

DAGGERS, DIRKS AND RAPIERS OF THE SCOTTISH MIDDLE BRONZE AGE¹

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TWENTY-SIX rapiers and related weapons have been found in Scotland. This is a very small number compared with 266 from England, and 231 from Ireland.² The explanation may be that the inhabitants of Scotland and northern England during this period were dependent on Irish traders for these weapons. The close Irish parallels for all but one of the Scottish finds make it probable that they were made in Ireland.

It is therefore useless to discuss the Scottish weapons without first describing the origins, forms, and dating of the related weapons in Ireland and England. Even before doing that, however, definitions of the words dagger, dirk and rapier must be given. The Oxford English Dictionary describes a rapier as 'Originally a long pointed two-edged sword adapted for either cutting or thrusting, but chiefly used for the latter'. This definition fits prehistoric rapiers admirably, except that it leaves room for considerable confusion between rapiers and swords. J. D. Cowen, the leading authority on British swords, eliminates this confusion by insisting that a sword must have a flange-hilt or tongue cast in one piece with the blade, and running the whole length of the hilt. Also a sword is a slashing weapon, and therefore has a broader blade, which in the case of prehistoric weapons is usually leaf-shaped. Prehistoric rapiers can thus be distinguished from swords by the fact, first, that the hilt is attached to a butt, which is usually trapeze-shaped, and does not extend the whole length of the grip, and secondly, that the blades are narrow and tapering. British Middle Bronze Age rapiers, with very few exceptions, had two rivets and can, therefore, be quite easily recognised. The difficulty is that weapons of this form come in a wide range of sizes, and so the only practicable method of classifying them is by length. The line on a graph showing the length to the nearest centimeter of one hundred intact weapons of all sizes and forms levels off appreciably at 22 cm. and again at 36 cm. It seems reasonable to include the group at 22 cm. among the dirks, and those at 36 cm. among the rapiers. Accordingly, a dagger is any weapon shorter than 21.6 cm. (8½ inches) from butt to tip, a dirk can be any length between 21.6 cm. and 35.5 cm. (14 inches), and all rapiers must be over 35.5 cm. long.

ORIGINS OF BRITISH RAPIERS

The accepted theory concerning the evolution of rapiers is that daggers were made

¹ This paper summarises the conclusions reached by the writer in a M.A. thesis on the subject. A more detailed description of the origins and development of these weapons, together with a list of all finds noted from the British Isles, will appear in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society.

² All figures indicate the number of weapons drawn and listed in a survey carried out in the major museums of the British Isles, and therefore comprise the majority, but not the total number, of known finds.

longer and longer until they could be called rapiers. This generalised explanation appears to be correct, since it conforms to the canon of technical evolution and is supported by evidence of associations. But a comparison of the daggers of the British Early Bronze Age with the dirks of the Middle Bronze Age reveals so great a difference between them, that the latter cannot be considered simply to have evolved from the former.

Margaret Smith¹ points out that there is a similar break in manufacturing tradition between flanged axes and palstaves. She argues most cogently that West European palstaves, to which all the British forms are related, originated in northern Germany during Montelius II B. This is significant, because it is Montelius II Germany which produces the best prototypes for the early British dirks. The German dirks belong to the Tumulus Bronze culture, which spread down the Rhine, and it seems to have been traders voyaging from the mouth of the Rhine to the mouth of the Thames who introduced both dirks and palstaves to England. In England metal-workers in the Fens and the Thames valley copied these foreign prototypes.

The most striking similarity between English and German dirks is provided by a couple of finds from the Thames, which have four small rivets set in trumpet-shaped butts. The use of four rivets is, however, exceptional in Britain. Tumulus Bronze smiths also produced dirks with two rivets in a trapeze-shaped butt, and it was this form which was most generally adopted in Britain.

The early dirks produced in Britain have an experimental look, and vary a good deal in appearance. Some of the forms show the influence of ogival Wessex daggers in their gracefully tapering blades. This suggests that the dirks were introduced while the Wessex culture was still in existence – i.e. before 1350 B.C. The dates given to the Tumulus Bronze Age and Montelius II make 1400 B.C. a likely time for the introduction of dirks, palstaves and probably also socketed spearheads into Britain.

Group I

From 1400 to 1200 B.C. British workers experimented with these three new bronze types. The new spears and dirks were welcomed by the fighting men of Ireland, but the makers of flanged axes refused to adopt the new type of axe, though knowledge of it must have been carried back, along with the other new ideas, by Irish traders selling axes in England. The Irish must have been making dirks almost as soon as the English, because a number of Irish dirks are decorated with engraved triangles and lines filled with cross hatchings. These patterns were most commonly used in Europe on daggers with solid metal hilts, except in Scandinavia, where they were used also to decorate axes and spear sockets. The patterns must have caught the fancy of the Irish halberd- and flat-axe-makers who settled in Scandinavia, and taught the local inhabitants the secrets of bronze-casting. The Scandinavians were, however, ungrateful, and drove the Irish out of their country

¹ *P.P.S.*, xxv (1959), 165.

