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## Tracing Troops: An Upper German Belt-Fitting from Roman Scotland

By FRASER HUNTER

### ABSTRACT

*A silver belt-fitting from Cramond in the shape of a ring-pommel sword is linked to a class of beneficiarius equipment typical of Germania Superior. It is argued that this represents troop movements connected with the Severan campaigns.*

**Keywords:** Cramond; Roman military equipment; military belt-fitting; ring-pommel sword; silver; Germania Superior; *beneficiarius*

The Roman fort at Cramond (near Edinburgh) was built in the A.D. 140s to defend the coastal fringes of the Antonine Wall frontier. It was probably abandoned in the A.D. 160s, but was re-occupied as a supply base during the Severan invasions in the early third century.<sup>67</sup> An interesting pit group discovered in 1985 in the fort's annexe is only now being prepared for publication. It contained two Trompetenmuster mounts and an exceptional silver belt-fitting which is the subject of this note (FIGS 10–11). These seem to have been part of a hoard; eight denarii were also recovered from the pit, ending with a coin of Caracalla (A.D. 206–9).

<sup>67</sup> Holmes 2003.

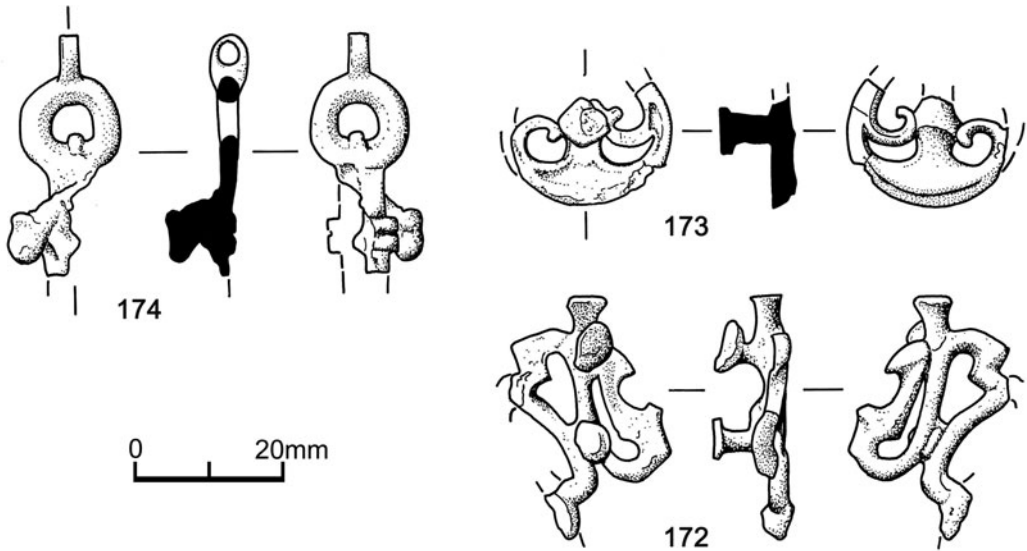


FIG. 10. The silver belt-pendant and copper-alloy Trompetenmuster mounts. Dimensions: find 172, 33.5 × 21 × 9 mm, 2.96 g; find 173, 22 × 17.5 × 10 mm, 2.94 g; find 174, L 32, W 13, T 9 mm, 4.08 g. (Drawing: Alan Braby)

The fragmentary silver item is the first Scottish example of a well-known series of miniature weapon pendants from military belts (FIG. 12). Despite being damaged and distorted by heat, it can be identified as a ring-pommel sword.<sup>68</sup> The distribution of such pendants concentrates overwhelmingly in Upper Germany (FIG. 13).<sup>69</sup> Most have a suspension fitting in the plane of the pommel and were attached to a strap end in the form of a *beneficiarius* lance.<sup>70</sup> Ring-pommel swords and *beneficiarius* lances co-occur in other depictions<sup>71</sup> and Jürgen Oldenstein<sup>72</sup> has argued that these pendants were intended to mark out *beneficarii*, troops on special service with the provincial governor. While the full-size lances were the equipment of *beneficarii*, ring-pommel swords were not so restricted; Christian Miks<sup>73</sup> has suggested that they were chosen for pendants because they remained recognisable when rendered in miniature.

The concentrated distribution suggests that the pendants were specific to Upper Germany; there is an analogous category of miniature lance pendants from Dacia with a similarly restricted distribution.<sup>74</sup> This makes the four pendants and one lance-shaped strap end found outside Germania Superior of particular interest. Apart from Cramond, there is one further British example, from the town of Silchester,<sup>75</sup> one Raetian example from the fort of Kōrsching (Germany),<sup>76</sup> one Pannonian find from the fort of Baracs (Hungary),<sup>77</sup> and one from the fort of Thamusida in Mauretania Tingitana (Morocco).<sup>78</sup> These must be connected to the movement of individual troops from Upper Germany.<sup>79</sup> However, it is worth noting that

<sup>68</sup> Bishop and Coulston 2006, 131–3, fig. 77.

