

CLANRANALD WEAPON DISPLAY NOTES

Longbow

The ancient Greeks were among the first to make use of portable one-man crossbows. This early weapon was called a gastraphetes or "belly weapon" because the user braced the curved centre-piece of the butt end against his chest or belly.

Crossbows are depicted on several Pictish stones, 'The Drosten Stone', which probably belongs to the 9th century, shows a hunter crouched and firing his bow at an approaching boar.

The use of crossbows in European warfare dates back to Roman times and is again evident from the Battle of Hastings until about 1500 AD. The crossbow range was 350 – 400 yards but could only be shot at a rate of 2 bolts per minute.



- A crossbow had a wooden stock generally made from yew ash, hazel or elm and coated with glue or varnish
- The 'bow' was made of wood, iron or steel with a span of 2 to 3 feet
- The crossbow string was made from hemp as it was the strongest and least elastic fibre available. The string was then soaked in glue as some protection against moisture
- The string could be pulled back by using the hand, a lever, hook or by winding a crank on a ratchet - a windlass crossbow
- By this mechanical method of 'drawing' the string far more tension could be gained than by muscle power alone. The crossbow was therefore an ideal weapon for an untrained soldier
- The Crossbow could be carried ready loaded with a bolt (unlike a Short or Longbow)
- A crossbowman could penetrate plate armour
- Crossbows were easier to aim than short bows or longbows
- The main disadvantages of the crossbow were the expense and time to manufacture and the slow firing rate.
- From the crossbowman's point of view its main disadvantage was his vulnerability whilst reloading the crossbow. He needed protection and a tall shield called a Pavise was developed for this purpose.

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Warhammer

War hammers, especially when mounted on a pole, could damage without penetrating the armour. In particular, they transmitted the impact through even the thickest helmet and caused concussions. A blade or spike tended to be used against other parts of the body where the armour was thinner, and penetration was easier, than through the helmet. The spike end could be used for grappling the target's armour, reins or shield.

Mace

Either round or star-shaped ball of iron on a wooden handle designed to crack your opponent's skull open. While maces have been in use since prehistoric times, at around the time of the norman conquest, the mace was principally a symbol of rank with minimal offensive capability - William and Bishop Odo carry them on the Bayeux Tapestry. The mace as an offensive weapon appears to develop following the early crusades, 12th century examples having a relatively small cast bronze head on a wooden haft. This then develops in the later 12th and 13th centuries into an iron flanged design.

Flail

Throughout the Middle-Ages, agricultural flails were sometimes employed as an improvised weapon by peasant armies conscripted into military service or engaged in popular uprisings.

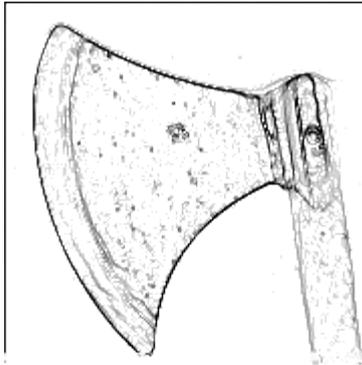
There is evidence for the long-handled flail as a weapon of war from Germany and Central Europe in the later Middle Ages. In a poem published in 1486, there is an anonymous woodcut depicting a knight carrying a rather simple morning star with spikes mounted in an asymmetrical pattern, as well as a flail equipped with a single spiked ball, known in German as a "Kettenmorgenstern" (literally *chain-morningstar*) which is technically a military flail. A picture published during the Jacobite rebellion proposed raising a regiment of females armed with the 'French flail' to defend Edinburgh as they would do a better job than the government soldiers posted there.



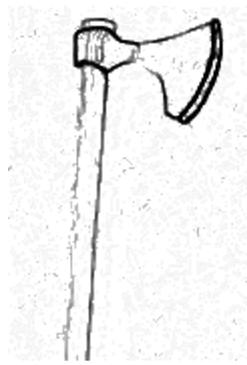
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Axes

A basic weapon that was relatively cheap to produce, either a hand axe (in various forms) or a larger two-handed (Dane) axe. The Medieval bearded axe, a design influenced by the Vikings & so called because of their beard-like appearance, were used by Scots at the Battle of Falkirk, and Bruce used an axe at Bannockburn.