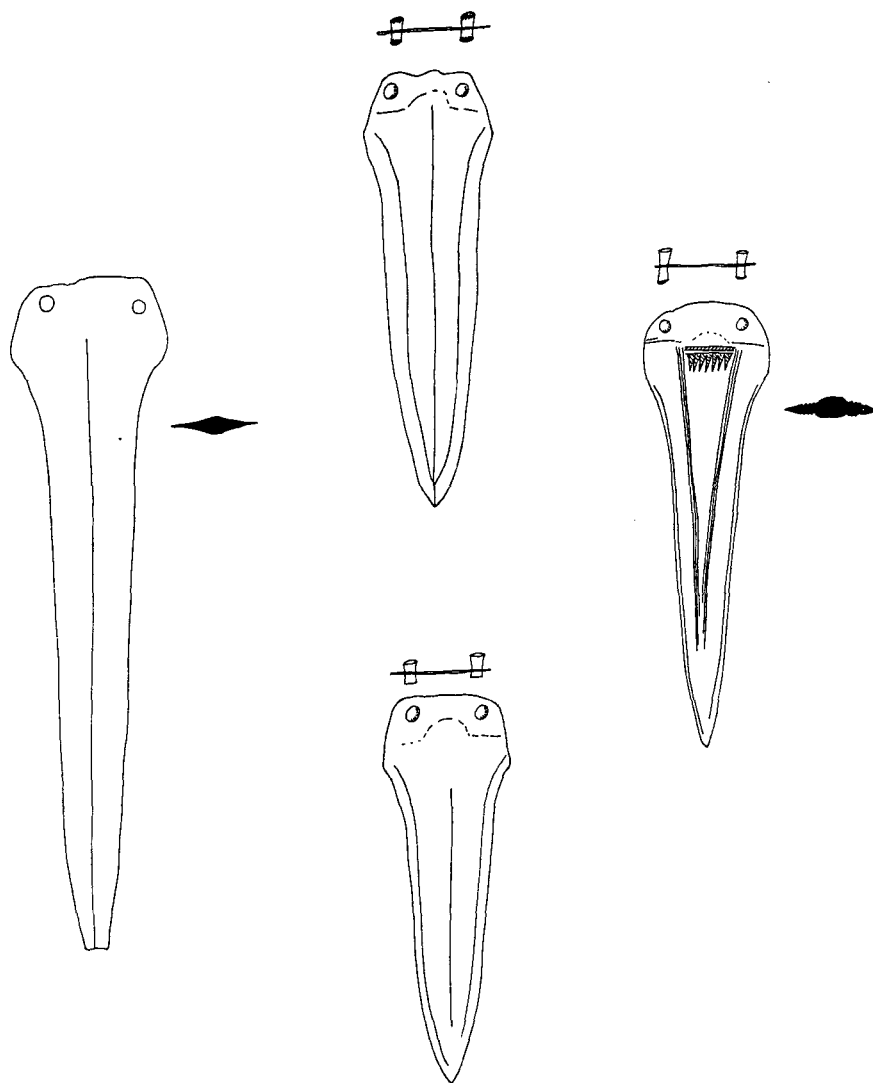


FIG. 1. 1. Fairholm; 2. Gretna (top); 3. Ireland (bottom); 4. Pitcaithly (1/3)

at a date set by de Navarro¹ at about 1400 B.C. The appearance of these patterns on Irish dirks should date from much the same time.

There is a well-preserved dagger bearing this form of decoration in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (fig. 1). It is believed to have been found at Pitcaithly in Perthshire. It bears a triple groove which defines the midrib. Between

¹ In Fox and Dickins (ed.), 'The Early Cultures of North West Europe' (H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies) (1950), 80.

lands and the Moray Firth area, and in the east rapiers are found in the same districts as overhanging-rim urns, which are of English origin.

Two of the Group I dirks from Scotland, those from Kilham, Northumberland (the territory seems to be disputed: some authorities say Roxburghshire), and Buttergask near Ardoch in Perthshire are remarkably similar in size and appearance (fig. 2). They both have the distinct midrib which occurs on numerous Irish specimens. Both were almost certainly made by the same Irish bronze smith, despite the fact that they were found such a considerable distance apart. The question arises: Did these Irish traders travel round like tinkers making weapons to order, or did they make the weapons at a permanent workshop in Ireland, and then hawk them round? The latter was more probably the case. It would be awkward to carry round the equipment needed for casting without wheeled transport. Also, while traders' hoards are known – Drumcoltran (see p. 11) is a good example – these do not contain either ingots or scrap metal. Itinerant smiths who recast scrap metal on the spot do not seem to have appeared in Britain until after the upheaval caused by the introduction of new techniques at the start of the Late Bronze Age.