<sup>69</sup> Raddatz 1953; Hundt 1955, Abb. 1.2–3; Oldenstein 1976, 154–5, Taf. 39–40; Miks 2007, 187, Abb. 28.

<sup>70</sup> e.g. Oldenstein 1976, Taf. 39, nos 367, 373.

<sup>71</sup> Miks 2007, Abb. 28.

<sup>72</sup> Oldenstein 1976, 152–7.

<sup>73</sup> Miks 2007, 187.

<sup>74</sup> Kovács 2005, 957.

<sup>75</sup> Boon 2000, 355, fig. 166, no. 121.

<sup>76</sup> Oldenstein 1976, Taf. 39, no. 374.

<sup>77</sup> Kovács 2005, 961–2, fig. 8.

<sup>78</sup> Rebuffat 1977, 203, pl. 70, no. 671.

<sup>79</sup> Kovács 2005, 962.



FIG. 11. The silver belt-pendant and copper-alloy Trompetenmuster mounts. (Photo: Neil McLean, © Trustees of National Museums Scotland)

three of the four pendants are unusual in having a small suspension loop set transversely to the pommel rather than in the same plane (only Silchester matches the German ones); in contrast, only one of the German finds, from Mainz, has such a fitting.<sup>80</sup> These small loops could not articulate with the lancehead strap terminals and must either have been held by wire or used rather differently. They may have been replacements for broken elements which were made locally, or represent local copies of items inspired by Upper German pendants. In the latter case they may not necessarily have had a link to *beneficiarii*, but the connection to Upper Germany remains strong given the close similarities in form.

The three other non-German examples lack any detailed context, though Silchester has produced another piece of *beneficiarius* insignia in the form of an openwork baldric terminal incorporating a lancehead design.<sup>81</sup> This makes Cramond's contextual information all the more interesting. Coins from the pit date it to the Severan period (with a *terminus post quem* for deposition of A.D. 206–9), when the fort was used during the imperial expedition<sup>82</sup> and members of the governor's or emperor's service would be passing through. It is likely that the invasion army included legions or vexillations from the Rhine and Danube armies.<sup>83</sup> Epigraphic evidence indicates the Germanies were a regular source of troops for British campaigns: vexillations or individuals from the Upper German legions VIII Augusta and XXII Primigenia are recorded in northern Britain in the second and early third centuries, including a *beneficiarius tribuni* from Piercebridge.<sup>84</sup>

The other unusual feature of the Cramond find is its use of silver. All other known examples are of copper alloy, though some have a white metal coating intended to emulate silver.<sup>85</sup> It is no surprise that such a

<sup>80</sup> Fischer 2012, Abb. 272.4.

<sup>81</sup> Boon 1974, fig. 8.4.

<sup>82</sup> Hodgson 2014.

<sup>83</sup> Birley 1999, 175.

<sup>84</sup> Keppie 2006, 120; *RIB* III 3253, 3258.

<sup>85</sup> Oldenstein 1976, 156.

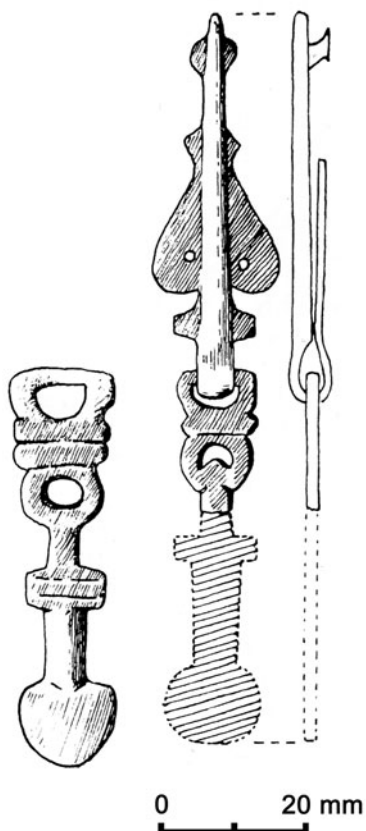


FIG. 12. Intact examples of a ring-pommel sword belt-hanger and *beneficiarius* lance strap end from Zugmantel.  
(From Raddatz 1953, Abb. 1)

prestigious emblem would be in a precious metal; George Boon noted related sword belt plates from Vechten (NL) and Silchester in silver and tinned bronze or base silver respectively,<sup>86</sup> while an unprovenanced silver brooch and dagger sheath terminal shared similar *beneficiarius* iconography.<sup>87</sup> These items were clearly intended to impress.

