

# One of the biggest Iron Age weapon hoards in western Germany unearthed

April 26 2021, by Bob Yirka

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Credit: LWL-Archäologie für Westfalen/Hermann Menne

A team of researchers with the Westfalen-Lippe Landscape Association

revealed during a presentation in the city of Schmallingenberg that one of the largest hoards of Iron Age weapons in western Germany had been unearthed at a nearby dig site on a small mountain in Wilzenberg. In their press release, the researchers note that they found approximately 100 Celtic Iron Age artifacts—primarily through the use of a metal detector.

The Iron Age in Germany and the rest of Europe arose at the end of the Bronze Age as the new metal became the material of choice for making weapons, farming implements and other utensils. The early Iron Age in Germany ran from approximately 800 to 45 BC. It was followed by the late Iron Age, which lasted until approximately 1 BC, when the Romans conquered the area. The dig site was believed to be a hill fort, which, as its name implies, was a type of elevated fort made of stone, clay or other local materials—they served as small fortifications against invading enemies, which is why most were constructed with ramparts. Prior digs had revealed the ramparts and some artifacts—the site has been active since the 1950s. In this new effort, the researchers took a new approach to locate iron artifacts hiding beneath the dirt floor—using metal detectors. Using them, the researchers found approximately 100 [iron](#) artifacts—they included swords, spears, lance tips, shields, belt hooks and harness parts. Precise dating was not possible, but the surrounding material suggested the artifacts were from 300–1 BC.



Credit: LWL-Archäologie für Westfalen/Hermann Menne



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Notably, most of the swords, spears and lances had been severely damaged. The swords were bent into halves or thirds and the spears and lance tips had been blunted. The severity of the damage, the researchers suggested, indicates that it was done intentionally after a battle had concluded. That meant the artifacts had likely been taken from a defeated enemy. They also note that because they were piled up in the hill fort, it was unlikely the battle had taken place at the same [site](#). They suggest that instead, it most likely played out around what is now the city of Wilzenberg with the victors carrying the arms back to the hill [fort](#) as trophies representing their triumph.



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**More information:** LWL press release (German):  
[www.lwl.org/pressemitteilungen ... lung.php?urlID=52158](http://www.lwl.org/pressemitteilungen...lung.php?urlID=52158)

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