To continue the list of Scottish Group I weapons, there is the neatly made, and well preserved dagger from Gretna, Dumfriesshire (fig. 1). It has an Irish midrib and a broad ogival blade, and there is a dagger of remarkably similar appearance in the National Museum of Ireland (fig. 1). Both these daggers show the line made by the base of the hilt on the patination of the butt. Surprisingly enough, this line does not come at the shoulders between the butt and the blade, which is the logical place for it, but considerably higher up the butt. This must have reduced the efficacy of the hilt, since the larger the area of butt enclosed in the hilt, the staidier the blade will be. Yet most of the weapons showing hiltmarks are like this.

The two neatly rounded rivets of the Gretna dagger are stained black at the heads. This must have taken place while the organic hilt was still protecting the stems of the rivets. Only two rapier hilts have survived in Britain, and they were both preserved in Irish peat bogs. The better known one is that from Galbally, figured by Evans in *Ancient Bronze Implements* (fig. 319), the other is from Shower, Co. Tipperary, and is in the National Museum in Dublin. Both are carved out of a single piece of horn, slit at the bottom to take the butt of the blade. This form differs from the Early Bronze Age use of two pieces of bone or wood held together by rivets, and a pommel of some material different from the rest of the hilt. On both Shower and Galbally the base of the hilt is cut in a single shallow arc, but on a good many other weapons (including that from Gretna) the line is arched in the centre, and straight, or almost straight, at the sides. The fashion for arched hilts goes back to Gerzean Egypt, and spread across Europe together with the earliest bronze daggers. The single-arc form was of more recent origin, since it first appears on some Tumulus Bronze dirks. Both forms were made in both England and Ireland, though the single arc seems to have been more popular in Ireland than England, and became more popular in both countries with Group III.

Of the remaining Group I finds from Scotland, three, Fairholm, near Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire (fig. 1), Turnercleugh Law, Yarrow, Selkirkshire, and Morlich

Towie, Aberdeenshire, are of simple form and rough workmanship. There is no trace of moulding on the blades, only a central arris. The word arris is used to designate the sharp edge formed by the angular contact of two plane or curved surfaces, and thus conveniently describes the central ridge apparent on many weapons of this type. Many similarly crude weapons are found in Ireland. They were probably cast in stone moulds, while finer weapons were cast in clay moulds.

The last Group I find to be described is a large broken blade, the finding-place of which is unknown. It is decorated with coarse reeding. Two similarly massive reeded blades have been found in the north of England. Both of these have (or had) three large rivets, arranged with the central one higher than the other two. This arrangement is an Irish device, used originally on halberds. Therefore these three weapons were almost certainly made in Ireland.

Group II

After the phase of development and experiment which produced the Group I weapons, there came the period which saw the zenith of achievement in the manufacture of rapiers in Britain. This period occupied the twelfth century. In both England and Ireland weapons of remarkable quality and elegance were produced. Warriors living in Germany, the Low Countries and France were eager to acquire these arms. It was the bronze smiths of the Thames valley who excelled all others in the quality of their products. Many rapiers have been dredged up from the Thames, so it is possible to recognise a distinct regional style, which is called the Wandsworth class. About a dozen of these have been found on the Continent, but surprisingly few from Britain outside the London area. There are two from the Fens, one from Newcastle, and also one from Midlothian (fig. 3). This elegant, serviceable and well-preserved weapon is the only English rapier found in Scotland, yet it is so closely comparable to certain finds from London (fig. 3), that it can be confidently asserted that it was made there, and found its way up the east coast by way of trade or as a gift.

Weapons similar and only very slightly inferior to Wandsworth ones were made in the Fens and in Ireland. These have been grouped under the heading of the Chatteris class. There are only seventeen Chatteris class finds from Ireland, and no two of them are particularly alike, so it is impossible to distinguish an Irish style, only certain Irish features. One of these is great length; Lissane, the longest of all British rapiers is 79.7 cm. The Dalbeattie rapier (in the British Museum) can, therefore, be assumed on grounds of its length (68.9 cm.) and its general similarity to a group of finds from Ulster to be of Irish manufacture.

The only other Chatteris class find from Scotland is the remarkable rapier in the Glentrool hoard. Though very badly corroded it can be seen that it has a double moulding and an arris — i.e. there are five ridges on the blade. It is 38.5 cm. long, and both mouldings run almost to the tip. The only comparable weapon is one shown by Coffey¹. This is 55.2 cm. long, and the inner moulding converges some distance from the tip. Even so, the similarities are so strong as to make it almost

¹ Coffey, G., *The Bronze Age in Ireland*, 1913, fig. 60, No. 1.

