

ART. V.—*Two beaded torcs in Tullie House, Carlisle.*
By JEAN E. BURNS, M.A., B.Litt.

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AMONG the collection of Romano-British antiquities in Carlisle Museum, Tullie House, are two bronze beaded torcs. Although they were both briefly mentioned in CW1 vi 196 f. and CW2 xxxiv 156 f. on their discovery, this paper is intended to place them in the general context of such finds in Britain and to discuss their origins.¹

Description.

The complete torc was found while deepening a cellar in English St., Carlisle, in 1881. It is of a variety known as a Cast Beaded torc, where the beads are cast in a single curve and not strung loose upon a wire. Manufactured of very bright bronze and in excellent condition, the torc weighs 220 gm. and has a maximum internal diameter of 5.1 in. (13 cm.). (Fig. 1a.) The torc has two main sections, the largest of which is the rear one which encircled the neck. This hoop is square in section and ornamented on the outer edge by a regular pattern of short lines between incised borders. No decoration is present on the inner surface of the hoop. It terminates at each end in two short tenons. The beaded section consists of ten disc-shaped beads cast in one, and separated by mock spacers. All are graded in size, varying from .5 in. in diameter on the outer ones to .7 in. on the inner. Each bead has a pronounced plain central rib which is edged with incised lines, and parallel lines fringe the edges.

¹ This will be incorporated in a larger paper to be published in the near future.



FIG. 1a.

At each end is a cylinder decorated with hatching similar to the hoop, providing mortice joints for the hoop tenons. (Plate.) When the two segments are joined, the elasticity of the metal provides a very close join.

The second example, of which only the beaded section survives, was found in close proximity to and

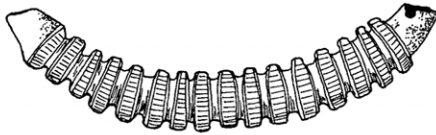


FIG. 1b.

probably associated with a small, curving V-shaped ditch of pre-Vallum date and situated some forty yards to the south of the Vallum on Greeny Bank, Stanwix, within Rickerby Park, in 1933. It has sixteen disc beads cast in one, and terminating cylinders to act as mortices. The condition is fairly poor, and decoration appears to be restricted to the edges of the beads. (Fig. 1b.)

Both torcs were made in two-piece moulds with the decoration emphasised by incision and punching after irregularities had been smoothed off. The Stanwix one retains its casting seam.

Discussion.

There are literary references to seven other cast beaded torcs in Britain, but of these, four have been lost or destroyed. The most complete example was from a cist at Embsay, Yorkshire,² and it had elaborate decoration on the beads and hoop. It closed by a mortice and tenon joint similar to the Carlisle examples. Three other fragmentary torcs of this type were also found in Attermire Cave, Yorkshire,³ at Giggleswick, Yorkshire,⁴ and in an unknown location in Lancashire.⁵ Of the three extant torcs, one from Lambertton Moor, Berwickshire,⁶ is the most elaborate, with massive decorated hoop and beads. The beaded section terminates in tenons, unlike the Cumberland examples. One from Skerne, Yorkshire,⁷ was classified as a "purse handle" as it was found with Roman coins, but is a very degenerate type with poor beads and a crude hoop. The one most similar to the Carlisle torcs is

² *Arch.* xxxi (1846) 517, pl. xxii.

³ Raistrick, *Yorks. Arch. Jour.*, xxxiv 115-150.

⁴ Simpson, *Celtic Art in North Britain before 400 A.D.* Ph.D. thesis. Edinburgh, 1966.

⁵ *VCH Lancashire* 248.

⁶ Anderson, *PSAS*, xxxix 367-376.

⁷ Mortimer, *40 Years Researches . . .*, 352.

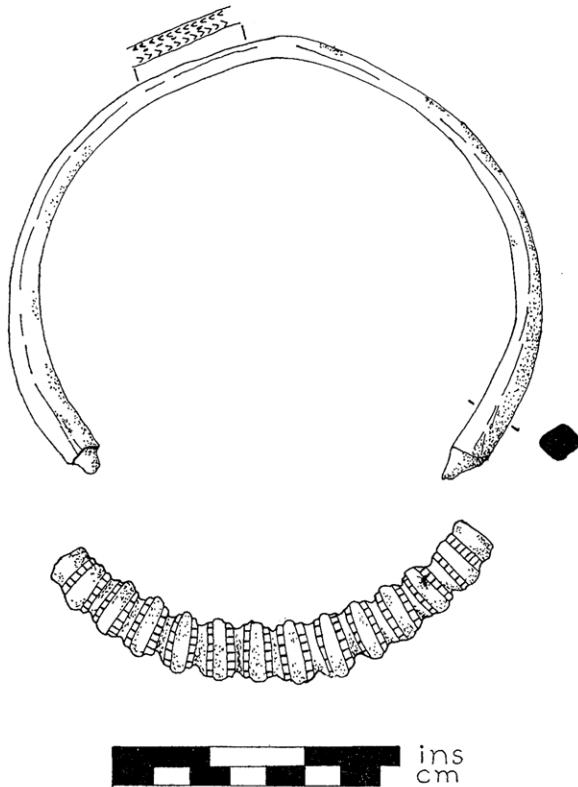


FIG. 2.

from Newmains, East Lothian.⁸ (Fig. 2.) It has twelve globular beads with decoration on the edges similar to the Carlisle torc. The hoop has an angular shape and tenons, but decoration differs in the use of a chevron pattern of punch marks on the outer edge.

