

THE TRAPRAIN LAW TREASURE AND 'IRISH PIRATES'

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The treasure of Roman Hacksilber from Traprain Law, a massive hill fort east of Edinburgh, has been interpreted since its publication in 1923 by Alexander Curle as an illustration of the last days of Roman Britain, and as having been broken up by Irish pirates or raiders in or about AD 405. The attribution resulted from an attempt to link historical or semi-historical sources, in particular about the Irish hero Niall of the Nine Hostages and St Patrick, with an archaeological discovery. Modern scholarship, however, has shown that Niall and St Patrick are to be dated to the middle or late fifth century, not to the late fourth and early fifth century, and so the argument that the Traprain Law treasure was connected with 'Irish pirates' fails.

Traprain Law is a massive volcanic intrusion, rising to 221m above the low surrounding landscape, which, as Fraser Hunter, FSA, has pointed out, was a major centre of the East Lothian plain throughout the Roman Iron Age.¹ The hill fort is the basis of any attempt to understand the relations between the peoples of southern Scotland and the Roman world. Alexander Curle and James Cree carried out key excavations on behalf of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1914–15 and 1919–23. On Monday 12 May 1919, Curle was summoned to the site by his foreman. When he arrived, he was astonished by the sight of about 22kg of fragments of 'bowls, cups, spoons and a miscellaneous collection of pieces of plate, tarnished and soiled, but obviously of silver'.² In a very short time Curle published a model account of the treasure, discussing not only the individual pieces of plate and their use within the Empire but possible reasons for the treasure being broken up and the historical setting.³ This paper, which arises out of the reassessment of the Traprain Law treasure by an international group of scholars at the invitation of the National Museums of Scotland, led by Fraser Hunter, FSA, is mainly concerned with the latter aspect of Curle's report.

The linking of archaeological discoveries to historical events is often attempted, but is full of risks. This is illustrated well by the stories that have been built around the Traprain Law treasure itself, and which assume that *Hacksilber*⁴ was broken up by raiders or

1. For the site and its archaeological importance, see Hunter forthcoming, in a volume on the broad context of Traprain Law and its treasure, resulting from a conference and seminar held in Edinburgh in 2009 under the auspices of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.
2. Curle 1920, 102–3.
3. Curle 1923.
4. Fraser Hunter and I (Hunter and Painter forthcoming) follow Catherine Johns (1996, 229) in using the German word *Hacksilber*, in preference to the English 'hacksilver' or 'hack-silver' or 'hacked silver', as what she calls 'a useful neutral term' to refer to Roman silver objects which

pirates, identified sometimes as Saxons but by others as Irish. In 1923 Curle suggested that the treasure was seized by Saxon ‘spoilers’ on a rich Roman site or sites on the continent, and was then taken back to Traprain Law.⁵ His first argument was that the treasure as a whole could not have come from Britain and therefore ‘was the fruit of raids on the continent’ because: first, the assortment of ‘intermingled’ church plate, temple plate, table plate and personal ornaments did not make up a single service, like the Chaourse treasure, and that, in any case, services of plate ‘of magnitude and importance’ can hardly have belonged to settlements in Britain, ‘at least in the northern part of Britain under Roman occupation’; second, the ‘Teutonic ornaments’ had no connection of shape or style with ‘the Teutonic tribes that invaded Britain’; and third, given that two of the *siliquae* are issues of Honorius, ‘no coin of Honorius ... has been found in the north of England’.⁶

Curle concluded that all hoards of the period, whether containing complete objects or broken ones, demonstrate his thesis: ‘The sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410, and the various inroads of the barbarians into the Roman Empire at this period, must have set in circulation, as bullion, masses of precious metal which had been seized as loot. The anticipation of pillage is shown in the concealment of such hoards as those of Corbridge and of the Esquiline Hill; while the realisation is vividly depicted by the condition of deposits like those of Traprain Law and Coleraine.’⁷ Of these, the only other *Hacksilber* he mentioned was the treasure from Coleraine.⁸

