

# Prince Charles Edward's silver-hilted back-sword

by A V B Norman

The unsurpassed collection of 18th-century Scottish basket-hilted swords in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland includes nothing more interesting than the silver-hilted back-sword said to have been taken from the baggage of Prince Charles Edward after Culloden which was bequeathed to the Scottish Nation through the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by Angus Roderick Macdonald, 23rd Chief of Clanranald (NMA cat. no. MCR2, *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 79 (1944-5), 178 and pl XXII).

The basket guard consists of a single piece of cast silver (pls 28, 29). It is decorated with figures of warriors, one of whom is mounted and in classical armour, a naked boy beating a drum, a captive, and trophies of arms, all in high relief amid pierced rococo scrolls. On the front is a figure of a woman, symbolic of War, seated on a cloud, her head forming the projecting 'beak' of the hilt. The wrist-guard or rear quillon is formed like a crouching lion. The pommel, through which the tang is riveted, is formed as a horned owl. There are three marks on the inside of the hilt. These are: 1, the top half of the crowned leopard's head of London as used up to 1756; 2, the upper part of the date-letter e which must be that for 1740/1; 3, the maker's mark which will be discussed below.

The grip is of white ray-skin with silver wire Turk's head ferrules, and has a spiral binding consisting of two bands of wire, lying side by side, twisted in opposite directions to give a herring-bone effect.

The light blade is back-edged almost to the point and has a broad fuller for almost its full length. This is the type known during the 18th century as a spadron-blade. The surface is partly etched and gilt. On the outside of the blade near the hilt, within a circle on a false-watered panel, are the words

Ne me  
tire Pas  
sans  
Raison

(Draw me not without reason)

On the inside, on a similar panel, are the words

ne me  
Remette  
Point sans  
honneur

(Sheath me not without honour)

On each side there is also the figure of a man in pseudo-classical armour holding a sword above which is written the name 'hannibal'. A foliage scroll runs some way up the spine.

The maker's mark on the hilt consists of the initials FK in script, partly defaced, under a

small device which is rather difficult to make out. The lower part of this device is damaged and, at first glance, the remainder might be taken for a fleur-de-lis. The outline of the punch follows that of the letters and the device. This is the sixth mark of Charles Frederick Kandler, goldsmith of Jermyn Street, London, entered at Goldsmiths' Hall on 25 June 1739. His device was a mitre with its infulae curled up like the outer petals of a fleur-de-lis. Kandler was one of the great masters of rococo silver. His enormous silver wine-cooler, made from a design worked up by George Vertue from a rough sketch by the goldsmith-banker Henry Jerningham, has been in the Russian Imperial Collection since 1739 (Penzer 1956; Grimwade 1976, 567, no. 691).

There are now two scabbards. One is of unlined black leather, decorated with blind tooling with saltires and marks like deer slots. It has a silver locket incised on the front with rococo scroll-work and foliage, and on the back with a trophy of arms amid rococo scrolls. The belt-hook is decorated with acanthus foliage. The silver chape has an invected upper edge incised to match the locket. The silver mounts are not marked. The other scabbard is of wood, covered in dark blue velvet, with a top-locket, mid-locket, and chape of silver all engraved and chased with trophies of arms in rococo panels. Both lockets have loose-rings for use with slings. The top locket bears five marks: 1, the King's head in profile in an oval punch; 2, the thistle in a shield-shaped punch; 3, the castle of Edinburgh; 4, the small Gothic f which is the Edinburgh date-letter for 1837-8; and 5, a maker's mark JM in a rectangle. G W M Crichton, a former Assay Master at Goldsmiths' Hall, Edinburgh, has very kindly informed me that the only sword-mounting recorded as having been submitted for assay in the year 1837/8 was one by James MacKay on 15 June 1838. Probably it was this very scabbard and the JM mark is that of MacKay.

The collection of arms and armour of George IV, which he began while Prince of Wales and added to almost to the day of his death, was at one time kept in his London residence in Carlton House. While it was there it was carefully catalogued by Benjamin Jutsham, who was, from 1803, Inspector of Household Deliveries and Keeper of the Prince's Armoury. The manuscript volumes of this catalogue are at present in the care of the Surveyor of Her Majesty's Works of Art.

No. 381 in the Carlton House Catalogue is described thus:

'Scotch, one Edged Blade with  
Gilt ornaments. White Fish Skin  
Gripe with Gilt wire, Silver Basket  
Guard and Hilt most Elegantly Carved  
and Embossed with a variety of figures  
Beasts and Trophies. The Guard lined  
with leather and Red Velvet. Black  
Scabbard Silver Chape Stamp in  
Trophies'.

Remarks:

'This sword belonged to the Pretender.  
On the blade is engraved the  
following words Viz  
Ne me Tire Pas Sans Raison  
Ne me Remette Point Sans honneur  
N.B. This Sword  
given away to Mr.  
Macdonald'.

No further identification of the recipient is given nor is the date of the presentation recorded but under no. 250 in the same inventory the words are added: 'Given to Mr. Macdonald of Clanranald, June 23rd 1820'. This was Reginald George Macdonald, Chief and Captain of Clanranald, whose title had been recognised in 1810 by the Lyon Court. Whether two swords were given to Clanranald, or Jutsham accidentally entered the presentation under both numbers, is not known, of course.