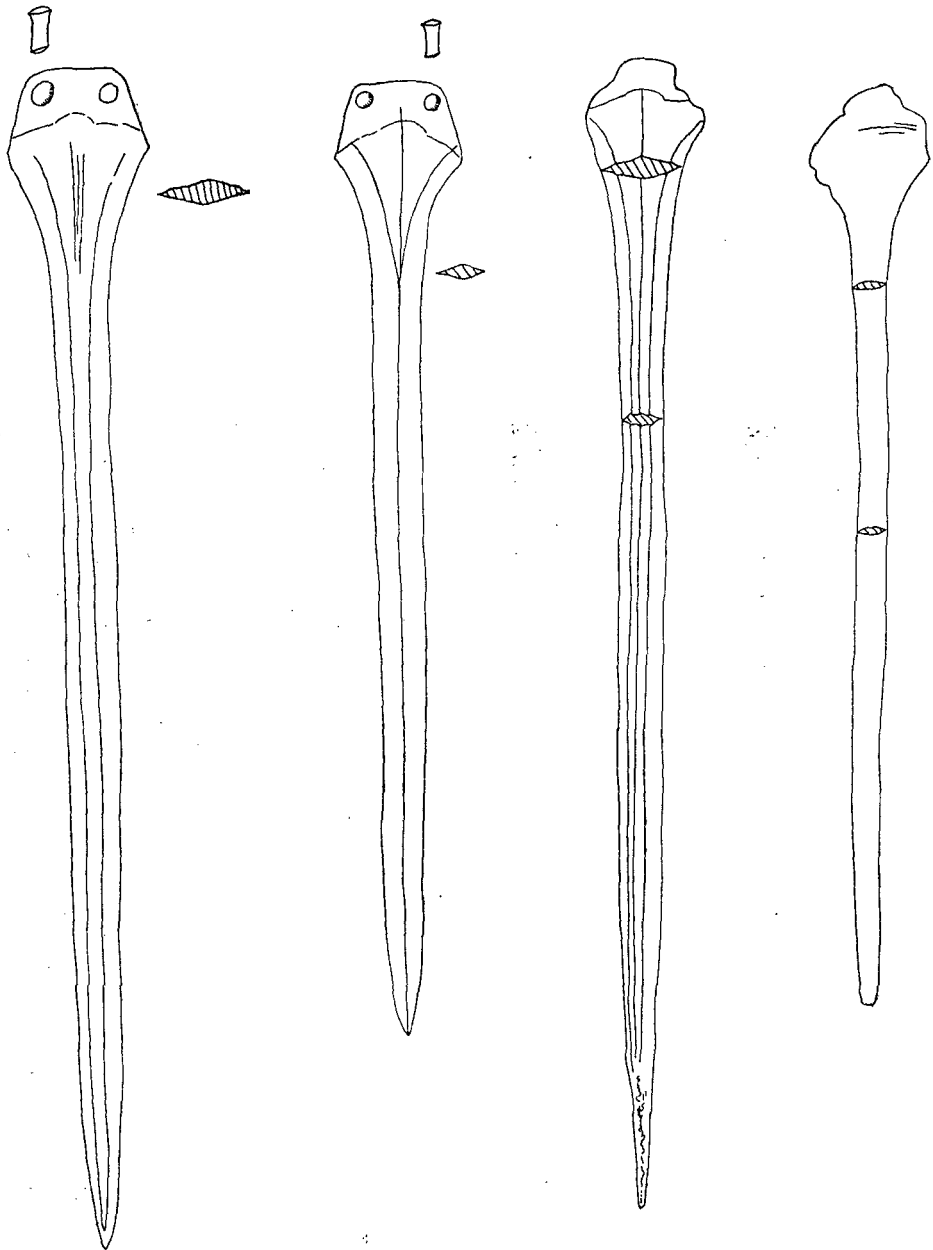


FIG. 3. 1. Midlothian; 2. Wandsworth; 3. Drumcoltran; 4. Drumcoltran (1/3)

certain that the Glentrool rapier came from the same workshop in Ireland, where other items of the hoard were also made.

The Glentrool hoard¹ was found under an overhanging rock on Eschonchan Fell, near Minigaff, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Attention was drawn to the spot by the fact that the spearhead was sticking up out of the ground. The objects were found within an area three feet by two feet, embedded up to 15 inches deep in the stony, peaty soil. The glass bead and one of the amber beads were found by a different man in the neighbourhood of the main find, and can be accepted as belonging to it.

The hoard contains a very fine basal-looped spearhead, which would originally have been 25 cm. long. Its blade is a slender leaf shape, and bears a moulding which runs into the flanges protecting the rough slots at the base of the blade. The flanges are hammered out into a lozenge. There is a cast rib running down the socket from the tip to the base of the blade. Four grooves encircle the mouth of the socket. Rising above these can, in some places, be discerned a hatched chevron pattern, which has mostly disappeared, due to corrosion and cleaning. Callander did not notice this engraved decoration. There is a similar decorated spearhead in the British Museum, which is supposed to have been found in Ireland,² and Coffey shows another one which was definitely found there,³ and which, though it is more oval in outline, has identical form and decoration to Glentrool. These Irish weapons are both single finds, and so do not help with dating, but they do establish that the Glentrool spearhead was made in Ireland.