The hoard found in 1854 at Ballinrees, near Coleraine, in Northern Ireland, consisted of more than 1,500 silver coins, eleven ingots or bars and two fragments of ingots, and six fragments of vessels.⁹ In the original publication, J Scott Porter concluded that the silver belonged to ‘a proconsul, a publicanus, an officer in the army’, who took the treasure to Gaul or Britain, and that it was then ‘broken up and sold for old silver’, after it was ‘injured by fire or other accident’, at which time it was sold into Ireland, where ‘the art of the silversmith was exercised ... and old plate and disused or damaged coins were commercially imported as the materials of that trade’.¹⁰ The date at which this occurred, he concluded, was after ‘the reign of Honorius, the latest emperor ... whose inscription occurs on the coins, and probably before the erection of mints and the issuing of silver money by the Anglo-Saxons in Britain, the Franks in Gaul and the Visigoths in Spain ... These limits would place the formation of this hoard between AD 423 and AD 600.’¹¹

Scott Porter’s interpretation was not and is not convincing, and it is not surprising that more informed theories took its place. The first was by Sir Arthur Evans, whose short account in 1915 of the coins from Coleraine drew support for his dating of the deposition of the Coleraine treasure from a life of St Patrick published in 1905 by J B Bury, the great

appear to have been broken up deliberately. The use of a neutral word such as *Hacksilber* is necessary because the English terms have over-precise implications. They are, moreover, often incorrect. The material was not simply, or always, hacked; there are also bent, folded or crushed items, as well as some that were left complete.

5. Curle 1923, 101–12, esp 109–10.

6. *Ibid.*, 101–7.

7. *Ibid.*, 108–9.

8. *Ibid.*, 8–10. For the Ballinrees hoard, see Scott Porter 1854 and Carruthers 1854.

9. Scott Porter 1854; Carruthers 1854; Mattingly, Pearce and Kendrick 1937.

10. Curle 1923, 108.

11. *Ibid.*, 109.

historian of the Late Roman Empire. Bury, adducing the events of Patrick's career from Patrick's own writings, from Irish annals and from later biographers, accorded these events absolute dates.¹² Key to this scheme of Patrick's life and, according to Bury, his birth in AD 389 (instead of the traditional AD 374) and death in AD 461, at the age of seventy-two (instead of the traditional AD 493, at the age of about 120), was a great raid on Britain by the Irish High King Niall Noigiallach, Niall of the Nine Hostages. Bury supposed the raid to have been that which is said to have occurred about AD 403–4, and that this was when Patrick, who tells us that he was fifteen at the time, was captured, just before Niall's death, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, in AD 405.¹³ In 1915, Arthur Evans reviewed the coins of the Coleraine hoard and suggested that the date of the arrival of Patrick as a boy of sixteen in Ireland, as argued by Bury, about AD 403–4, 'corresponds very nearly with that of the Coleraine hoard', the deposition of which Evans placed 'in or after AD 408'.¹⁴ He concluded that: 'It is by no means improbable, moreover, that the booty represented by the Coleraine hoard and the captivity of the boy Patrick were actually due to the same Irish raid, perhaps one of the latest enterprises of King Niall, who perished in "the Sea of Wight" about AD 405.'¹⁵

Curle made no reference to Evans, to his dating of the deposition of the Coleraine treasure, and to his suggestions, based on Bury, of its origin; but in 1924, the year after the publication of Curle's volume on the Traprain Law treasure, William Ridgeway published a paper explicitly linking the treasures of Traprain Law and of Coleraine, their hacking, their 'looting' and their concealment. One of the purposes of his paper was to refute Evans's suggestion that the origin of the Coleraine treasure and its coins was Britain, and to show therefore that Curle's parallel statement about the origin of the coins from Traprain Law was correct.¹⁶ Ridgeway's paper is in two parts. Using the evidence of coinage of about AD 400, as known in 1924, and invoking the numismatic work of R G Collingwood and advice from Harold Mattingly, he concluded that the silver coinage of Honorius, present in both treasures, was not to be found in the north of Britain, and that such coins which were found further south were not later than AD 398.¹⁷ From this it followed, he maintained, first, that the coins – and accompanying objects – in the Coleraine (or Ballinrees) and Traprain Law treasures must have been acquired not in Britain but further afield, in Gaul, and, second, that the occasion of the looting and deposition of the Coleraine treasure was fixed by the latest coin in the Coleraine treasure, which he dated to AD 403.¹⁸

12. Bury 1905.

13. *Ibid.*, 333. See Charles Thomas's (1985, 315–16) analysis of the controversy about the chronology of St Patrick's life and of Bury's long-lasting role, and Byrne 2001, 70–86.

14. Evans 1915, 512–16, on the Coleraine treasure.

15. *Ibid.*, 516.