(Left) Broadaxe or Dane axe. A large head, normally on a 5 to 6 foot haft, with a very thin section blade. Normally used two handed.



(Right) Bearded axe, originally of Norse origin. Elongated lower edge improves stiffness and cutting ability.

The “Sparth Axe”

Sparth is an Anglo Saxon name for an Axe. The Galloglaich ("Galloglas") were Scottish mercenaries in Ireland, forming the backbone of the Irish armies from the late 1200s through the early 1600s. They were drawn from the best fighters in the Hebrides. The word galloglaich means "foreign young warrior", and refers not only to the fact that they were from outside Ireland, but that they were of mixed Scottish-Viking stock, the result of many centuries of



Viking raids on the Western Isles and Scotland's western coast.

Their favored weapon was a large axe, about six feet long, variously described by foreign observers as a halberd or bardiche, but generally what we now call a sparth axe; it had a long, narrow, curved blade about 18" long, attached by its center and bottom to the pole.

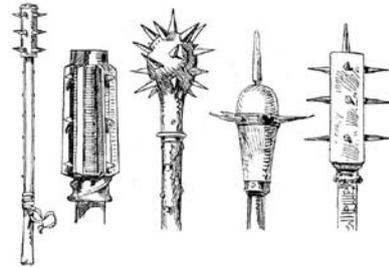
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Scottish polearms

Many of the polearms used in Scotland started as the weapon of the common agricultural labourer who could not afford to buy specialised weapons. By attaching an agricultural implement, such as a bill or sickle, to a pole he now had a serviceable and efficient weapon.

Brogit staff

The name means literally "spiked staff". This polearm is recorded in a Scottish law listing types of weapon in 1430 and is mentioned on other occasions in the 15th. and early 16th. century. Though clearly a pole weapon, it's exact form is obscure. It's been suggested it may have been similar to a 'Holy Water Sprinkler'



Jeddart Staff

The Jeddart (or Jedburgh) staff is a polearm of the



16th & 17th centuries with a glaive-like blade which is fixed to its haft by two sockets, in the manner of a bardiche

Lochaber Axe

A simple axe with a broad curved blade usually attached to its long haft at two points. In addition to its cutting blade, the Lochaber axe had a hook which could be used to pull horsemen from the saddle. The shaft of the axe was up to eight feet long. This type of axe is first recorded in 1501 and was used until the 18th. century.



Scottish Halberd

The Scottish halberd is thought to have derived from the continental halberd probably in the late 16th century though it shares features with the poleaxe of the century before. They continued to be used into the 18th. century. It has a spear-shaped point, small axe-blade and a back-spike, often curved. They were often carried by town officials and town guards. Possibly the word halberd comes from the German words Halm (staff), and Barte (axe).



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Scottish Swords

The sword on the left is a Scottish two-handed sword or 'Claidheamh da laimh' (often referred to as 'Claymore'). The imported blade is stamped upon the forte with an escutcheon bearing a foreign, probably German, blade-maker's mark. The hilt, having the long grip and guard with sloping arms ending in quaterfoils, is typical of Highland 'great' swords of this period, and was made in Scotland, c1550-1600.

The second sword is a very rare survival, a longsword or 'halflang' sword of circa 1400. It is thought to have been found in Ireland. Despite this, it is of a form characteristic of Scottish medieval swords, having a drooping guard, the arms of which carry spatulate terminals. Medieval swords of this type were probably the stylistic ancestors of the later two-handed Highland swords.

The third weapon is another sixteenth-century two-handed Scottish sword, but of Lowland rather than Highland design. The blade, probably German (as were most blades used by Scottish sword-makers) carries the mark of the running wolf, as well as a maker's mark of a small punched shield.



