



Imperial Rome and Ostia

The Aurelian wall

COLIN CHANT:

Towards the end of the Imperial period, the renewed threat of barbarian invasion led to the rapid construction of the second fortification ring in the history of ancient Rome: the Aurelian wall. Attached to one of the four main gateways, the Porta Appia, a stretch of this wall still survives. There were projecting square towers at regular intervals, built of brick-faced concrete, the walls were more than 6 metres high and some 4 metres thick - far more substantial than the old Servian wall. By the time the new walls were built, concrete building technology was well established. On the inside of the walls, arches carried an interior vaulted gallery, above which ran a battlemented wall walk. The walls were not only tall enough and thick enough to withstand the siege weapons of the time; they were also designed to maximise movement and communication on the inside along the 19 kilometres of wall surrounding the city.