16. Ridgeway 1924. Since Ridgeway referred so explicitly to Evans, it is strange, as will become clear below, that he made no mention of Bury and his work on Patrick.

17. Collingwood 1922; Mattingly: personal correspondence with Ridgeway, quoted by Ridgeway 1924, 125–6. For the modern, very different, numismatists' view of the coinage of this period, see Sekulla 1982; Bland 1997; Reece 2002; Bland *et al* forthcoming; Guest forthcoming; and Reece forthcoming.

18. Ridgeway 1924, 130: 'As the coin of Honorius VOT X, MVLX XV (403), found at Ballinrees is five years later than any of his silver as yet known in Britain, it looks as if the booty of Ballinrees was not taken from Britain but from Gaul, a view strongly supported by the fact that at least 140 silver coins of Honorius were in that same hoard, a number far larger than all the silver coins of that emperor as yet authenticated as found in Britain.'

In the second part of his paper Ridgeway attempted to establish ‘Who brought the booty to Traprain Law and Ballinrees?’¹⁹ He argued that, in AD 395, on the death of Theodosius I and the succession of Honorius under the guardianship of Stilicho, Britain was invaded by Franks, Saxons, Picts, Scots [ie Irish] and Attacotti, and that the Roman poet Claudian, in his poem about the consulship of Stilicho, showed that ‘the most formidable onslaught had come from Ireland under one powerful leader acting in co-operation with the Picts and Saxons’.²⁰ Ridgeway aimed to ‘get further light upon this mobilising of all Ireland against the Roman dominions’.²¹ He therefore cited Claudian, who referred to ‘Scotus’. Ridgeway interpreted ‘Scotus’ as his ‘one powerful [Irish] leader’, because he wished to identify him as Niall Noígiallach, Niall of the Nine Hostages.²² Ridgeway believed that Niall was a historical figure, an Irish king and the eponymous ancestor of the Uí Néill who dominated Ireland from the sixth to the tenth centuries.²³ He commented that: ‘None of the historians of Roman Britain seem to have noticed the great part played at this time by Niall Naoighiallach.’²⁴ Either Ridgeway did not know about, or he ignored, J B Bury’s 1905 book.

Ridgeway’s own conclusion, after surveying the literary evidence for the existence of Niall, was that: ‘there can be no doubt (1) that there was such a king as Niall, (2) that he played a great part between 379 and 406 in the breaking down of the Roman power in Britain and Gaul, and (3) that [St] Patrick, whether captured in Scotland or Armorica, was brought to Ireland, probably about 387, on one of Niall’s raids’.²⁵ In support, Ridgeway then compared the available numismatic evidence with the literary and concluded that: ‘As the coins found at Chester, Worcester, Caerleon, and Carreen all point to a catastrophe having overtaken these towns in or about 395 – the very year in which “the Scot” mobilised all Ireland in combination with the Picts, the Saxons and the Franks against the Empire – there is very high probability, especially in view of the Irish evidence of Niall’s continuous activities, that it was he who destroyed these towns in that year.’²⁶

19. *Ibid*, 130.

20. The passage of Claudian is quoted by Curle (1923, 110) and by Ridgeway (1924, 130–1). Claudian, *de consulatu Stilichonis*, ii, 244–55: *Inde Caledonio velata Britannia monstro, / ferro picta genas cuius vestigia verrit / caeruleus, Oceanique aestum mentitur, amictus: / me quoque vicinis pereuntem gentibus,* inquit, / *munivit Stilicho, totam cum Scotus Hibernen / movit et infest spumavit remige Tethys. / Illius effectum curis, ne tela timerem / Scotica, ne Pictum tremere, ne litore toto / prospicerem dubiis venturum Saxona ventis*. Curle’s translation is: ‘Then Britain, clothed in the skin of a Caledonian wild beast, with tattooed cheeks, and azure robe that swept her footprints like ocean’s swelling tide, thus spoke: “To me also, while perishing at the hands of neighbouring peoples, did bring Stilicho aid, when the Scot set all Ireland in motion, and the sea foamed under the oars of my enemies. Through his care of me I had no need to fear the weapons of the Scot, or to quake at the sight of the Pict, or to watch from the whole length of my shores for the coming of the Saxon on the wings of the fickle breeze”.’