Irish Swords

Irish swords (Circa Mid to Late 16th Century) display distinctive features found only on Irish swords such as hollow ring pommels through which the sword tang can clearly be seen and the cruciform shaped guards are often decorated with a cut out "E" shape or some other similar feature.

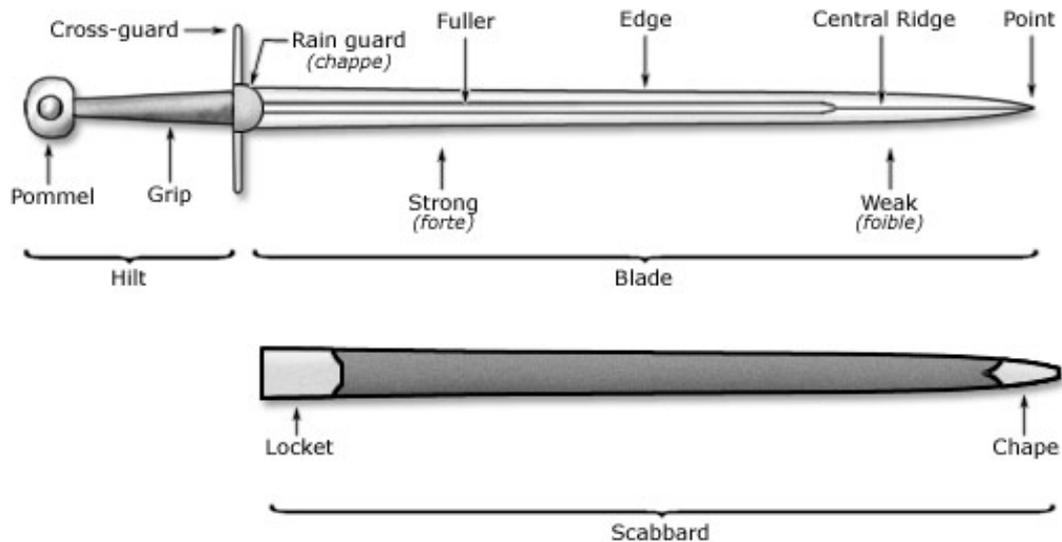


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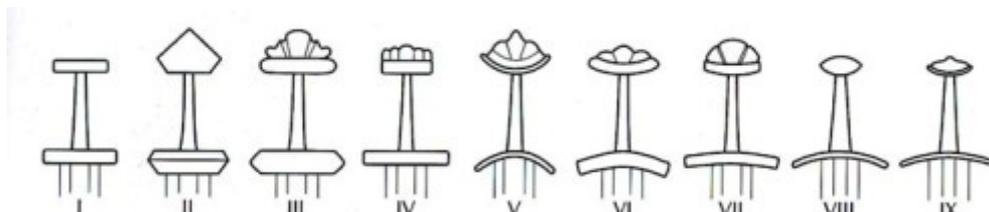
Scottish Swordsmith

Despite a long tradition in iron making in Scotland, it has been assumed that already from the 1400's most sword blades have been produced in Europe and imported *en mass* into Scotland, only their hilts being made locally. This long standing assumption has been put to the test when permission was granted to sample and examine chemically and metallographically 15th and 16th century swords and daggers from the collection of the Glasgow and Ayr Museums. The project examined the possibility that the blades themselves could have in fact been "made in Scotland". A combination of art historical criteria, chemical and mineralogical analyses of bloomery mounds/furnaces in Scotland as well as chemical and metallographic investigation of the blades themselves suggest– but not necessarily conclude– a likely local production at least for some of them. This suggestion is corroborated by the well established Highland tradition of clan smiths, hereditary smiths to other clans.

Many Scottish basket-hilted swords have the Passau Wolf mark which indicates a Prussian made blade or were marked with the Andrea Ferrara name. Nothing is certainly known of the swordsmith originally using the designation of Andrea Ferrara, beyond the excellence of the blades that bear his mark by right. He is said to have been an Italian armourer of the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and to have also established an armoury in Spain. But the name may also derive from the town of Ferrara in Italy, or the town of Feraria in the north of Spain.



