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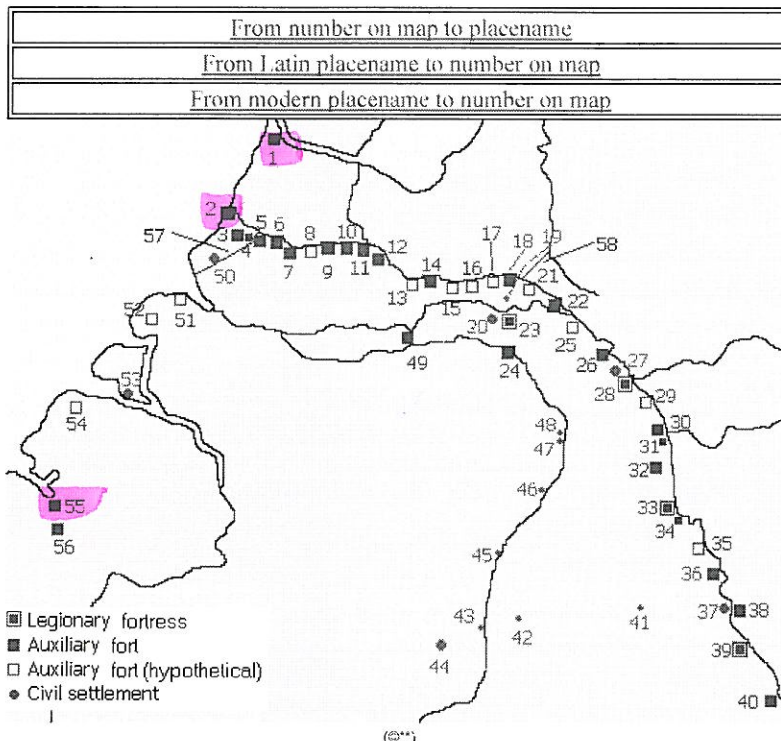
# The limes of Germania Inferior and its hinterland



**Germania inferior:** small province of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower Rhine. Its capital was Cologne. This webpage offers an overview of some sixty topographical names.



Reconstruction of a Roman legionary (Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn)



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Part of the Dutch limes: a road on a dike. Reconstruction near Valkenburg (\*\*)

## From number on map to placename

1	<a href="#">Flevum</a>	Velsen
2	<a href="#">Lugdunum</a>	Katwijk-Brittenburg
3	<a href="#">Praetorium Agrippinae</a>	Valkenburg
4	?	Valkenburg-Marktveid
5	<a href="#">Matilo</a>	Leiden-Roomburg
6	<a href="#">Albaniana</a>	Alphen aan den Rijn
7	<a href="#">Nigrum Pullum</a>	Zwammerdam
8	?	Bodegraven
9	<a href="#">Laurium</a>	Woerden
10	?	Utrecht-De Meern
11	<a href="#">Traiectum</a>	Utrecht
12	<a href="#">Fectio</a>	Vechten
13	<a href="#">Levefanum</a>	Rijswijk
14	<a href="#">Mannaricium</a>	Maurik
15	<a href="#">Carvo</a>	Kesteren
16	?	Kandwijk
17	?	Driel
18	<a href="#">Castra Herculis</a>	Arnhem-Meinerswijk
19	?	Elst
20	<a href="#">Batavodurum / Noviomagus</a>	Nijmegen
21	?	Loowaard
22	<a href="#">Carvium</a>	Herwen-De Bijland

(4)  
(5)

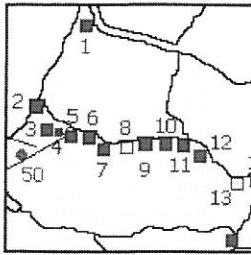
Carvo	Kesteren	15
Castra Herculis	Arnhem-Meinerswijk	18
Castra Vetera	Xanten-Birten	28
Ceuclum	Cuijk	24
Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium	Köln	37
Colonia Ulpia Traiana	Xanten	27
Coriovallum	Heerlen	42
Divitia	Köln-Deutz	38
Durnomagus	Dormagen	36
Fectio	Vechten	12
Feresnes	Stokkem?	45
Flevum	Velsen	1
Forum Hadriani	Voorburg	50
Fossa Corbulonis	Canal of Corbulo	57
Fossa Drusiana	Canal of Drusus	58
Ganuenta	Colijnsplaat	53
Gelduba	Krefeld-Gellep	32
Grinnes	Rossum	49
Harenatium	Rindern	25
Helinio	Oostvoorne?	51
Iuliacum	Jülich	41
Laurium	Woerden	9
Levefanum	Rijswijk	13
Lugdunum	Katwijk-Brittenburg	2
Mannaricium	Maurik	14
Matilo	Leiden-Roomburg	5
Nigrum Pullum	Zwammerdam	7
Novaesium	Neuss	33
Noviomagus	Nijmegen-Hunerberg	23
Oppidum Batavorum	Nijmegen	20
Oppidum Cananefatum	Voorburg	50
Oppidum Tungrorum	Tongeren	44
Praetorium Agrippinae	Valkenburg	3
Quadriburgium	Qualburg	-
Rigomagus	Remagen	40
Traiectum	Utrecht	11
Traiectum ad Mosam	Maastricht	43
Ulpia Noviomagus	Nijmegen	20