A hint as to date is provided by the fact that a very fine, large Irish 'rapier' spearhead has the same decoration round the socket.⁴ Estyn Evans⁵ says there are six spearheads of this type from Ireland, and two or three from England. Parker Brewis⁶ discusses the form, and shows how it soon degenerated into the normal looped form. He illustrates seven examples from Ireland; basically they consist of a rapier blade set on a socket. One (in the British Museum) even has skeuomorphic rivets in the shoulders of the blade. One can assume that these few and striking weapons were made contemporaneously with Irish Chatteris class rapiers, i.e. during the twelfth century B.C.

Good parallels to the Glentrool spearhead come from the Stibbard hoard, the only difference is that they lack decoration and are slightly smaller.⁷ Seventy low-flanged palstaves, many of them from the same mould, were also found in this hoard, which dates from late in the Middle Bronze Age.

The Glentrool hoard also includes a large and solid celt of 'eared' type,⁸ such as were made in Ireland throughout the Middle Bronze Age, while England was producing true palstaves.

There is a tanged knife in the Glentrool hoard, with a straight, flat, blade and rounded point. It has Irish parallels which do not help towards dating, but suggest that the Glentrool knife was made in Ireland. More significant for dating is the

¹ Callander, J. G., *P.S.A.S.*, LV (1920-1), 29. See also p. 18 below and Plate 1.

² Kemble, *Horae Ferales* (1863), Pl. VI, 20. ³ Coffey, *op. cit.*, fig. 31.

⁴ Coffey, *op. cit.*, fig. 27. ⁵ *Archaeologia*, LXXXVII (1937), 193.

⁶ *Archaeologia*, LXI (1909), 455.

⁷ Evans, J., *Ancient Bronze Implements* (1881), fig. 407 and p. 328. ⁸ *P.P.S.*, XXV (1959), 172-3.

fact that there is a flat tanged knife in the Monkswood hoard, which is one of the Somerset hoards containing bronze torcs dating from the eleventh century.¹ The four small plain chisels in the Glentool hoard also have parallels at Monkswood.

There is an interesting bronze pin with a disc head and a loop some way down the stem. A very similar pin was found in Ireland, and is now with the Evans collection in the Ashmolean²; its dimensions are so nearly identical that it may have come from the same mould as the Glentool pin. There is another from Ireland, which is in the British Museum, so these three pins were probably all made in Ireland. The form, however, is not Irish, but occurs in the Tumulus Bronze culture of Germany. Janssen³ shows a pin from Marzahne, Kreis West Havelland, which he ascribes to the period Montelius II. In Abb. 7 he shows a grave group from Arneburg, Kreis Stendal, which includes a pin similar, but with a bent stem, a crude urn, two leaf-shaped spearheads, a single-edged knife, and a Type 2 twisted neck ring (very like the one at Glentool). This group Janssen assigns to Montelius III. Looped pins are not common in the Tumulus Bronze Age, but mark a survival of an Aunjetitz form, which was used on disc-headed pins in Hungary and east Germany, and only spread north sporadically. There are practically no other pins in the British Middle Bronze Age – indeed, the absence of pins is one of the main differences between British and Continental prehistory in the Bronze age – so this Glentool pin is of the greatest interest.

Callander compares the bronze torc in the Glentool hoard to those in the Somerset hoards, but these differ from Glentool in being cast, not formed by twisting a square-sectioned rod. Kersten's Type 2 torc⁴ would also appear to be cast, and in fact twisted torcs are rare on the Continent, though there is one in the Villers-sur-Authie hoard.⁵ This has plain hook terminals, and Glentool probably had the same, though these are now missing. M. Smith has shown⁶ that the Villers-sur-Authie hoard belongs to the eleventh century B.C.

There are two razors in the Glentool hoard which are of a hybrid form between Class I and Class II⁷. One has faint lines forming an oval on the face of the blade, which is reminiscent of the oval decorated area on Class I razors, but the blade is much wider and has more of the water-lily leaf shape of Class II, though spreading straight out from the top of the tang, and not turning down. There is a similar hybrid in the Taunton Workhouse hoard, but it is narrower, and more like Class I. Since Class I belongs to the Middle Bronze Age, and Class II to the Late, a date round about 1000 B.C. is likely for a hybrid.

There remains to mention the beads. The bronze plate 2.3 cm. long, with two holes, seems to be without parallel. Amber occurs in Middle Bronze Age contexts at Winterslow bell barrow, where a secondary burial was found in an inverted urn very like a Cornish Ribbon-handled urn, along with a Class I razor, an awl, amber beads, V-bored buttons, and the shaved-off eyebrows of more than one person.⁸

¹ *Inventaria Archaeologica*, GB 42:2.

² *Prähistorischer Zeitschrift* xxvi (1935), 212 Abb. 5.

³ *P.P.S.*, vii (1942), 33.