21. Ridgeway 1924, 131.

22. It is not, in fact, certain that Claudian was referring to a single Irishman, as ‘Scotus’ could equally have been used as a singular for a plural, ‘the Irish’. This is also the translation preferred by Ireland (1986, 13).

23. The sources for Niall are: genealogies of historical kings, the ‘Roll of Kings’ section of the *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, Irish annals such as the *Annals of the Four Masters*, chronicles such as Geoffrey Keating’s *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* and legendary tales.

24. Ridgeway 1924, 131.

25. *Ibid*, 133.

26. For modern numismatists’ views, see above, n 17.

From this Ridgeway came to a conclusion about the Coleraine and Traprain Law hoards:

Finally, there is a high probability that the 1,506 silver coins found at Ballinrees with the silver plate like that from Traprain Law was part of the booty brought back by one of Niall's followers from his last and fatal expedition to Gaul. It has already been shown that the two coins of Constantine III (407–11) found at Ballinrees are much more likely to have been obtained in Gaul ... It may be said, that as Niall's death took place in AD 405 or 406, these coins could not have come from his last raid. Yet it is quite possible that some of his followers did not cease plundering in Gaul on his death, and brought home the coins of Constantine III a year or two later ... The close resemblance of the Traprain Law plate to that from Ballinrees points to it having a like source, whilst the fact that it was found near the east coast of Scotland renders it highly probable that it was booty taken by Picts or Saxons, and possibly in combination with Niall in 395, or at least some subsequent combined raid.²⁷

Ridgeway's interpretation has since had a persistent following, appearing sometimes partially (eg referring to 'Irish raiders' but at a different date) and mostly in summary and referring more often to attacks by the Irish under Niall of the Nine Hostages and to St Patrick than to the evidence of the treasures themselves, in histories and archaeologies of Roman Britain and Ireland, histories of the early Church, and exhibition catalogues.²⁸ There have been, however, at least two strands of scholarship that undermine all this.

It is not surprising that Ridgeway should have thought of the deposition of coins as being always linked directly to danger. Coin evidence, in the form of a supposedly unusually large number of hoards, has been claimed for various raids and invasions across the Roman frontiers. Ridgeway does not mention it; but he must have known that, in 1900, Adrien Blanchet published a study of 871 coin hoards, deposited in Gaul and the Germanies between the first century BC and the early fifth century AD.²⁹ Blanchet's interpretation was based on the premise that hoards of coins were buried because of the imminent threat of an enemy, and that in Gaul and the Germanies the enemy was invariably invading Germans.³⁰ He surveyed the historical evidence for German incursions and then made an inventory of hoards of coins, by date and by find-place. He concluded that, like the historical sources, the coin evidence demonstrated that the German invasions caused the greatest trouble in Gaul in the second half of the third century and in the fourth and early fifth centuries, which accounted for the number of hoards buried between the reigns of Claudius II (AD 268–70) and Honorius (AD 393–423) – almost half the hoards in

27. Ridgeway 1924, 134–5.

28. The following are a selection. Histories of Roman Britain: eg Collingwood in Collingwood and Myres 1936, 312; Frere 1967, 364; Salway 1993, 300; Mattingly 2006, 450. Archaeology of Ireland: Haverfield 1913, 7–8; Ó Riordain 1947, 43–53, no. 6 and pl IV; de Paor and de Paor 1978, 27; Edwards 2006, 4. Histories of the early Church: Hanson 1968, 187–8; Frend 1984, 793–5. Exhibition catalogue: Webster and Brown 1997, 213.

29. Total of 871: Blanchet 1900, 51.

30. Ibid, 4: *J'ai voulu montrer les rapports évidents que j'entrevois entre les invasions germaniques et la fréquence des trésors enfouis dans certaines régions à certaines époques.* 'I wanted to show the clear connections which I see between the invasions by the Germans and the frequency with which treasures were buried in certain regions at certain periods.'

his lists. Ridgeway would have been pleased to see that Blanchet concluded that the evidence from Britain was in line with the evidence from Gaul, and that Britain also has a bulge of coin hoards of the period AD 260–94, even though it did not suffer from Germanic incursions, a statement which is still true.³¹