### From modern placename to number on map

Aardenburg	?	55
Alphen aan den Rijn	Albaniana	6
Alt-Kalkar	Burginatum	26
Arnhem-Meinerswijk	Castra Herculis	18
Blerick	Blariacum	47
Bodegraven	?	8
Bonn	Bonna	39
Brittenburg	Lugdunum	2
Canal of Corbulo	Fossa Corbulonis	57
Canal of Drusus	Fossa Drusiana	58
Colijnsplaat	Ganuenta	53
Cuijk	Ceuclum	24
Dormagen	Durnomagus	36
Driel	?	17

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## Velsen (Flevum?)



The location of Flevum (number 1)

**Germania inferior:** small province of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower Rhine. This webpage is part of a series of short descriptions of villages in Germania inferior. An overview can be found [here](#).



### Velsen-1

Like Fectio/Vechten, Velsen was a naval base. It controlled an important watercourse, the Oer-IJ, the northernmost outlet of the river Rhine, and an exit of Lake Flevo. According to the numismatic evidence, the fort was built in 14-16, which suggests that it was meant to support the offensives of the Roman general Germanicus, who conducted several retaliatory campaigns in Germany after the Roman defeat in the Teutoburg Forest in 9.

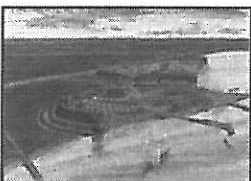


Bust of Germanicus, found in the Roman Baths of Smyrna. Archaeological Museum of Izmir

After a modest beginning (1 ha), Velsen became a pretty large base (2 ha), with a river port, four piers or jetties, and several ship sheds. Reports about a "satellite" on the opposite bank of the Oer-IJ have turned out to be incorrect.

Like almost all Roman forts, there was Mediterranean luxury. Archaeologists found evidence for the use of olive oil and fish sauce (*garum*) from Andalusia, and wine from France, Italy and the Greek isles Rhodes and Kos. The epigraphic evidence suggests that there were Italians in the fort, but also people from Spain. An intriguing sherd records the personal name Batavus.

Not far from the military settlement, a small Frisian sanctuary was discovered that was in use from the Early Iron age to third century CE ("Velsbroek", mostly unpublished). It is possible that the divine presence was one of the reasons why the Romans settled at Velsen.



Modern reconstruction of Velsen 1, by [Graham Sumner](#). From Lendering/Bosman, *Edge of Empire* (2012 Rotterdam).

Archaeologists have shown that the more or less trapezoidal fort was attacked at the beginning of the second quarter of the first century. The garrison survived, but seems to have had a close escape: during the fight, new slingshots were prepared. No less than 520 of these metal objects were discovered, and it is possible to reconstruct the pattern of attack. A first Frisian attack was unsuccessful, but a second wave broke into the camp - that it was later than the first wave, is proved by the fact that the Romans now used second-rate projectiles. Had the second attack been coordinated with the third one, across the water, Velsen would not have survived as a Roman fort.

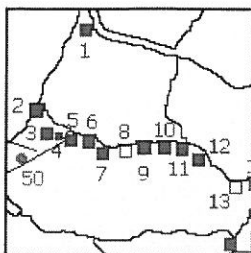
Three people who were quickly buried and never received a proper cremation: their final resting place was a well. One soldier still wore a part of his armor. (One of them was buried with a small coin that was minted between 22 and 30; it shows no traces of wear, which enables us to date the fight to, say, the years 22-35.)