⁴ Kersten, *Zür Älteren Nordischen Bronzezeit*, 36.

⁵ *P.P.S.*, xxv (1959), 161-2.

⁶ Butler, J. J. and Smith, I. F., *12th Annual Report of the Institute of Archaeology*, London (1954-5), 47-48.

⁷ Stone, J. F., *Wessex before the Celts* (1958), 126.

⁸ Evans, *op. cit.*, fig. 457.

The glass bead in the Glentrool hoard is bluish, not white like the Gilchorn bead. The only other blue glass bead from Scotland is in the Adabrock hoard, which contains part of a Hallstatt bronze bowl.

In conclusion, it seems from analogies with the Somerset hoards and Montelius III that the Glentrool hoard dates from the eleventh century B.C. This is rather late for a Chatteris class rapier, but in an area such as south western Scotland, where men did not make their own weapons but were dependent on Irish traders for them, they might well have gone on using earlier forms after 1100 B.C. Only three weapons of the form proper to the eleventh century have been found in the whole of Scotland. The bark-like corrosion on the Glentrool rapier is absent from all the other objects in the hoard, which are in a good state of preservation. This suggests that the rapier was older than the other goods.

This is a personal hoard, and is interesting as showing the possessions of a well-to-do man in south-west Scotland at this time, with his weapons, his tools and his ornaments. One imagines that they were hidden in time of trouble on this lonely hillside by someone living on lower ground, who did not survive to recover them.

Group II, Thetford Class

A variant of the trapeze-butt rapier was developed in England, and became sufficiently stereotyped to be considered a separate class, the distinguishing features of which are penannular notches, instead of closed rivet holes, and a strongly ridged blade. It is called the Thetford class after the weapon from there, which is illustrated by Evans.¹ The class was manufactured in Ireland, as well as England, and several examples were exported to Scotland. A broken weapon from near Callander shows the excellent standard of finish given to many Period II weapons (fig. 2).

The seven rapiers which can now be traced out of the twelve or thirteen found at Drumcoltran in 1837 all seem to belong to the Thetford class, though they are all, unfortunately, so badly corroded at the butt as to make their original form a matter of conjecture. Four out of the seven have the strongly ridged blade which is a feature of the class. On two of them (fig. 3, third from left) the butt is well enough preserved for it to be seen to have a rounded outline, similar to several Irish Thetford weapons. The three with smooth blades are extremely badly corroded, and very long and skinny (fig. 3, right). One reaches the unusual length of 63.3 cm. despite a missing tip; 45 cm. is a good average length, and longer weapons must have been rather unwieldy.

There is a remarkably similar hoard containing six rapiers from Talaton, Devon.² The four better preserved weapons from it can most easily be restored to the Thetford form, while the other two are as skinny and shapeless as the poorer specimens in the Drumcoltran hoard. There are similarly degenerate blades found in Ireland, which have butts of what is unquestionably the Thetford form, so these poor-looking weapons in both hoards can be accepted as belonging to the same class as the finer weapons found with them. Drumcoltran and Talaton are the only hoards containing more than three rapiers, and it is interesting that they are all of

¹ Evans, *op. cit.*, fig. 316.

² *Arch. J.*, xxiv (1867), 110.

the same type, which means there were Irish traders selling this one type of rapier who travelled round both England and Scotland. The other interesting point is that both hoards contained rapiers only. It is probable that in Ireland (though not in England) rapiers and knives were made by one group of men, while another group was devoted to making axe heads. The axe-makers rejected the palstave when the dagger-makers accepted the dirk and the socketed spearhead at the start of the Middle Bronze Age. There are no axe moulds in the Killymeddy hoard¹ which consists of stone moulds for a dirk, spearheads, knives, and a sickle. Finally, there is the evidence of Drumcoltran and Talaton. It all suggests that there was a division between axe-makers and armourers in Ireland.

The nature of the Drumcoltran hoard would be clarified if we knew the function of the earthwork in which it was found. The fort or motte of Drumcoltran is described in *P.S.A.S.*, xxvii (1892-3), 105 where plan and section are given, and also in the Royal Commission's Report on the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, p. 150, where it says: 'This fine circular fort is situated on the NW. slope of Drumcoltran Hill, sheltered and overlooked by higher ground towards the east, but commanding a fine prospect round from north-west to south. It has been formed by the excavation of a deep trench, now quite obliterated on the lower slope to the west, but well preserved on the upper side, where it measures thirty feet across the top and nine inches in depth. It is recorded that in the trench "where deepest" there was found in 1837 a hoard of bronze weapons, and in the same trench in 1867 an eighteen inch blade.' The diameter of the structure is 225 feet north to south, and there is a slight counter-scarp on the outer side of the ditch. The bank seems to be made entirely of earth. An entrance to the NNE. crosses both the ditch and the inner and outer banks, while another entrance to the SSE. is blocked by the small outer bank.