Modern numismatists, however, have put forward comprehensively different interpretations of third-century hoards. After forty years of debasement, the old coinage was replaced with coins of higher value by Aurelian, in AD 274, and by Diocletian, in AD 294. The old coins continued to circulate as small change, but their purchasing power continued to diminish. Most hoards of the period AD 260–94 consisted of the poor, low-value coins, but Richard Reece, FSA, has suggested that their owners could no longer be sure that they would have the same purchasing power when they were recovered from the ground.³² Indeed, Reece has concluded, British hoards were probably put away because they had already lost their value, and a good reason for such a large number of hoards not being recovered was that the coins never regained it. The numismatists and archaeologists of Gaul and Germany have in the past been more reluctant to abandon a connection between hoards and Germanic invasions, but views have begun to change, and scholars are beginning to state that Blanchet's theory cannot be accepted as stated.³³

In the light of these reassessments it becomes clear that Blanchet's theory that all Gallic and German hoards were concealed solely because of Germanic invasions loses credibility.³⁴ The failure to recover so many, if not all, third-century hoards in Britain,

31. *Ibid.*, 69–72: *La composition des trésors sortis du sol de l'Angleterre, bien loin de contredire le rapport que je tiens à établir entre les cachettes monétaires et les invasions, fournit une confirmation très sûre; car les trésors, enfouis dans l'île de Bretagne, appartiennent aux III^e et IV^e siècles, dans la proportion des 9/10*. Voici en effet un relevé succinct des trésors parvenus à ma connaissance:* [list of 47 hoards from Britain of which Blanchet knew, dating from the 1st to the early 5th century AD]. 'The composition of the treasures found in England does not contradict the connection which I am attempting to establish between coin-hoards and the raids. It positively confirms it, because nine-tenths of the finds belong to the third and fourth centuries. The following list is a succinct summary of the hoards which have come to my attention: ...'. Blanchet (1900, 72) commented further: *L'île de Bretagne, vouée en apparence à une paix complète, ne fut jamais entièrement possédée par les Romains, qui étaient contraints de protéger la partie conquise par des remparts, dont l'un, connu sous le nom de «mur d'Hadrien», traverse l'île, de l'embouchure de la Tyne au golfe de Solway. De plus, aux III^e et IV^e siècles, les pirates francs et saxons infestaient la mer du Nord; la Bretagne subissait les mêmes ravages que les côtes de la Belgique et de l'Armorique; les Barbares connaissaient la route de Londres. Il est donc logique de rapporter aux incursions des pirates les paniques dont le résultat fut l'enfouissement des trésors, si nombreux depuis Claude II jusqu'à Honorius.* 'The Romans intended to pacify the island of Britain completely; but they never occupied the whole of it, and they had to protect the occupied territory by walls, one of which, known as "Hadrian's Wall", stretches from the mouth of the Tyne to the Solway Firth. In addition, in the 3rd and 4th centuries, the North Sea was infested by Saxon and Frankish pirates, Britain was ravaged in just the same way as the coasts of Belgium and Armorica, and the barbarians found their way to London. It is therefore logical to connect the panic caused by the incursions of the pirates with the burial of the hoards, which are very numerous from the time of Claudius II to that of Honorius.' For the modern view of hoards in Britain, see Reece 2002, 67–88, esp 76–7, 84.

32. Reece 2002, 76–7.

33. Van Ossel 2011, 14–15, for example, quoting Estiot (2006, 225 n 44), who has suggested that the devaluation of the coinage of the Gallic Empire in 282–3 led to the burial of hoards by owners who did not want to exchange their coins at unfavourable rates for the post-reform *aureliani*.

34. For the particular case of 3rd-century hoards at Mâcon, see Painter and Kaufmann-Heinimann 2007, 149–55.

Gaul and Germany was, rather, largely a consequence of an economic and monetary crisis.³⁵ If so, then Ridgeway's arguments, that the coin evidence demonstrates late fourth- and early fifth-century incursions, this time by Niall in Gaul and Britain, including the capture of Patrick, cannot stand.