A more macabre discovery was the presence of parts of human bodies on top of the layer of waste in the harbor. There was no waste to cover them, which means that corpses have floated in the Oer-IJ and gradually fell apart. There was no one to bury them, because the fort had been evacuated (had it still been occupied, the bodies would have received a decent burial).

It is extremely tempting to link the archaeological results described above to the Frisian revolt of 28, during which, according to the Roman historian Tacitus, a fort called *Flevum* barely survived ([text](#)) and had to be rescued by legionaries of V Alaudae, which had come from Xanten. This identification, although very tempting, is not completely certain and it is still possible that Flevum will one day be discovered in a different, more northerly part of the modern provinces of Noord-Holland

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## Lugdunum (Brittenburg)



The location of Lugdunum (2)

**Germania inferior:** small [province](#) of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower [Rhine](#). This webpage is part of a series of short descriptions of villages in Germania inferior. An overview can be found [here](#).

**Lugdunum** was a naval base and fortified military granary at the estuary of the river [Rhine](#). It was probably the location of one of the strangest incidents from ancient history. In 40, the emperor [Caligula](#) arrived at the beach with many soldiers, probably belonging to the newly recruited [Twenty-second legion Primigenia](#). What happened next, is told by his biographer [Suetonius](#).



Finally, as if resolved to make war in earnest, he drew up a line of battle on the shore of the ocean, placed his ballistas and other artillery, and, no one knowing or able to imagine what he was going to do, he all of a sudden commanded they gather sea shells and fill their helmets and pockets with them [...]. As a monument of this victory, he erected a lofty tower, from which lights were to shine at night to guide the course of ships, as from the lighthouse of [Alexandria](#).

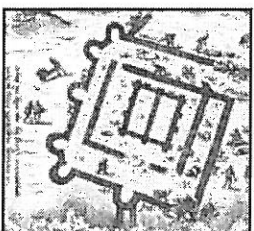
[Suetonius, *Life of Caligula* 46;  
tr. J. Gavorse]

This farce must have taken place on the beach near modern Katwijk Boulogne, which is sometimes mentioned, can be excluded because there are no remains from the age of Caligula.



The Rhine near Katwijk. The Brittenburg must have been immediately in front of the estuary.  
(©\*\*)

In the winter of 39/40, a military base was constructed at nearby Valkenburg. It was called *Praetorium Agrippinae*; the first element of this name means 'headquarters', the second is a reference to the emperor's mother Agrippina. The presence of the emperor at the mouth of the Rhine is certain, because a barrel has been found that once contained wine from the emperor's personal vineyards. As late as the sixteenth century, fishermen from Katwijk called a group of underwater ruins 'the tower of Kalla'. Because there has been continuous human occupation at the mouth of the Rhine, it is tempting to think that the site of the lighthouse was still been remembered.



Brittenburg, etching by Abraham Ortelius (1581)

Apart from these stories, Lugdunum is only known to us from drawings from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, when the ruins of the ancient settlement (not the lighthouse) became visible on the beach. The precise location of the Brittenburg, however, is still hotly debated.

The drawing by Abraham Ortelius, one of the most famous cartographers of all ages, shows a building that can probably be identified with a *horreum* or military granary. The heavy walls with round towers suggest a date in the fourth century.

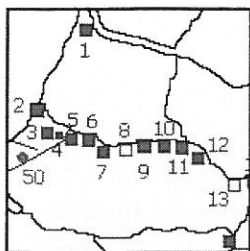
The ruins of the Brittenburg were probably sighted for the last time in the last days of October (or the first days of November) 1954. Unfortunately, nobody has recorded their precise location. Modern archaeologists have been unable to trace the ruins of the 'Brittenburg', which have become one of the most famous and romantic mysteries of Dutch archaeology. The violence of the sea has probably destroyed the remains of the castle beyond recovery.

The Renaissance expression "Lugdunum Batavorum" to describe the nearby town of Leiden is erroneous. In Antiquity, Leiden was called [Matilo](#).

