Colchester Castle (Roman Temple)

The [Temple of Claudius](https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/monument/mcc1830) was the largest temple building in Roman Britain, an indication of Colchester’s status and the focus for the worship of the emperor and his successors. A temple already existed at the time of the revolt of Queen Boudica in AD 60 and it is referred to in the historical account of the destruction of the town. Today, only the foundations of the original temple survive below [Colchester Castle](https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/monument/mcc1732).

The inside of the temple was reserved for priests to worship the spirit of the emperor; everyone else would have gathered outside in a large enclosed space known as the precinct. It is likely the precinct would have housed a statue of Claudius and an altar, approached through a monumental arch.

At the end of the Roman period, the temple may have been used as a Christian church before it fell into disuse. The whole site was largely abandoned for centuries, although shortly before the Norman Conquest a Saxon chapel was constructed among the ruins. The Normans recognised the importance of the temple site, both as a legacy of an ancient past and as an excellent location for their castle as they realised they could use the existing foundations. Today, these remains – the Vaults, as they became known in the eighteenth century – can be visited on guided tours of [Colchester Castle](https://cimuseums.org.uk/visit/venues/colchester-castle/).