

## New finds of late bronze-age spearheads from Scotland

by Joanna Close-Brooks

### I *A hoard from Carinish, North Uist, Western Isles*

In early May 1975 two boys, Iain Morrison, aged eleven, and Ewen Nicholson, thirteen, discovered four bronze spearheads while gathering the family cattle. The findspot was in a low-lying peat moss close to the sea in an area of creeks and islets at Clett-feora, Carinish, North Uist (NGR NF 833957). The find was subsequently reported by Mrs Isa McKillop of Carinish School to Mr Iain Crawford, then excavating in North Uist, who visited the site on 14 and 16 June. The substance of his report, for which I am indebted, is incorporated in this note. The present writer visited the site with the guidance of the finders on 4 July 1976, and by sifting through the spoil left by earlier diggers recovered the missing tip of spearhead no. 2. The hoard has been claimed by the Crown as Treasure Trove, the two boys rewarded, and the spearheads placed in the National Museum (see p 334, Donations no. 19).

When the boys found the spearheads, the sockets protruded from the vertical face of an old peat cutting. The spearheads lay at a slight angle to the horizontal, arranged two above two, but no signs of any container were noticed. No traces of wood remain in the sockets so they were clearly buried without hafts. Mr Crawford reports that at the time of his visit the section, which had only partly been damaged by digging for further material, showed no indication of insertion from above. The hoard lay some 0.7 m below the present surface, but as one or more spits had been removed from this area in the past, it must have been under some 1.2–1.5 m of peat in recent times. Some 1.2 m of peat underlay the hoard above bedrock.

Three of the spearheads are leaf-shaped and riveted, one basal-looped and riveted. All are considerably corroded.

- 1 Basal-looped, riveted spearhead, 40.8 cm long, 6.1 cm wide (fig 1, 1). The blade has channels beside the midrib and bevelled edges. Casting flashes remain on either side of the socket and within the loops. The tip of the blade is damaged. It is not clear if the irregular holes now present in the wings and socket are casting flaws enlarged by corrosion, or due to corrosion only. (NMA cat. no. DQ 388)
- 2 Leaf-shaped, riveted spearhead, 36.2 cm long, 5.8 cm wide, now in three pieces (fig 1, 2). The blade has bevelled edges. (DQ 389)
- 3 Leaf-shaped, riveted spearhead, 32.2 cm long, 5.8 cm wide, the tip damaged. (fig 1, 3). The blade has bevelled edges. (DQ 391)
- 4 Leaf-shaped, riveted spearhead, 30.8 cm long, 5.2 cm wide, the tip damaged. (fig 1, 4). The blade has bevelled edges. (DQ 390)

This is only the third association for a basal-looped spearhead in Scotland, though others are known in England. The previous instances were in the Glentrool hoard of the middle bronze age, and the Pyotdykes hoard of the late bronze age (Coles 1964, 121, 153; Coles *et al* 1964); thus