### Literature

Livius.Org [Anatolia](#) [Carthage](#) [Egypt](#) [Germ. Inf.](#) [Greece](#) [Judaea](#) [Mesopotamia](#) [Persia](#) [Rome](#) [Other](#)

## Forum Hadriani (Voorburg)



The location of Forum Hadriani (number 50)

**Forum Hadriani:** small town in the Roman province of Germania Inferior, modern Voorburg near The Hague in Holland.

Description	Photos
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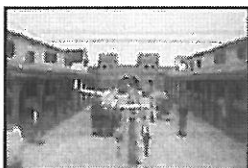
The Roman town, which may have been founded immediately after the Batavian revolt of 69-70, was originally called *Municipium Cananefatium*, 'the town of the Cananefates'. This name can be found, for example, on the milestones discovered at Den Haag. The town was the capital of this tribe, which was probably related to the Batavians and lived in what is now the Dutch province of Zuid-Holland.

The town was founded exactly at the watershed between the river basins of Meuse and Rhine. It is possible that it originally was the site where ships were hauled from one little brook to another. After 47, a canal was dug by the Roman general Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo.

In the second century, the town of the Cananefates received the title of *Forum Hadriani*. Too much has been made of this new name, which simply means 'market of Hadrian'. It was not uncommon for towns to change their name to honor a ruler. Several archaeologists have claimed that the emperor Hadrian (117-138) awarded the right to organize markets to the town, which can therefore, in their view, best be typified as a market town. However, we know enough of Roman Law to understand that as a municipal capital, Voorburg did already have this prerogative. The fact that the old name was still in use during the reign of the emperor Decius (249-251), should have been sufficient warning against this theory. (This misunderstanding is one of the examples of the regrettable lack of cooperation between Dutch archaeologists and historians.)



The only thing we know for certain is that the town changed its name. It is tempting to link this to several well-documented building activities in the region during the reign of Hadrian (e.g., repairs of the Canal of Corbulo, which connected Voorburg with the Rhine at Leiden in the north and the estuary of the Meuse in the south).



Model of ancient Voorburg, from Museum Swaensteyn

Remains of the Roman town have been excavated in park Arentsburg in modern Voorburg. It seems that the ancient settlement was, in spite of its small size (about 1000 inhabitants), a regular city with the common Roman gridiron lay-out. Several houses had shops in front and gardens in the back. Parts of the river port were identified in 2007.



Reconstruction of a house from ancient Voorburg (Archeon)

Archaeologists have established that the inhabitants left the town after c.270. This is more or less at the time of the disaster that befell Germania Inferior in 274, when the Roman emperor Aurelian reconquered northwestern Europe, which had become independent in 260 and had succeeded in defending itself against the Germanic Franks and Alamanni. The collapse of this Gallie Empire meant the end of both the Rhine frontier and Roman Voorburg. The countryside suffered as well; the farm at Rijswijk - De Bult was abandoned too. When the frontier was restored by Constantius I Chlorus at the beginning of the fourth century, Forum Hadriani was not rebuilt.

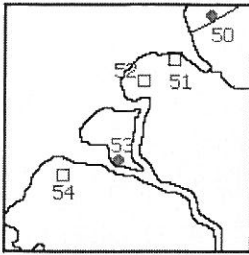


Caspar Reuvsen at the excavations of Voorburg (©\*\*)

The site was excavated for the first time in 1827-1834 by Caspar Reuvsen, the world's first professor of archaeology. At that time, the name *Forum Hadriani* was already known from the Peutinger map, and Reuvsen was not certain about the interpretation of his discoveries. He can not be blamed. After Pompeii and Herculaneum, it was the first systematic scientific excavation of a Roman civil settlement, and the results are even more impressive when we take into account that Reuvsen's budget was cut back in 1830 because of war circumstances. It was only in the 1960's that

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## Helinio (Oostvoorne?)



The location of Helinio (51)

**Germania inferior:** small province of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower Rhine. This webpage is part of a series of short descriptions of villages in Germania inferior. An overview can be found here.

In 173, the Chauci, a tribe that lived in what is now called Groningen and Ostfriesland, and was well-known for its sea-faring qualities, attacked what is now called Flanders. The governor of Gallia Belgica, Didius Julianus, defeated them. The Roman government responded by building several forts along the coast of what is now Zuid-Holland, Zeeland and West-Vlaanderen.

Because the sea has been active in the third century, the castle at Oostvoorne, which guarded the estuary of the Meuse, must be sought somewhere off the coast. Its ruins have been seen in 1752. The name *Helinio* is known from the Peutinger map.

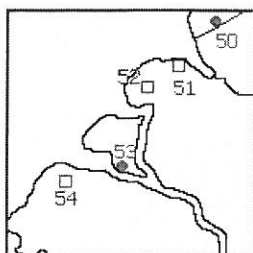
Because the remains survived for centuries, it is likely that the fort was at some stage replaced by a heavily fortified castle, and we may assume that this happened in the fourth century.

