

VI.

NOTE ON A BRONZE SWORD FOUND AT INVERBROOM, ROSS-SHIRE ;
EXHIBITED BY J. A. FOWLER, ESQ. OF BRAEMORE. BY JOSEPH
ANDERSON, LL.D., ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

In the early part of the present year a bronze sword was found in the cleft of a rock on the hillside above Inverbroom, Ross-shire, by a gamekeeper, and passed into the possession of J. A. Fowler, Esq. of Braemore. A notice of the find, with a photograph of the sword taken by Miss Fowler, was sent by Rev. Mr Sutherland, minister of Lochbroom, to Dr D. Campbell, F.S.A. Scot., of Craigrannoch, Ballachulish, by whom it was communicated to Dr Christison, Secretary. Dr Christison, perceiving that the sword was of great interest, as being of a type not at all common in Scotland, wrote to Mr Fowler, requesting that it should be sent for exhibition to the Society, a request with which Mr Fowler courteously complied, and subsequently granted permission for a facsimile of the sword to be made by Messrs Brook & Son, George Street, for the National Museum. The replica made under the careful superintendence of Mr A. J. S. Brook, a member of the Council of the Society, is now in the Museum.

The sword, which is of the rare variety having the hilt and pommel as well as the blade cast in bronze, measures $27\frac{3}{4}$ inches in total length, but the pommel being incomplete, the original total length probably exceeded 28 inches. The length of the blade from its junction with the hilt to the point is 23 inches, the length of the grip 4 inches, and there is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch of the pommel remaining. The form of the blade is the usual leaf-shape, narrowing slightly from its breadth of $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches at its junction with the hilt till it reaches its narrowest measurement of $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches at about 3 inches from the hilt, from which it swells gradually to its greatest width of $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches at 16 inches from the hilt, from which it again tapers rapidly for 7 inches to the point. The breadth of the thin strip drawn down by the hammer to form the edge of the blade on both sides is about $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch. As usual, it is cut off at about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch from the junction of the blade with the hilt.

The common form of bronze sword has a flat hilt-plate, with rivet-holes for fixing on the side-pieces of the grip, which were usually of bone, horn, or wood. Fig. 1 shows a sword from the Island of Islay, with two rivet-holes in the hilt-plate and two in each of the wings, while fig. 2 shows a sword from South Uist, with two rivet-holes in the length of the hilt-plate and one in each of the wings: the side-pieces of the grip, which were of perishable material, are in both cases absent. Fig. 3 shows a sword found at Aird, in the parish of Barvas, Island of Lewis, which is the only Scottish example known that still retains the side mountings of the grip. In this case they are of ox-horn, and have the further peculiarity that, instead of being separate pieces riveted on either side of the hilt-plate, they are cut out of the horn, somewhat in the form of the legs of a tuning-fork, and held together by a solid portion of the horn projecting beyond the butt-end of the hilt, so as to slightly increase the length of the grip.

A much less common form, however, has the handle as well as the blade of bronze, and the butt-end terminated by a pommel, as shown in the sword from Leadburn, Peeblesshire, fig. 4. This is the type to which the Inverbroom sword belongs, the pommel being slightly damaged, and the convex part wanting, as shown in fig. 5. In the case of the Leadburn sword, the hilt of which was broken across, it was seen that the hilt and pommel are one hollow casting, still retaining the clay core over which the casting was made. In the case of the Inverbroom sword the pommel seems to have been hollow, and the casting appears to have failed at one side, which may account for the breaking away of the convex end. But in the centre of the hollow part of the broken pommel the end of the usual flat hilt-plate appears protruding (see the end view of the pommel in fig. 5). This shows that the sword had been originally one of the common pattern of fig. 1, with a hilt-plate to be made up for the grip by side-pieces riveted on, and that subsequently the bronze grip and pommel had been cast over the ordinary hilt-plate. Sir John Evans figures a sword found in the river Cherwell,¹ and now in the Museum at Oxford, which has a hilt with grip and pommel of bronze,

¹ *The Ancient Bronze Implements, Weapons, and Ornaments of Great Britain and Ireland*, by John Evans, D.C.L., p. 286.

