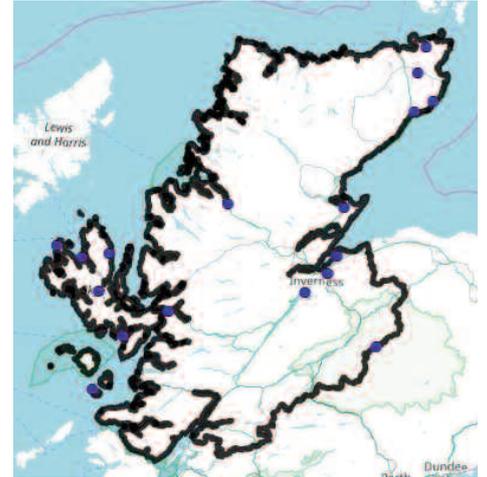


Bronze Swords

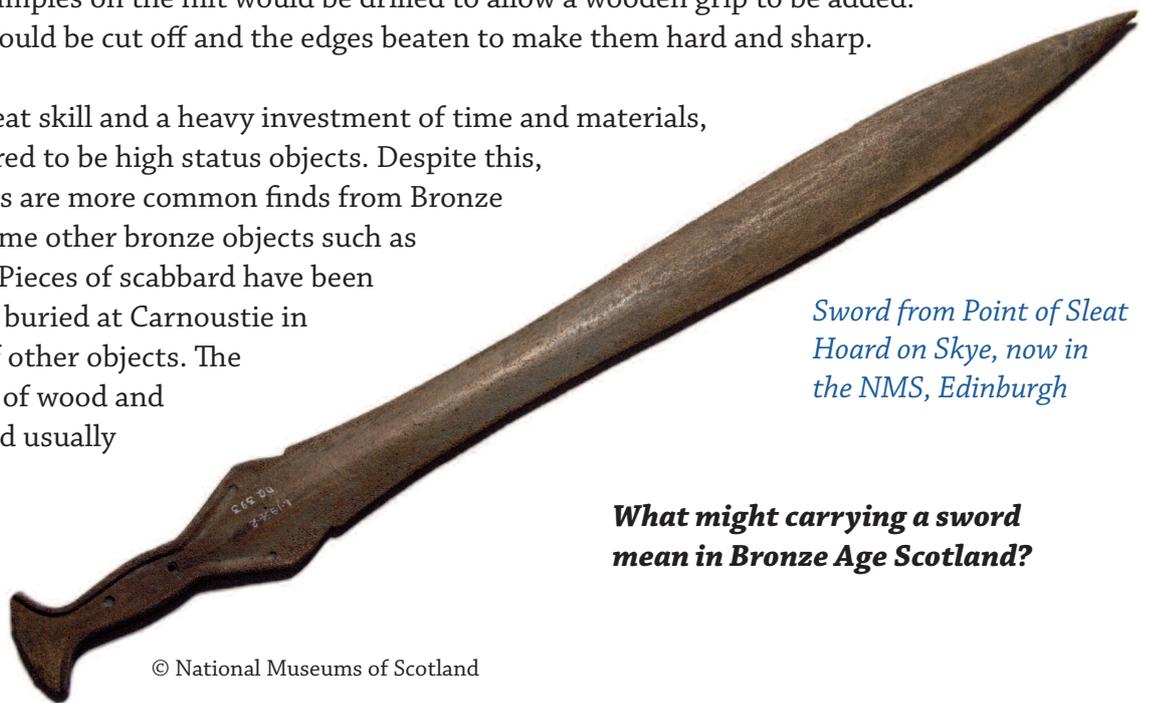
Period:	Bronze Age (c. 2500 – c. 800 BC)
Material:	bronze
Composite item:	wooden handle, sheath made of wood, leather, textile.



These bronze swords are based upon examples from the Late Bronze Age (around 1000 - 800 BC). They were made by casting liquid bronze in a mould. Sword technology steadily developed from daggers in the Early Bronze Age with blades getting longer and longer, and the techniques used to produce them reflect this. One sword was cast through the blade-tip, which allowed the handle (known as the 'hilt') to be very fine, but required the long sword blade to be thicker near the tip to allow the liquid bronze through the mould. The other was cast through the hilt – the triangular shape at the end of the grip is the 'pouring cup' where the bronze was poured into the mould. This innovation allowed a thinner blade with a wider leaf-shape to be cast in a long sword.

After casting, the dimples on the hilt would be drilled to allow a wooden grip to be added. The 'pouring cup' would be cut off and the edges beaten to make them hard and sharp.

Swords required great skill and a heavy investment of time and materials, so they are considered to be high status objects. Despite this, fragments of swords are more common finds from Bronze Age Britain than some other bronze objects such as sickles and gauges. Pieces of scabbard have been found with a sword buried at Carnoustie in Fife with a hoard of other objects. The scabbard was made of wood and leather, which would usually not survive.



Sword from Point of Sleat Hoard on Skye, now in the NMS, Edinburgh

What might carrying a sword mean in Bronze Age Scotland?

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Sword from Fendom near Tain, now in the NMS, Edinburgh.

See also:

When? Bronze Age
CT Bronze Casting

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