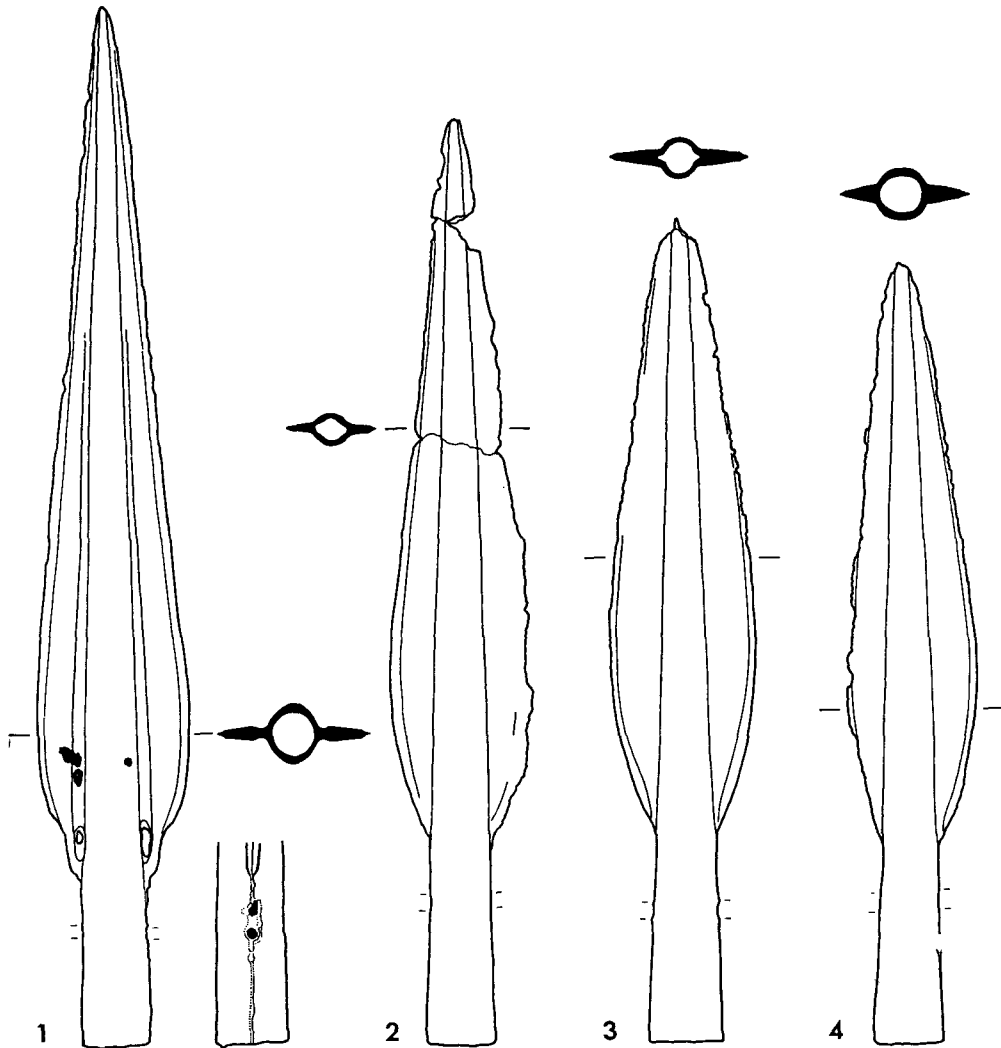


FIG 1 Four spearheads from Carinish, North Uist (scale 1 : 3)

Carinish adds a second late bronze-age association for Scotland. Burgess (1968, 19–22) and Coles (1964, 106–111; Coles *et al* 1964, 189) have shown that basal-looped spearheads are a middle bronze-age form which continues into the late bronze age, but that those examples which appear in later contexts tend to be distinguished by considerable length, triangular blades, and rivet holes in the socket. The Carinish spearhead fulfils the first and last criteria.

## II *A spearhead from Struan, Bracadale, Skye*

In 1976 the Museum purchased from Mr Archie MacDonald of Struan a bronze spearhead he had found some four years previously on the E side of Cnoc an Fheorlain, just N of the cemetery at Struan, Bracadale, Skye (c NGR NG 347386) (see p 336). He reports that he found it lying flat, sticking out of a peat bank about two feet down in the peat. Mr MacDonald only realised the significance of his find, and wrote to the Museum about it, after reading newspaper reports of the discovery of the Carinish spearheads.