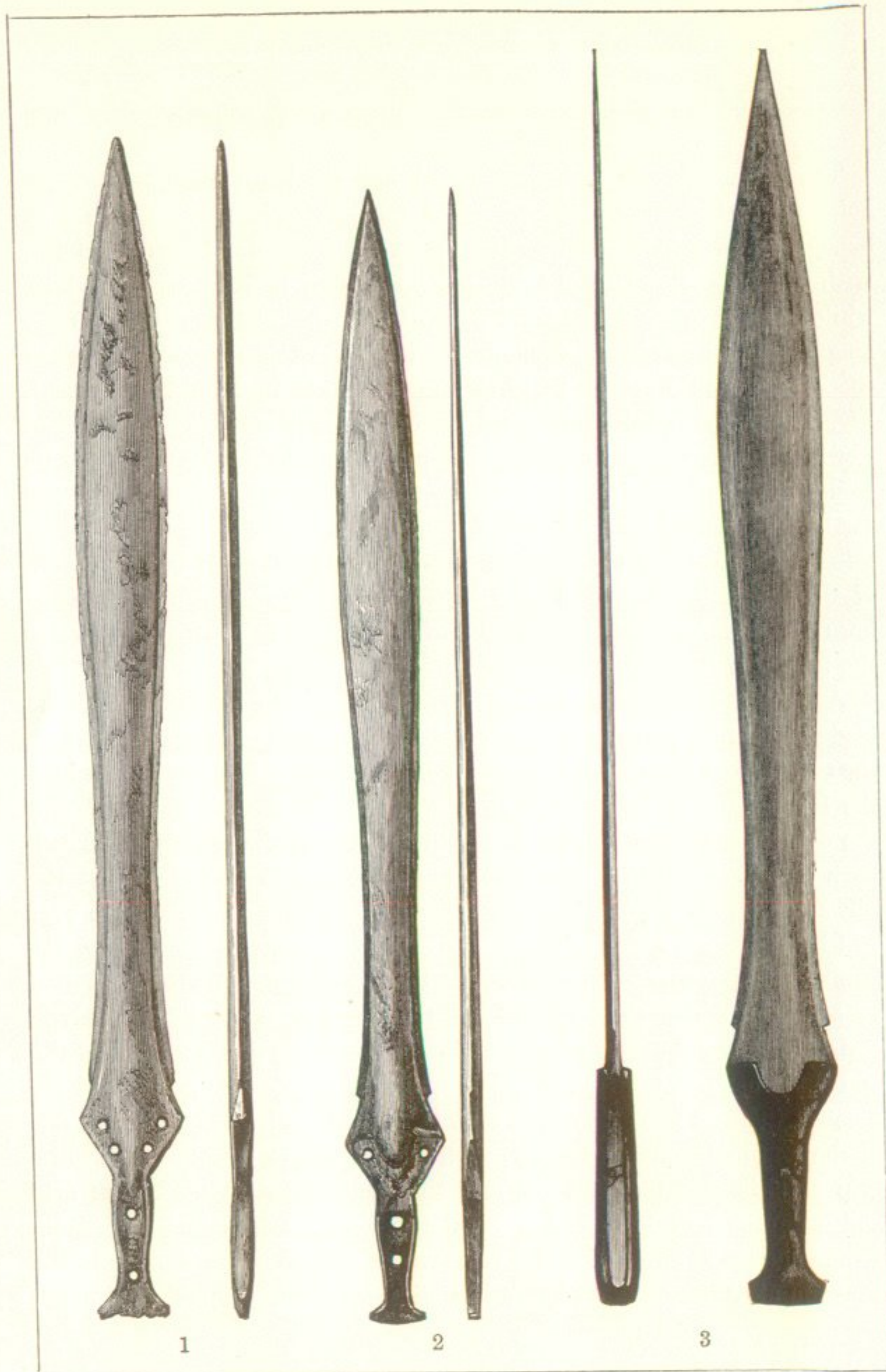


Fig. 1. Bronze Sword from Islay ($\frac{1}{4}$), and Fig. 2. Bronze Sword from South Uist ($\frac{1}{5}$), both showing handle-plate with rivet-holes. Fig. 3. Bronze Sword, with grip of ox-horn riveted on the handle-plate, from Aird, Barvas, Lewis ($\frac{1}{4}$).

