fourth century sources, the Romans thought that the plague was brought on by some act of sacrilege; one of these sources traces the plague back to the city of Seleucia in modern day Iraq<sup>262</sup>. Coming from a region such as this, the Romans would have little experience with the disease, leading to the great pressures placed on the people, economy, and politics.

### **Abandonment of the Wall:**

The exact time and causes of the eventual abandonment of the Antonine Wall are unknown, but it seems likely that a number of factors contributed to the decision to reinstate Hadrian's Wall as the formal frontier in Britain for the Roman Empire. While in the past there were considered to be two phases of Antonine Wall occupation, it seems more likely that the modification to structures along the Wall were instead part of routine maintenance and alterations based on response to various changes in threats apparent<sup>263</sup>. At around 158 CE reconstruction efforts were undertaken at Hadrian's Wall. At the same time there are still indications of the continued use of the Antonine Wall; in this way there would still have been a line of defense against the untrusted north of Scotland while the defensive structures of Hadrian's Wall were reestablished<sup>264</sup>. The lack of Samian ware in the northern forts on or near the Antonine Wall suggests abandonment of the Wall before the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE and most likely the Wall was abandoned prior to the end of the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus in 169 CE<sup>265</sup>. An inscribed stone along the wall indicates that it was still occupied as of 158 CE<sup>266</sup>. The support for the use of the Wall during the period of joint rule following the death of Antoninus Pius comes from several coins found dating to 162 CE and 164 CE<sup>267</sup>. The 164 CE coin comes from a known archaeological context, while the others come from unstratified contexts; this would seem to narrow down the range of possible abandonment dates to between 162 CE and 169 CE, with a possible narrower range of 164 CE to 169 CE<sup>268</sup>. This time period would have been fairly soon after the death of Antoninus; it would have been unlikely that the Wall would have been abandoned while he was still alive since it was one of his primary military accomplishments while emperor, though it seems consent was given to restore Hadrian's Wall<sup>269</sup>. If Antoninus had allowed for the abandonment of the wall during his reign, however

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<sup>260</sup> Fears, *The plague under Marcus Aurelius*, 69

<sup>261</sup> Fears, *The plague under Marcus Aurelius*, 69

<sup>262</sup> Fears, *The plague under Marcus Aurelius*, 70

<sup>263</sup> N. Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland: its dates and causes*, (Dexter: Thomson-Shore, 2009) 185

<sup>264</sup> Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland*, 190

<sup>265</sup> Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland*, 191

<sup>266</sup> Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland*, 189-190

<sup>267</sup> Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland*, 191

<sup>268</sup> Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland*, 191

<sup>269</sup> Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland*, 190-191

practical the circumstances may have been, it could have weakened his standing among military leaders. This indicates that the wall entered disuse during the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. As adopted heirs of Antoninus Pius, they would no longer have to maintain the wall as their military achievement; they would need a martial accomplishment of their own. This would mark a transition period of rule in the empire, which could have caused some instability in the outer reaches of the empire's territory. In any case, it seems likely that some form of revolt occurred at this time, probably by the Brigantes, along with conflict with the tribes north of the wall that influenced the decision to return the northern boundary line to Hadrian's Wall<sup>270</sup>. This would have been compounded by the occurrence of the Parthian War and the threats in Germany that would eventually build up to the Marcomannic Wars. Hadrian's Wall was larger, but less vulnerable to flanking, and was south of the Brigantes' territory<sup>271</sup>.

### **Conclusion:**

It would seem that the Roman abandonment of the Antonine Wall and reoccupation of Hadrian's Wall was the result of a perfect storm of political, military, and economic stress. It came following the transition of rule from Antoninus Pius to the dual rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus; such transitions inevitably cause strain on the political environment. There were also potential threats rising in Germany that could have necessitated military intervention. Then there were the Parthian wars occurring in what is now the Middle East, wars that continued periodically over a lengthy time which not only required military and economic input, but also was the likely source of the Antonine plague that devastated large populations of the Roman Empire. This plague was the probable cause of death for Lucius Verus, further altering the political status quo, though it is likely that Lucius' death followed the abandonment of the wall. Furthermore, a large flood occurred in Rome during this time, further complicating the situation. Finally, back in the area of the Antonine Wall, a rebellion may have occurred headed by the Brigantes, which would increase the military requirements at some of the northern most reaches of the Empire. Since Hadrian's Wall required the control of fewer problematic tribes, it is hardly surprising that under all of these circumstances the Romans would decide to fall back to a reliably stable defense so they could shift their focus to the other issues of the Empire.

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<sup>270</sup> Hodgson, *The abandonment of Antonine Scotland*, 189

<sup>271</sup> Kamm, *The last frontier*, 112

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