The spearhead (fig 2, 1) has a leaf-shaped blade; the socket is missing below the base of the blade but was presumably riveted. The bevelled edges of the blade are badly chipped. The surviving length is 31.5 cm, the maximum width 6.2 cm. (DG 114)

### III *A spearhead from the Island of Raasay, Skye*

The Museum purchased this spearhead in 1975 from Mr John Macleod of Raasay who had inherited it from his father (see p 336). Information from Mr Macleod and from the Ordnance

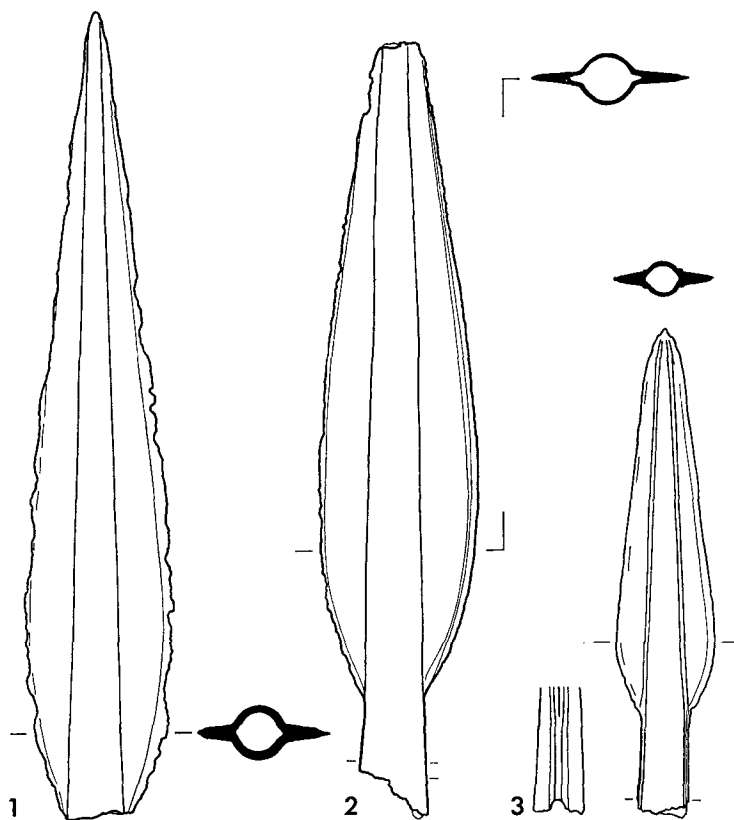


FIG 2 Spearheads from 1, Struan, Bracadale, Skye; 2, Raasay; 3, Meikleour, Perthshire (scale 1 : 3)

Survey record cards shows that the spearhead was found about 1916 by a crofter who gave it to Mr Macleod's father in 1922. No one realised its age, and the tip was broken off by children playing with it. The findspot was among rocks at Eyre point, Raasay (NGR NG 5834); according to information given to the Ordnance Survey in 1961 the spearhead was found 'in a natural rock shelter beneath the cliffs'.

The spearhead (fig 2, 2) has a fine dark green patina. The leaf-shaped blade has bevelled edges, the tip is missing, and the socket is broken across one rivet-hole. Surviving length 31 cm, maximum width 6.5 cm. (DG 113)

The distribution maps in Coles (1960) show that Skye is rich in late bronze-age metalwork, especially socketed axes, while Coles' group of Minch swords centres on the island. The new finds from Struan and Raasay help to fill out the thinner distribution of spearheads and also suggest a source for the new hoard from North Uist.

#### IV *A spearhead from near Meikleour, Blairgowrie, Tayside Region*

In 1975 Mr Eric Cooper found a bronze spearhead in disturbed ground where a new gas pipeline had crossed a field west of Meikleour, Blairgowrie (c NGR NO 150399). He has placed it on loan in the National Museum (L.1975.6).

The spearhead (fig 2, 3) is leaf-shaped and riveted, and has a fine patina only broken in a few places. It is bent into a slight curve and cracked on one side, damage probably caused during the pipe-line construction. On the blade there are slight ridges either side of the midrib that continue down the sides of the socket to the rivet holes, at which point the spearhead is broken. The edges of the blade are almost imperceptibly bevelled.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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