There is a similar structure called Macnaughton Fort, which is also in Kirkcudbright.² 'Though small, its enceinte has been strongly ramparted, the depth of its fosse being even now fully six feet. Flint arrowheads, and spearheads ornamented on the sockets with gold, are said to have been found here.' The rampart is built of water-worn stones and has a ditch on the outside. There is one entrance to the east.

Macnaughton is like an Irish Ring Fort, or more specifically, a cashel of simple type, since it is built of stones; Drumcoltran is like an earthen Rath. Since O'Riordáin has shown³ that such structures were first built in the Early Bronze Age and continued in use into Early Christian times, it follows that they were being built in the Middle Bronze Age. It is tentatively suggested here that the Irish set up trading posts in the form of Rathes in south-west Scotland during the twelfth century B.C. in the same way as the English set up trading posts in India during the seventeenth century A.D. This is not to suggest that all circular fortifications of Irish type in Scotland date from the Middle Bronze Age; the Ring Forts of Angus - Turin Hill, for example - are Late Iron Age in date.⁴

¹ Coffey, *op. cit.*, figs. 39, 43.

² *P.S.A.S.*, xxvii (1892-3), 112.

³ O'Riordáin, S. P., *Antiquities of the Irish Countryside*, 2nd edn. (1943).

⁴ R. W. Feachem in Wainwright (ed.), *The Problem of the Picts* (1955), 74.

Group II, Keelogue Class

There is only one type of rapier which was manufactured exclusively in Ireland, and this has been called the Keelogue class. It is distinguished by a broad, heavy blade, and long, fairly slim rivets. The shoulder marking the transition from butt to blade is very slight. There is always an arris down the centre of the blade, but the moulding, if visible at all, is close to the edge of the blade, and indistinct, being

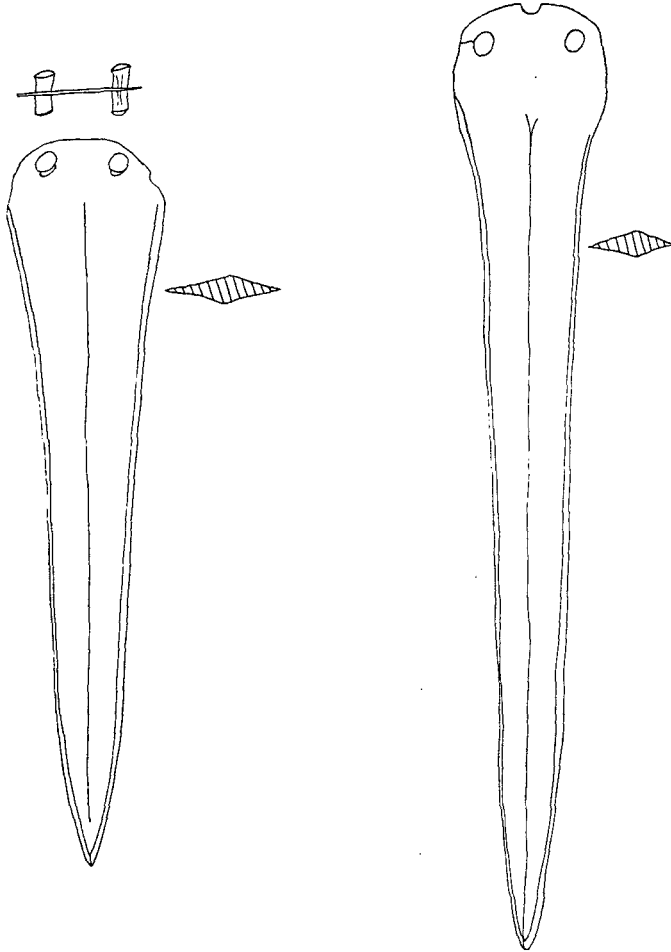


FIG. 4. 1. Newton Don; 2. Ireland (1/3)

formed by the processes of sharpening, and not formed in casting, as it was on more strongly ridged blades. The Keelogue class was almost certainly cast in stone moulds, while most other rapiers were made in clay moulds. There are twenty known specimens from Ireland, and a dozen exports have been found in Britain, including one from Scotland. This is from Newton Don, Nenthorn, Berwickshire (fig. 4). It is very like some of the Irish specimens (fig. 4).