The presentation of sword no. 381 is again referred to, by Robert Mudie (1822, 210):

'Mr. Macdonald of Clanronald, M.P., intended to lead his numerous clan as a separate body, the divisions of it to be commanded by Boisdale, Staffa, Sir Charles Macdonald, and other gentlemen of this respectable clan; but the unexpected death of the Marquis of Londonderry rendered it impossible for his nephew, Clanronald, to appear in public at this period. We have the best authority for stating that his Majesty's partiality for the tartan was not formed in Edinburgh. For several years past Clanronald has been wont to appear at court in the Highland garb, and his Majesty uniformly expressed his decided approbation of the dress, and of the chief who wore it. On one of these occasions, when Clanronald appeared in the full costume befitting the chief of the Macdonalds, his Majesty received him most graciously, and presented to him a magnificent broad-sword, which the City of Glasgow gave to Prince Charles. His Majesty's words to Clanronald on that occasion were, "I will always be happy to see you *in that dress*. This sword belonged to the unfortunate Chevalier, and I now give it to you, as the person best entitled to wear it".'

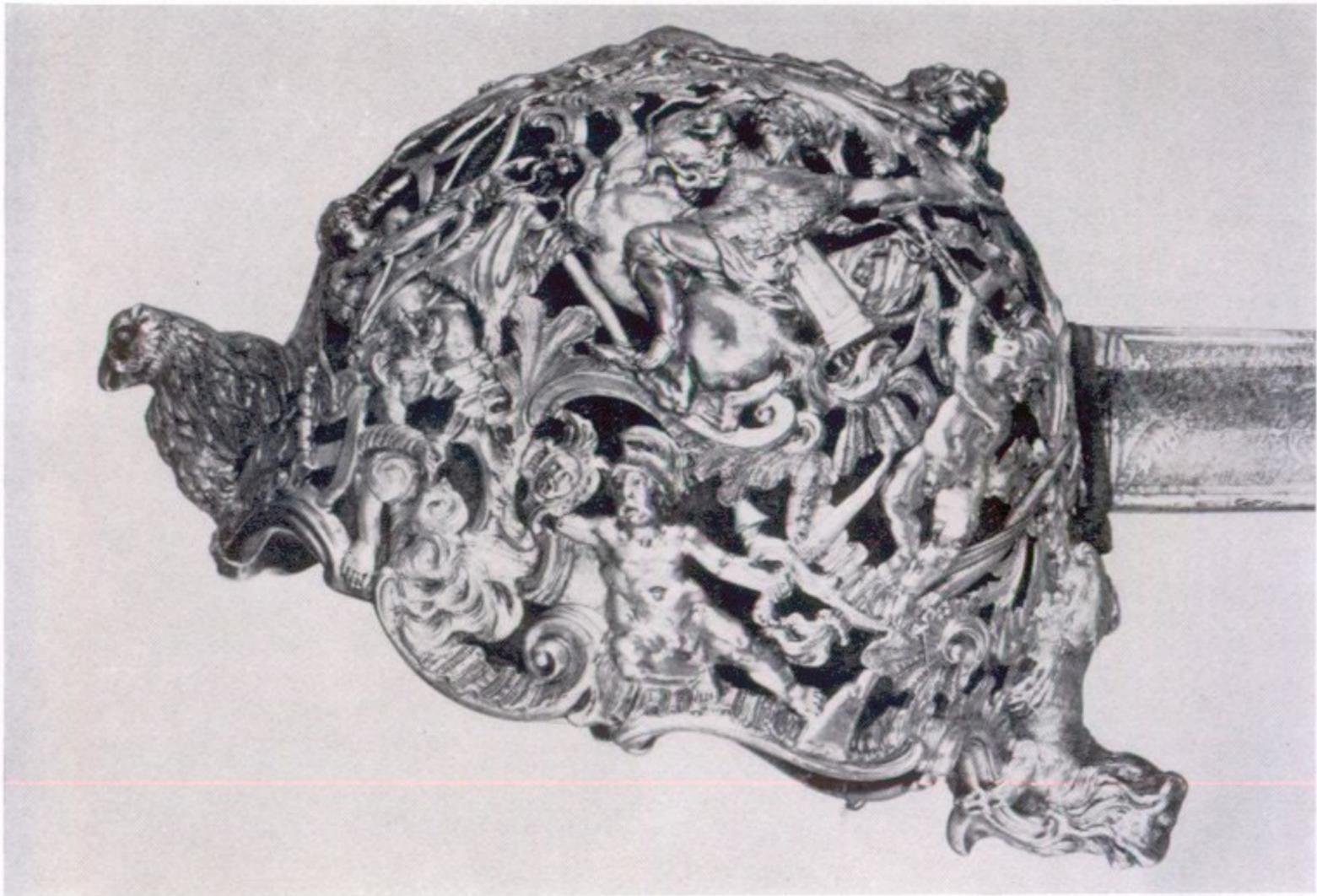
There can be no doubt, I think, that the weapon described in the Carlton House catalogue is the one now in the National Museum. The source of the story that the sword was given to Prince Charles by the City of Glasgow is unknown. Since the city was strongly Hanoverian in sentiment, this does not sound very probable. The tradition noted in *Proceedings* in 1944 that it was a gift from Western Jacobites may be a version of the same story.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