The second part of Ridgeway's argument is that the 'Scotus' referred to by Claudian was Niall of the Nine Hostages. This depends on references in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, which date Niall's accession as king of Ireland to AD 379, and his death to AD 405, but which are not contemporary.³⁶ The activities and deaths of Niall's sons, however, are at the very end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth. The annals suggest that his eldest son, Coirpre, was alive in 485, when he won a battle over the Leinstermen at Granard; they do not record the death of any of Niall's sons earlier than Maine (AD 440), whose death is followed by that of Loéguire (c 462), Eógan (c 465) and Conall Cremtheinne (c 480).³⁷ All this requires that Niall should have died not earlier than about AD 450.³⁸ It follows that St Patrick was not captured by Niall at the beginning of the fifth century.³⁹ More importantly, in the present context, the account of a specific raid on Britain, whether in AD 403–4, according to Bury, or in AD 405, according to Evans, or simply as 'one of Niall's raids', according to Ridgeway, is without foundation, and there is no justification for attaching to it the deposition either of the Coleraine treasure or of the Traprain Law treasure. The failure of attempts to do this illustrates the hazards of linking historical or pseudo-historical sources with archaeological discoveries. *Hacksilber* tells us nothing relevant to Niall, and vice versa, nor does Niall have anything to do with the last two decades of Roman rule in Britain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful for much wise advice and help from, amongst others, Fraser Hunter, Max Martin, Peter Salway, Richard Reece and Charles Thomas, as well as Kate Owen and the Society's referees, none of whom is responsible for any surviving errors.

35. Callu 1979. I owe this reference to Richard Reece.

36. Ryan 2002, 127: M379.0 and M379.1 (accession of Niall), and M.405.0 and M.405.1 (death of Niall). Byrne notes (2001, 81) that the same date for Niall's death is adopted by the *Chronicum Scotorum*, and by the *World Chronicle*, prefixed to the *Annals of Innisfallen*. For the date of the annals, see Byrne 2001, 78.

37. Byrne 2001, 81, notes further that as late as AD 501 another victory of Coirpre over the same enemy occurs in a secondary interpolation into the annals of Ulster.

38. For this conclusion and for further supporting arguments, see Hughes 1972, 145, and Byrne 2001, 81: 'In fact, as Carney has pointed out, all known persons with whom Niall is associated belong to the latter half of the fifth century. ... We may ... [accept] Carney's thesis [1955] that Niall died c. 452.'

39. The chronologies of Niall and St Patrick are inextricably intertwined. The 7th-century chroniclers in Armagh wanted to date Patrick's arrival in 432 in order that he should not be displaced as apostle of the Irish by Palladius, who arrived in 431, having been sent by Pope Celestine to be the first bishop of the Irish (reported by Prosper of Aquitaine). At the same time the chroniclers wanted to associate Patrick with Niall and the high kingship in order to establish the primacy of the bishopric of Armagh. The annals and other documents all bring Patrick into contact with people who died at the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century. For all of this, see Thomas (1985, 314–27) and Byrne (2001, 78–82), who give clear and helpful accounts of the controversies surrounding this problem.

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RÉSUMÉ

Le trésor romain trouvé à Traprain Law, ancienne colline fortifiée massive située à l'est d'Édimbourg, a été interprété, depuis qu'il a fait l'objet d'une publication, en 1923, par Alexander Curle, comme étant une illustration des derniers jours de la Grande-Bretagne romaine. Ce trésor aurait été divisé par des pirates ou des assaillants irlandais aux alentours de l'an 405 de notre ère. Cette attribution a résulté d'une tentative de relier des sources historiques ou semi-historiques, notamment concernant le héros irlandais Niall Noigiallach et saint Patrick, à une découverte archéologique. Cependant, les chercheurs contemporains ont montré que Niall et saint Patrick vivaient entre le milieu et la fin du Ve siècle, et non pas entre la fin du IVe et le début du Ve siècle. Ainsi, l'argument selon lequel le trésor de Traprain Law a un rapport avec des pirates irlandais ne tient pas.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der römische Hacksilberhort von Traprain Law, einer riesigen Bergfeste östlich von Edinburgh, wird seit seiner Veröffentlichung durch Alexander Curle im Jahre 1923 als eine Veranschaulichung der letzten Tage des römischen Reichs in Großbritannien angesehen, denn angeblich wurde der Hort von irischen Piraten oder Plünderern um 405 n.Chr. zerschlagen. Diese Zuordnung ergab sich aus dem Versuch, historische und halb-historische Quellen, insbesondere zu dem irischen Volkshelden Niall und dem St. Patrick, mit einer archäologischen Entdeckung zu verbinden. Die moderne Wissenschaft hat jedoch nachgewiesen, dass Niall und St. Patrick in der Mitte oder im ausgehenden fünften Jahrhundert anzusiedeln sind, nicht im späten vierten oder frühen fünften Jahrhundert. Demzufolge ist das Argument, dass der Hort von Traprain Law etwas mit „irischen Piraten“ zu tun hat, hinfällig.