Viking sword pommels

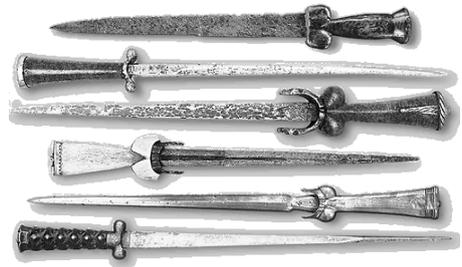


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Scottish Dagger Development

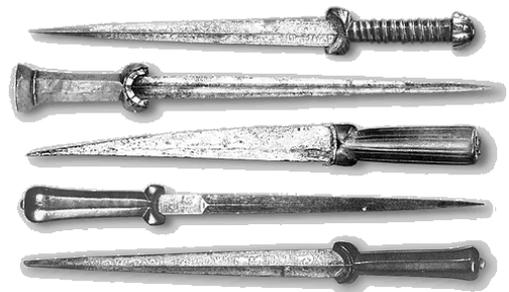
Ballock Daggers

A popular dagger of the high Middle Ages with military men and civilians alike was the ballock dagger. This dagger is named for the rather phallic shape of its hilt: two round protuberances are surmounted by a cylindrical grip. Added to this is the fact that it was often worn front-and-center on the belt, with the grip pointing straight up. It is easy to see why people in more prudish times have preferred to call it a "kidney dagger."



Dudgeon Daggers

The ballock took on its own distinctive flair in the British Isles beginning in the early seventeenth century with makers in Edinburgh's Canongate. Often hilted in native boxwood (known as dudgeon), they were fittingly called dudgeon daggers. Dudgeon daggers were hilted in a similar fashion to ballock daggers, the protuberances which gave the ballock dagger its name remained in place.



Early Dirks

"Dirks, dorks, durckes are frequently mentioned during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some writers consider these references to encompass ballock daggers, dudgeon daggers and dirks. One account, though, seems to specifically refer to what we think of as a dirk. Richard James (1592-1638) describes a highlander's arms like this in his account of Shetland, Orkney, and the Highlands: "the weapons which they use are a longe basket hilt sworde, and long kind of dagger broad in the back and sharp at ye pointe which they call a durcke."



Researchers such agree on the earliest dateable appearance of the dirk: an effigy dated to 1502 in Ardchattan Priory shows a knight girded with a dagger clearly identifiable as a dirk. It is larger than the average ballock dagger of the time and possesses a blade that is wide at the hilt and tapers to a strong point. Its sheath contains a by-knife.

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Medieval West Highland Warriors

One theory is that the West Highland warriors, being more reliant upon their wooden galleys for transport, eschewed easily corroded and difficult to maintain mail armour in favour of their distinctive long quilted aketon/cotuns, possibly faced with deer hide. Of course it's also possible that the reverse is true, with mail worn *under* the aketon. The other features are a type of bascinet, chain-mail coif, a spear, and usually, a distinctively Scottish style of single-handed sword known as a halflang.

West Highland, Isles, and even East Highland slabs feature the same type of single-handed or hand-and-a-half sword. These weapons all feature a swept guard with swollen tips, protruding central "langets" along the blade, and either lobated or "tea-cosy" type Viking style pommel, or a later rounded type with protruding tang enclosure. The blade is usually a pan-European design classified by sword historian Ewart Oakeshott as Type XII – a wide but tapering 3/4 fullered blade, whose heyday was the 13th and 14th centuries.

Many elements of the hilt were retained or adapted in the later and much more well-known two-handed "claymore" of the 16th Century, with its quatrefoil (rather than swollen) terminals. A tell-tale typological sign is that the later pommel on the "halflang" is identical to that on the earlier of the claymores, before a globe pommel was adopted, which was in turn (along with many cut-down blades) retained in the basket-hilted "claymore" of later years. These earliest swords are therefore part of a traceable tradition of Scottish swordmaking.



One of the Kilmory slab swords (left) and one of several surviving "halflang" swords recovered in Scotland and Ireland (this one is now in Glasgow)