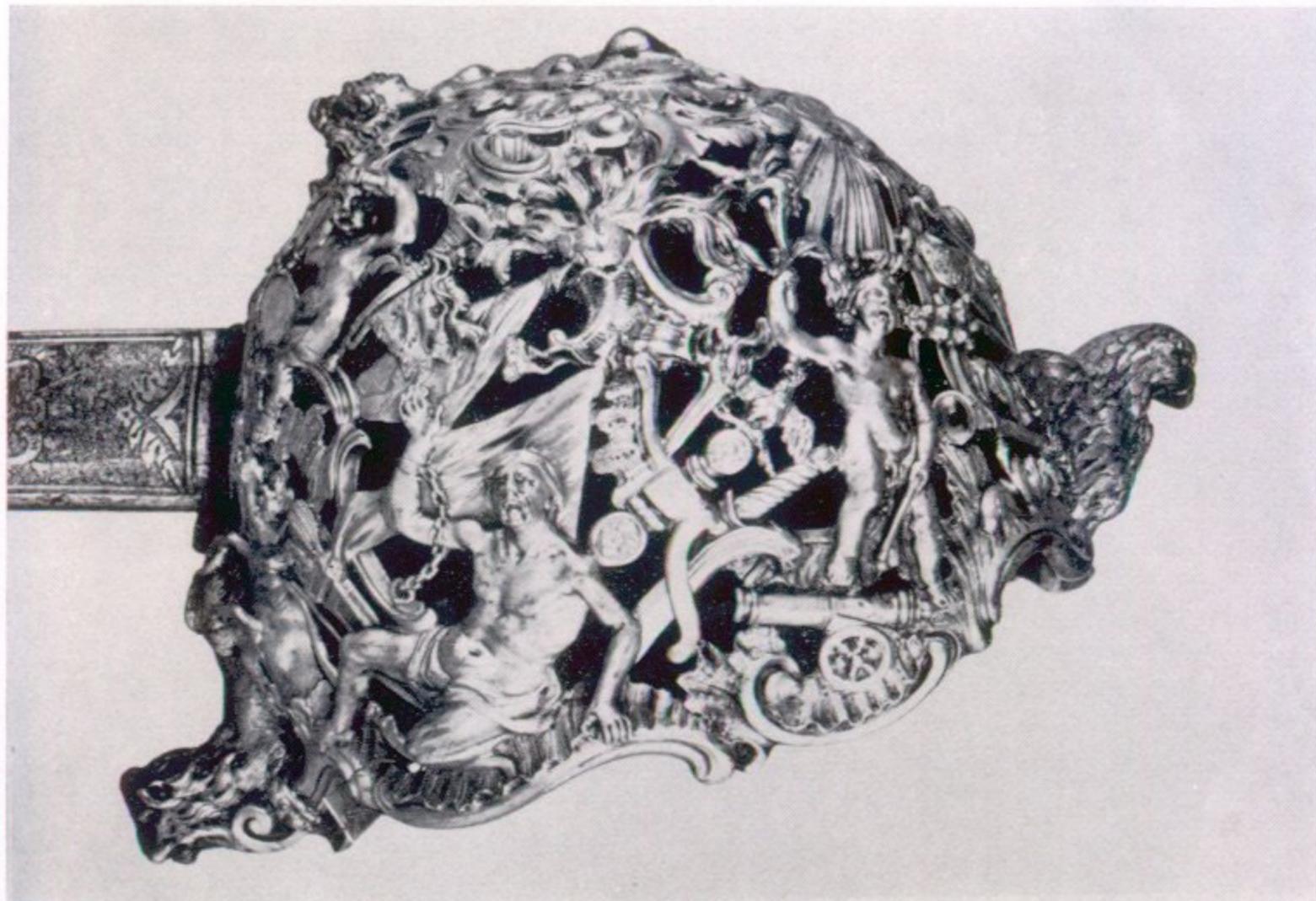
Permission to quote from the Carlton House Catalogue was graciously granted by Her Majesty The Queen. I am most grateful to the Surveyor of the Queen's Works of Art, Mr Geoffrey de Belaigue, for his unfailing kindness, and for his help with my researches into the armouries of George IV and his grandfather. I should like to thank Mr R B K Stevenson for allowing me to examine this weapon and for his patience in waiting so long for my report on it, also Mr Basil Skinner for tracing the source of the quotation of George IV's words to Clanranald.

#### REFERENCES

- Grimwade, A 1976 *London Goldsmiths 1697-1837, their marks and lives*. London.  
 (Mudie, R - anon) 1822 *A Historical Account of His Majesty's Visit to Scotland*.  
 Penzer, N M 'The Jerningham-Kandler Wine-Cooler', *Apollo*, 64 (1956), pt I, 80-2, pt II, 111-15.



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