It seems unlikely that the mounts and pendant came from the same belt given the mixing of silver and copper alloy. The pendant had clearly seen use as the suspension loop shows wear, while heat-damage suggests attempts had been made to recycle it.

This sword-pendant from Cramond, while melted and outwardly unimpressive, is thus a significant find which highlights the wide-ranging connections of the Roman army and throws fresh light on the troops involved in the Severan expedition.

<sup>86</sup> Boon 1974, fig. 8.4 caption, 309 n. 8.

<sup>87</sup> Miks 2007, Abb. 28 X, Ω.

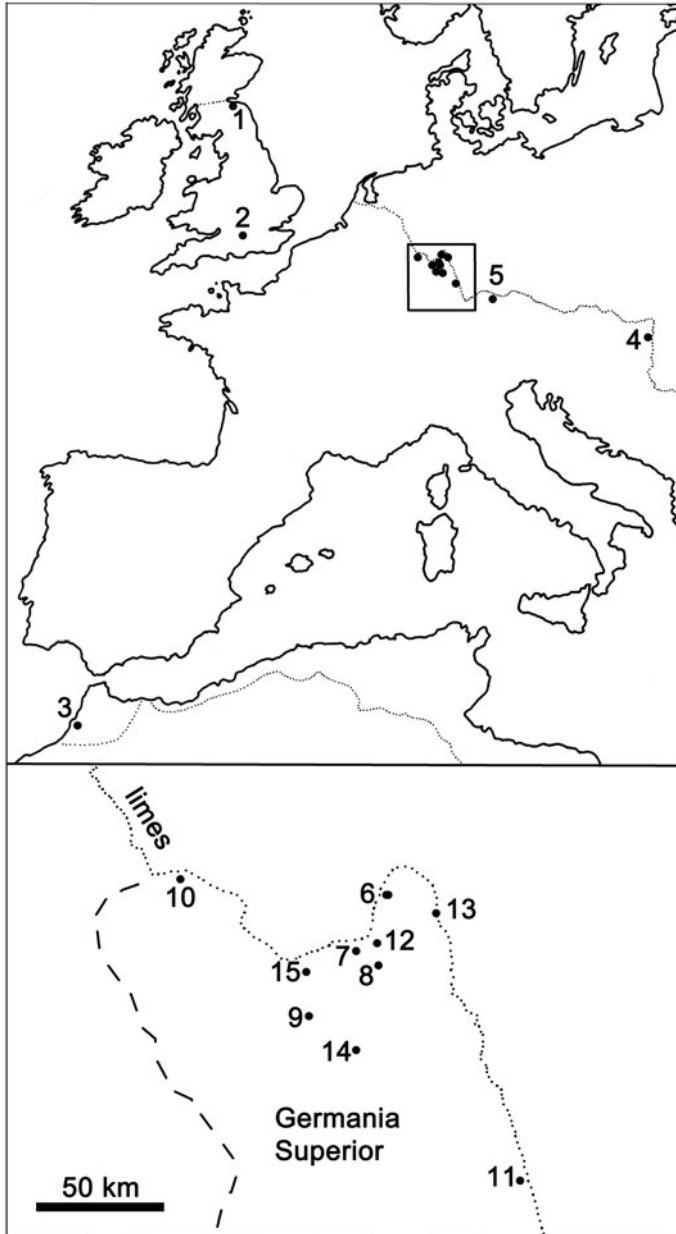


FIG. 13. Distribution of pendants in the form of ring-pommel swords and strap ends in the form of *beneficiarius* lances. 1. Cramond (Edinburgh/UK); 2. Silchester (Hampshire/UK); 3. Thamusida (Kénitra/Morocco); 4. Baracs (Kom. Fejér/Hungary); 5. Kösching (Bavaria/D); 6. Butzbach (Hessen/D); 7. Feldberg (Hessen/D); 8. Frankfurt-Heddernheim (Hessen/D); 9. Mainz (Rheinland-Pfalz/D); 10. Niederbieber (Rheinland-Pfalz/D); 11. Osterburken (Baden-Württemberg/D); 12. Saalburg (Hessen/D); 13. Stammheim tower 4/96 (Hessen/D); 14. Stockstadt (Hessen/D); 15. Zugmantel (Hessen/D). (Map: author, based on references in note 3)

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## A New Phallic Carving from Roman Catterick

By ADAM PARKER and CATH ROSS

### ABSTRACT

*A phallic carving excavated by Northern Archaeological Associates in 2014 during investigations at Catterick, North Yorkshire, contained unique artistic features for a carving of this type in Roman Britain. Excavations were carried out as part of the A1 Leeming to Barton road upgrade scheme. The two features — a projecting line of ejaculate and an incised, triangular object — are here considered within the wider evidence base for phallic imagery in Roman Britain.*

**Keywords:** phallic imagery; carving; sculpture; Yorkshire; Catterick; bridge