The beaded torcs of strung and cast manufacture have no parallel without the British Isles, or indeed, the Northern Zone of Britain (Map). Strung necklaces were probably translated into a lasting form in bronze

⁸ *Discovery and Excavation* (1966), 25. Now in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh.

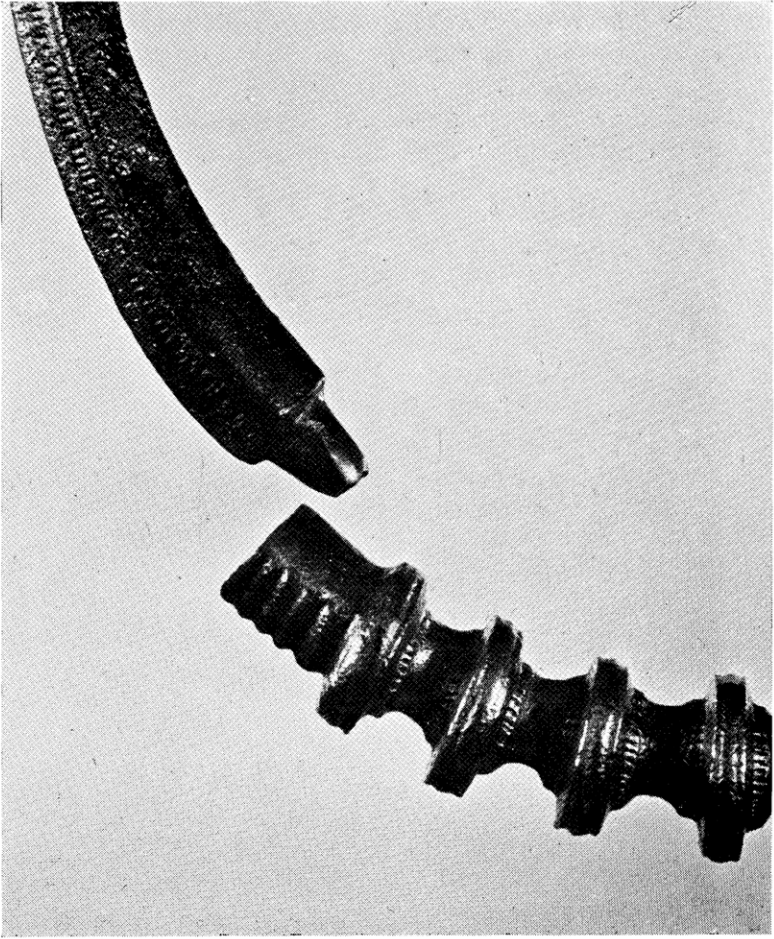


Photo: Tullie House

Mortice and tenon joints, Carlisle torc.

and the cast beaded torcs seem to have been the last development stage. The strung examples date from the 1st century A.D., while the cast ones are later.

Confusion arose concerning the Carlisle torc with the discovery of a Roman inscription 200 yds. from its find spot. This is attributed to the Ala Augusta Petriana Torquata, and the torc has been associated with this unit, despite the lack of accurate stratification.



While torcs were worn by the Romans as military insignia,⁹ most lithic evidence of tombstones and statues show them to be twisted or tubular torcs with bulbous ends,¹⁰ and not of the beaded variety. This may have been artistic convention, but many other details of the carvings exhibit individuality and accuracy. The Stanwix example can be roughly dated to the Vallum construction of c. A.D. 128, but no associated finds were made.

Skerne was found with a hoard of Roman coins, but no note was taken of these and they were dispersed in a larger collection.¹¹ Lamberton Moor was found with a hoard of bronzes. About 22 items were associated, including paterae, bowls, fibulae and rings covering a period from the 1st century A.D. to the 3rd century A.D. The torc, therefore, has no definite date of manufacture. Newmains was found with a native bronze spiral bracelet, a terret ring and patera, while the Embsay torc was reputed to be with a blue paste melon bead.

While all the datable examples show affinity with Roman objects, there is also a curious admixture of native items. It seems likely, therefore, that the torcs were manufactured in the Northern province of the Brigantes in the 2nd-3rd centuries A.D., when the Roman occupation was well established. The two examples from Carlisle may therefore have been the result of trade between the native smiths and the Romans, or indicative of native levies in the garrison, rather than manufactured as deliberate army insignia.

Acknowledgements.

Permission to publish the torcs was obtained from Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery. I am indebted

⁹ Seneca, *De Beneficarium*, ch. 5.

¹⁰ Statue of M. Coelius in Dusseldorf.

¹¹ Earl of Londesborough's collection in the British Museum.

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