



National  
Museums  
Scotland

# Scotland's Silver Treasures



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**For almost a thousand years, silver was the most prestigious metal in Scotland.**

This exhibition tells the story of the importance of silver during a pivotal time in Scotland's history, shedding new light on the thousand years between the Roman occupation of Britain and the Viking invasions. It explores the transition from pagan Iron Age to Early Medieval Christian society over the first millennium AD, a time for which historical sources offer very few clues. Silver, not gold was the material of choice, underpinning the power behind the first kingdoms of what we now call Scotland.

Silver first arrived as Roman coinage and vessels, and rapidly became the sole precious metal used to symbolise wealth, power and status. It retained this special significance for the next thousand years of Scotland's history.

Spectacular objects of power and prestige from Roman to Viking-age Scotland, AD 1–1000

The exhibition will showcase these spectacular treasures, many of which have never before left Scotland:

- Two spectacular silver chains. These dramatic objects, worn around the neck, were made from several kilograms of solid silver, and are unique to Scotland. Only nine of them are known to exist.
- Beautiful and elaborate Early Medieval brooches, emblems of power and prestige. These include examples from the St Ninian's Isle hoard discovered in the 1950s in the Shetland Isles by a schoolboy on his very first day on an excavation.
- Treasures from the biggest hoard of hacked-up Roman silver ever found beyond the Roman Empire's borders. The Traprain Law hoard, an incredible 22kg of silver, was buried around mid-5th-century AD. It was discovered in 1919 in East Lothian, near Edinburgh.
- An exciting new discovery of probably the earliest Roman hacksilver hoard from beyond the frontier, found in Dairsie, Fife.
- A richly decorated fragment of a brooch from Dunbeath, Scotland, decorated with minute gold filigree embedded on a traditional silver body.
- Unique objects from the Norrie's Law hoard, from Fife, one of the largest Pictish hoards ever found. The hoard includes a leaf-shaped plaque with Pictish symbols, a script unique to Early Medieval Scotland.



## Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication *Scotland's Early Silver*, written by Alice Blackwell, Dr Martin Goldberg and Dr Fraser Hunter.

## Specifications

- Available for hire from Spring 2019.
- Around 80 objects from National Museums Scotland collections.
- Includes exhibition text, a short exhibition film and a selection of graphics and images for use.
- Requires minimum 140 square metres and secure display cases.

## Exhibition Curators

Alice Blackwell, Glenmorangie Research Fellow, Dr Fraser Hunter, Principal Curator and Dr Martin Goldberg, Senior Curator are world leading experts in Roman and Early Medieval archaeology in Scotland.

Alice and Martin have been researching National Museums Scotland's Early Medieval collections since 2008. Their research project is supported by The Glenmorangie Company and has produced exhibitions, research papers and a publication *Early Medieval Scotland: Individuals, Communities and Ideas*.

Dr Fraser Hunter has over twenty years' experience of curating and researching Iron Age and Roman collections. He is currently directing a major research project on the Traprain Law late Roman treasure.





National Museums Scotland Scottish Charity, No. SC011130

We create inspiring and memorable visitor experiences. Through our touring exhibitions we offer our internationally important collection and diverse research to a broader range of audiences, revealing the many fascinating stories these objects tell.

## For more information contact

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