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## Goedereede-Oude Wereld



The location of Goedereede-Oude Wereld (52)

**Germania inferior:** small province of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower Rhine. This webpage is part of a series of short descriptions of villages in Germania inferior. An overview can be found here.

In 173, the Chauci, a tribe that lived in what is now called Groningen and Ostfriesland, and was well-known for its sea-faring qualities, attacked what is now called Flanders. The governor of Gallia Belgica, Didius Julianus, defeated them. The Roman government responded by building several forts along the coast of what is now Zuid-Holland, Zeeland and West-Vlaanderen.

Because the sea has been active in the third century, the castle at Goeree must be sought somewhere off the coast. Its ruins have been seen in 1618 and were called *Oude wereld* ('ancient world'). Because the remains survived for centuries, it is likely that the fort was at some stage replaced by a heavily fortified castle, and we may assume that this happened in the fourth century.

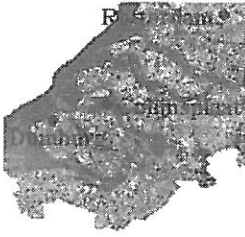
The remains of a nearby Roman settlement have been found in the neighborhood.

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## Ganuenta (Colijnsplaat)



**Germania inferior:** small province of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower Rhine. This webpage is part of a series of short descriptions of villages in Germania inferior. An overview can be found [here](#).

**Ganuenta** is only known from an inscription on one of the votive altars dedicated to the ancient goddess Nehalennia, which were discovered in 1970-1974 in the Eastern Scheldt estuary, about 1½ kilometers northwest of Colijnsplaat. It has been argued that Ganuenta was the capital of the Frisiavones, but it is likely that it was in fact in Menapian territories, and that Frisiavones lived, in fact, a bit more to the north.

As the waters of the Scheldt and the sea have swallowed up this area, hardly anything is known about this place, which may once have been an important international port.



The Eastern Scheldt today.



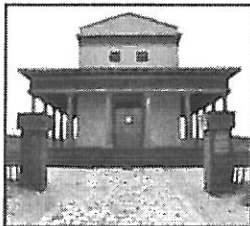
Reconstruction of a votive altar. They were all painted. ([Archeon](#))



Votive altar of Nehalennia (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden)



Votive altar of Nehalennia (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden)



Modern reconstruction of the temple of Nehalennia, in modern Colijnsplaat. There is, actually, no evidence whatsoever for the shape of the sanctuary, but most temples in the Low Countries looked like this.

No votive altar can be dated after 227, and archaeologists have discovered almost nothing from Late Antiquity in this part of the Netherlands. This suggests that the site and the area were abandoned at some moment in the mid-third century. There is indeed evidence for changes in the ecological system, although ideas about large transgressions ("Duinkerke 2") have now been abandoned.

In itself, the ecological changes would not have been disastrous, but the inhabitants of the coastal region of Germania Inferior had been extracting salty peat from the mud flats, which was used to produce salt. The natural defense against the water had disappeared, and the sea could now easily destroy the coast.

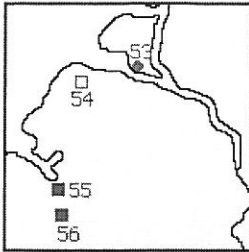
A satellite photo of the site can be found [here](#).

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## Walcheren-De Roompot



The location of Walcheren (54)

**Germania inferior:** small province of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower Rhine. This webpage is part of a series of short descriptions of villages in Germania inferior. An overview can be found here.

In 173, the Chauci, a tribe that lived in what is now called Groningen and Ostfriesland, and was well-known for its sea-faring qualities, attacked what is now called Flanders. The governor of Gallia Belgica, Didius Julianus, defeated them. The Roman government responded by building several forts along the coast of what is now Zuid-Holland, Zeeland and West-Vlaanderen. The presence of a fort at the island **Walcheren** can be deduced from Roman roof tiles found at De Roompot.

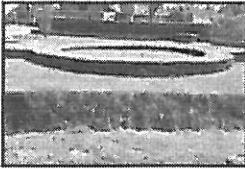
It is likely that the original fort was at some stage replaced by a heavily fortified castle, and we may assume that this happened in the fourth century.

