A considerable number of Roman finds have been recovered north of the Imperial frontiers. Although their significance is often problematic, in that it is hard to know whether they were objects of trade, the trophies of successful raids on the south, or casual losses during Roman expeditions into Scotland, they are potentially of very great interest. The Culbin Sands material was originally in a private collection in Ireland, and was purchased for the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland at Sotheby's on 18th May 1970 (see Museum Purchases, item 3). All the pieces appear to be of second-century date.

1. The largest of the items is a brass trumpet-brooch of developed type, without enamelling, 63 mm long (Museum no. 1970, 23; fig 4: 1). The pin is attached to a spring and there is a loop at the head for the chain which would have linked it to a similar trumpet-brooch: these fibulae were worn in pairs. The plate is not pierced and the only decoration on the brooch is the conventional acanthus device in the centre of the bow.

Trumpet-brooches are typically North-British and a number of examples have been found in Scotland, for example at Newstead, Mumrills and Traprain Law.
2. A more unexpected item of jewellery is a Roman silver signet-ring (1970, 25; fig 4: 2; Appendix). It is ovoid, 24 × 20 mm, and the hoop, which is rounded externally, expands towards the bezel. Henkel illustrates a similar silver ring from Kastell Zugmantel. British specimens of the type are recorded from Corbridge, Chesters and Chollerford (Northumberland), from Slay Hill Saltings (Kent), Chalgrave (Bedfordshire), Thistleton (Rutland) and Leicester.

The ring contains a cornelian intaglio, oval and slightly convex, 10 × 8 mm (pl 29, a). The device, which is relatively well cut, is the god Silvanus standing to the front and facing right. He is bearded and wears a cap or diadem. His dress is a short tunic and boots, the usual garb for the countryman. In his right hand he holds a curved pruning-knife (falx) and in his left hand is a branch.

The type is a well-known one which may have become popular as the result of the identification of Antinoos (Hadrian’s beautiful favourite who was drowned in tragic circumstances in the Nile, and came to be deified as one of the forces of nature) with Silvanus.

Silvanus is shown on intaglios from Corbridge and Chesterholm (Vindolanda) in Northumberland, as well as on other stones from Rome, Aquileia and Carnuntum.

3. The third object, of bronze, has a somewhat strange appearance (1970, 24; fig 4: 3). It is 37 mm long. A prong rises from a base of slightly conical shape. A semi-circular cutting on one side is balanced by a corresponding expansion on the other. Above this projection is the head of an animal, perhaps a panther. The two eyes and the mouth are indicated, but other detail is lacking. We have here a very crude example of a type of zoomorphic support which was commonly employed as an element in the construction of miniature tripods, such as were in use as decorative candlesticks. Although legs generally have claw-feet, the lion or panther-headed protome is characteristic of these supports.

As far as I am aware this is the first of these fittings to have been recorded from a site in Scotland.
NOTES


4. J Curle, Newstead. A Roman Frontier Post and its People (Glasgow 1911), 321-3 and pl LXXVI, no. 16. PSAS, LXIII (1928-9), 553-5 and fig 115 no. 1 (Mumrills); PSAS, LIV (1919-20), 65, fig 7 nos 6 and 7, fig 8, no. 1 (Traprain Law).

5. F Henkel, Die Römischen Fingerringe der Rheinlande (Berlin 1913), 56 and pl xxi, no. 410.


7. Cf Arch Ael fourth series, xlv (1971), 215-230, for the intaglio from South Shields which depicts Silvanus-Cocidius also wearing a cap and a tunic, as well as boots with leggings.

8. Cf G E Rizzo, ‘Antnoo-Silvano’, Ausonia, III (1908) 3-17. For Silvanus on a Hadrianic bronze medallion, F Gneccchi, I Medaglioti Romani, ii (Milan 1912), 5 nos 16-23, pl xxxix, 1-3. Silvanus is, of course, found in pre-Hadrianic art; e.g. on Trajan’s arch at Beneventum (A V Domaszewski, Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien, II (1899), 181 no. 3, 184 no. 77.


10. Annales de la Société d’Archéologie de Bruxelles, ix (1895), 430, pl xxii, fig 1 (Tirlemon, Belgium). Also note an example from Colchester, Trans Essex Arch Soc third series, part 1 (1971), 82 and fig 27, no. 15. For a full discussion, cf Martin Henig, ‘Zoomorphic Supports of Cast Bronze from Roman Sites in Britain’, Arch Journ, cxxvii (1971), 182-7, especially nos 6-10.

11. No. 10 ( =J P Bushe-Fox, Richborough IV, 1949, 130 and pl xxxvii, no. 130), from a bucket, does not have a clawed foot.

APPENDIX

Examination of Silver Signet-Ring (1970.25)

by J. C. McCawley, Research Laboratory, National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland

The ring was thought to be made of silver and was analysed to confirm this and to identify the other constituents of the alloy. A non-dispersive X-ray fluorescence spectrometer, with radioisotope excitation, showed the surface metal to be silver alloyed with copper and containing minor/trace amounts of lead, zinc, gold, antimony and bismuth. The copper is present at the 3-12% level and this is consistent with the addition of brass as hardener and deoxidant.
a  Cast of intaglio from Roman finger-ring, Culbin Sands (†)

b  Glamis: front of cross-slab fragment.
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