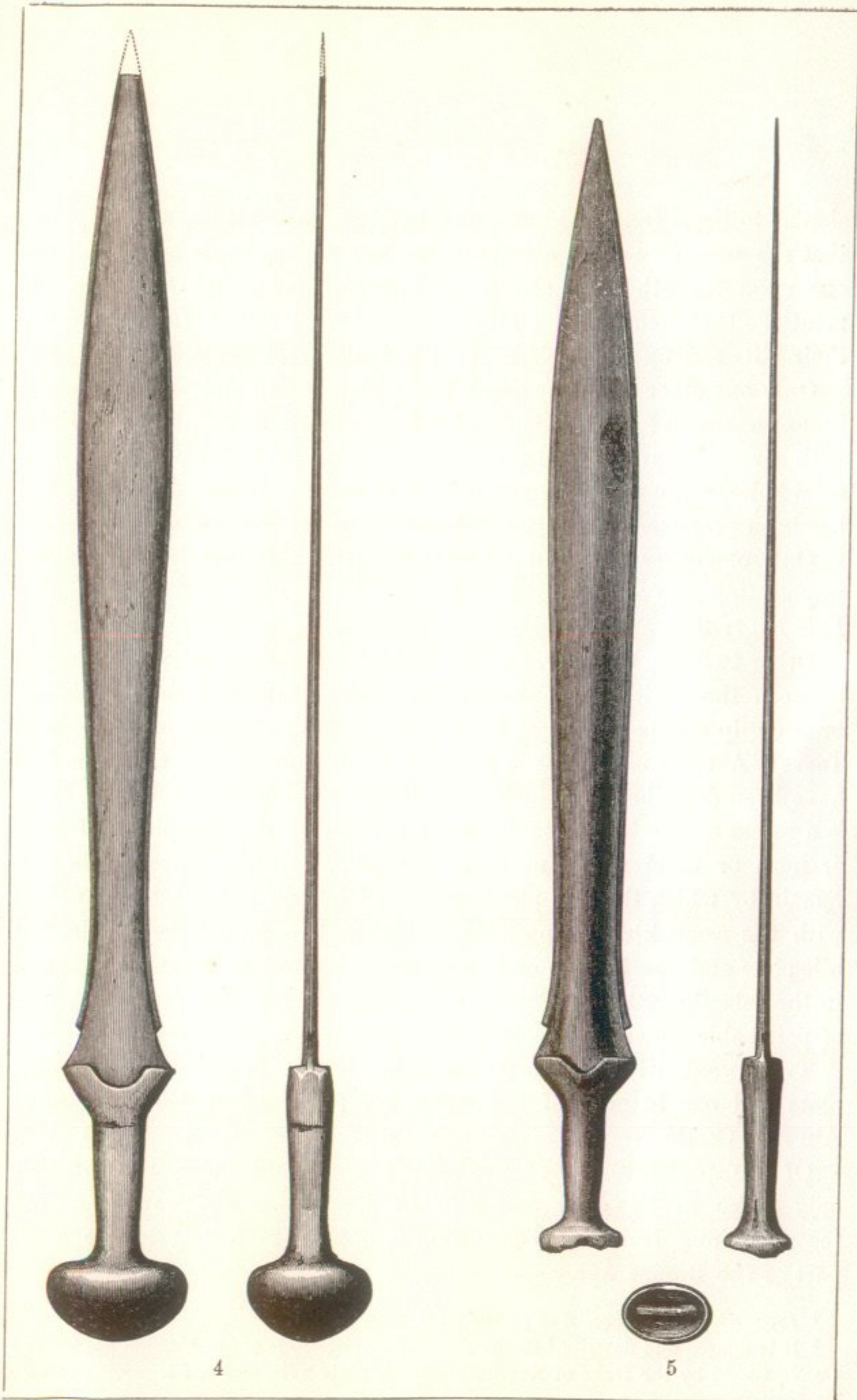


Fig. 4. Bronze Sword, with hilt and pommel of bronze cast on the blade, from Leadburn, Peeblesshire ($\frac{1}{4}$).
Fig. 5. Bronze Sword, with hilt and pommel of bronze cast over a flat handle-plate, from Inverbroom, Ross-shire ($\frac{1}{5}$).

similar to those from Leadburn and Inverbroom. He states his opinion that the same process of attaching the hilt to the blade by casting the one upon the other was also in use in Scandinavia and Germany; and mentions that some of the bronze daggers from Italy seem to have had their hilts cast upon the blades, in which the rivets were already fixed.

Only one other sword having a hilt with the grip and pommel cast in bronze has been found in Scotland. It was found in Edinburgh in 1869, with several other swords having the ordinary flat hilt-plates pierced by rivet-holes, a pin and ring, and a kind of annular button of bronze, and has been previously described and figured in the *Proceedings*.¹

Only one other has been found in England. It was found in a railway cutting in Yorkshire, and is now in the museum at Alnwick Castle. It is larger than any of those now mentioned, being 29 inches in length.²

Other two are, however, on record, which are of an intermediate type between those with the ordinary flat-handle plate and those with the bronze grip and pommel cast over it. One in the British Museum, from Tarves, Aberdeenshire, has a pommel of bronze similar to those that have been described, but instead of the grip being cast in bronze, there is a recess on the hilt-plate for the reception of the side-pieces of bone or horn or wood which made up the grip, and the three rivets still remain by which the side-pieces were fastened on either side. Another with the same kind of pommel, and with two rivet-holes in the flat hilt-plate and one in each of the wings, is figured by Pennant as found in the Island of Skye. This sword seems also to have had side-pieces of perishable material to make up the grip.

Two swords with leaden pommels, but having two rivets in the hilt-plate and one in each of the wings, are preserved in the museum at Alnwick Castle.

Of the special variety of the Inverbroom sword there are, therefore, only three in Scotland and two in England. The variety is not recorded from Ireland. These swords appear to belong to the latter part of the Bronze Age.

¹ *Proceedings of the Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. xiii. p. 321.

² It is figured and described in the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Museum at Alnwick Castle*, issued by the Duke of Northumberland, plate xvii. and p. 54.