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Livius.Org Anatolia Carthage Egypt Germ. Inf. Greece Judaea Mesopotamia Persia Rome Other

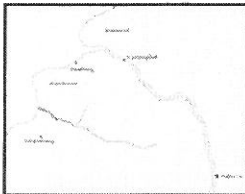
## Aardenburg (Rodanum?)



Remains of a tower and the ditch of the fort at Aardenburg

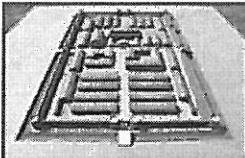
**Aardenburg:** coastal fortress in Germania Inferior. The ancient name may have been Rodanum.

In 173, the Chauci, a tribe living in what is now called Groningen and Ostfriesland and well-known for its sea-faring qualities, attacked what is now called Flanders. They had some success, but in the end, they were defeated by the governor of Gallia Belgica, Didius Julianus. The Roman government responded by building several forts along the coast of what is now Zuid-Holland, Zeeland and West-Vlaanderen.



The Scheldt estuary in Antiquity

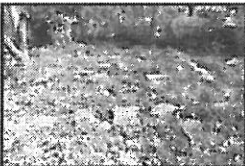
Aardenburg was one of them. Situated on the east bank of a small river, the Rudanna, it controlled the route to Maldegem and beyond. Its walls measured about 150x240 meters; they were built from natural stone imported from Tournai and the Eifel Mountains. About a thousand soldiers may have lived over here, both infantry and cavalry. Roof tiles with the stamps CIIA and CIIS prove that the units were called *Cohors Secunda A...* and *Cohors Secunda S...*; we do not know where they were from, but the oldest pieces of Samian ware were produced in Rheinabern, suggesting that the first garrison arrived from the land of the Rhine and Moselle.



Model of the Aardenburg fort

The new settlement must have had serious consequences for the native population, the Menapians, who had until then continued their old life style, becoming Romans only very slowly. Now, all of a sudden, they had to produce food and other products for the garrison, and received coins in return. The presence of native ceramics, fish, cockles, and mussels, within the fort proves that they managed to produce what was needed. In return, they suddenly had trade contacts with the valley of the Scheldt, with Britain, Gaul, and even Spain. Archaeologists have found Samian ware and pieces of wall painting - a luxury the Menapians can never have seen before.

It is possible that after 225, the Romans concentrated their forces in nearby Oudenburg. The military settlement at Aardenburg may have been taken over by citizens. In any case, a temple was added, which is unusual inside a fort.

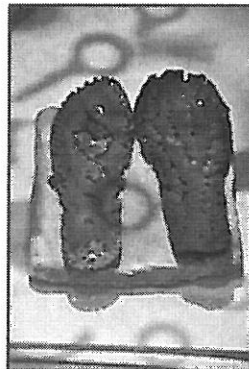


Remains of the Aardenburg temple (Archeologisch museum Aardenburg)

After 260, the fort was refortified by the rulers of the Galic Empire, but it was eventually evacuated in c.274, probably after an attack by Saxonian pirates, who appeared on the Flemish coast after the collapse of the Gallic Empire, which had been reunited with the "real" Roman Empire by Aurelian. A skeleton found at Aardenburg may belong to one of the attackers, as it is inhumated, not cremated. A second reason to abandon the site may have been a change in the environment. The sea was increasingly dangerous, and the land along the little Rudanna was vulnerable.



Skeleton, perhaps a Germanic raider (Archeologisch museum Aardenburg)



Sandals (Archeologisch museum Aardenburg)



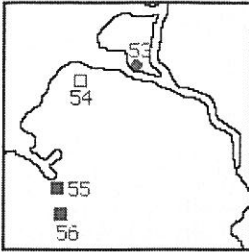
Head of Bacchus (Archeologisch museum Aardenburg)



Terracotta head (Archeologisch museum Aardenburg)

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## Maldegem



The location of Maldegem  
(56)

**Germania inferior:** small province of the Roman empire, situated along the Lower Rhine. This webpage is part of a series of short descriptions of villages in Germania inferior. An overview can be found here.

In 173, the Chauci, a tribe that lived in what is now called Groningen and Ostfriesland, and was well-known for its sea-faring qualities, attacked what is now called Flanders. The governor of Gallia Belgica, Didius Julianus, defeated them. Modern Maldegem occupies the site of a temporary, wooden fort built during this campaign. It was excavated in the 1990's.

The fort at Aardenburg was built to replace the Maldegem fort.

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