Group III

The evidence of the few associated finds suggests that Group II dates from 1200 to 1100 B.C. Between 1100 and the introduction of new weapons and techniques at the start of the Late Bronze Age there was a decline in the quality, though not the quantity, of weapons produced by British bronze smiths. The weapons are smaller, less efficiently hilted, and carelessly finished. In the London area a

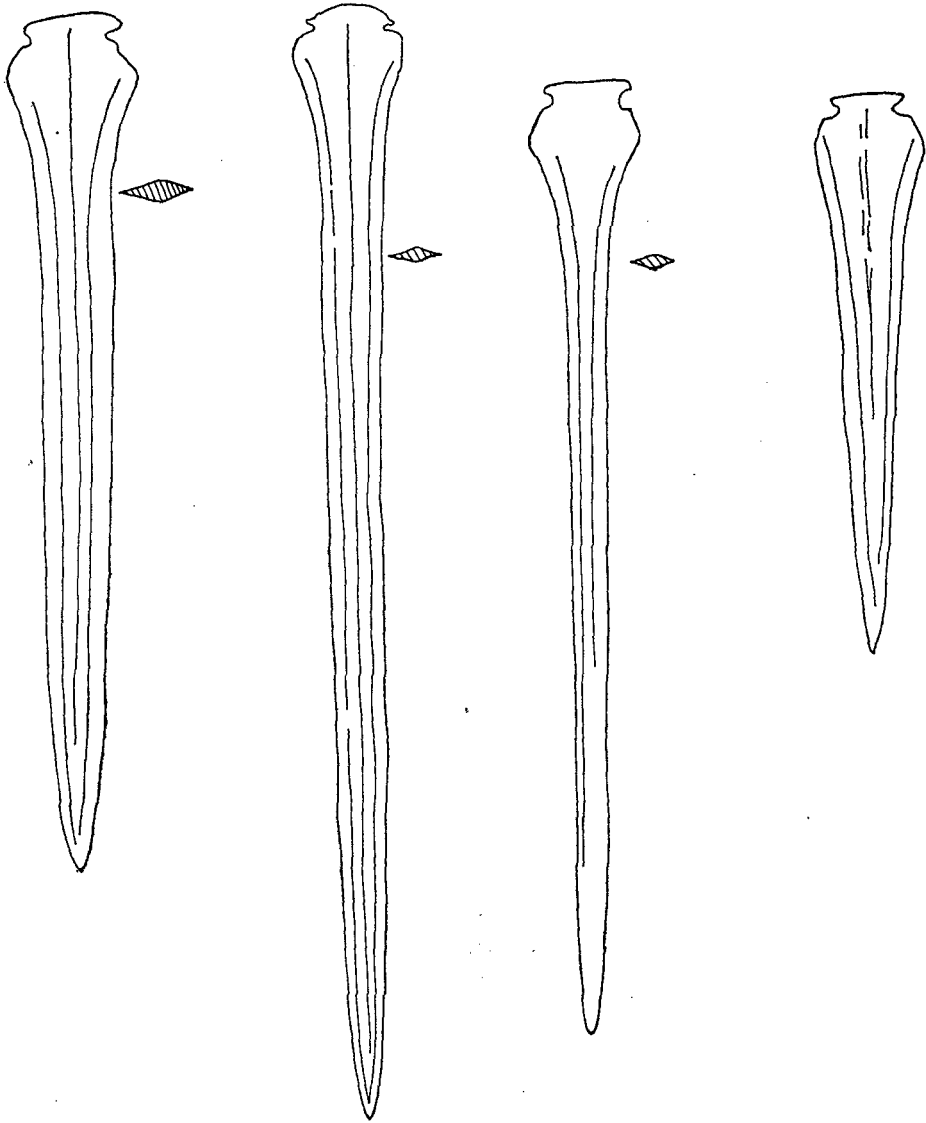


FIG. 5. 1. River Cree; 2. River Shannon at Cornacarrow; 3. Midlothian; 4. Rath Keeland, Tipperary (1/3)

form called the Barnes class devolved from the magnificent Wandsworth class, and related weapons made elsewhere are grouped into the Corrib class. But the only Group III weapons found in Scotland belong to the Lisburn class, which is distinguished by having a butt with roughly cast notches in the sides, instead of true rivet holes. Its blade is broad in proportion to its length, and flat in cross-section. The form was probably developed in the Thames valley, but it was so popular in Ireland as to justify our calling it after an Irish find.

Of the four Lisburn weapons from Scotland, that from the River Cree (fig. 5) has a flat top to its butt, and a slight arris down the blade (a feature usually absent from Group III weapons). It bears considerable resemblance to a rapier from the Shannon at Cornacarrow (fig. 5), and also to a fine large weapon from Newcastle. Two other Scottish finds are a fragment from Callander, and a dirk from Milne Graden, Berwickshire. Both these are poorly made and have only very shallow notches. They can never have been dangerous weapons of war, though the rapier from Midlothian (fig. 3.1) was.

This raises the question: What were these weapons used for? The answer is: For killing a man's enemies and his prey. Since the people of Middle Bronze Age Britain lived almost exclusively by cattle raising, we can be sure they went in for cattle raiding, because the two inevitably go together in primitive communities. Rapiers must, therefore, have been used in the hand-to-hand struggles over cattle. They were probably used also for dispatching quarry when hunting, and smaller weapons would come in handy at meal times for cutting up meat. All the weapons, from daggers to the longest rapiers, have sharp edges all the way up to the hilt, which suggests that they were used for a certain amount of cutting, though a thrust was the only way of inflicting a death blow.