

Is it a Claymore or a Scottish Basket Hilted Broadsword?



THE SWORDS OF TULLIBARDINE

It is common that the term Claymore is attributed to the Scottish two handed sword romanticised so often.

This was a very large sword and uncommon in Europe as most European swords of this size were mainly ceremonial.

It is commonly depicted with the forward angled arms and quarterfoil designs at the end.

The classic medieval sword was large and very much the same as we see so often in movies depicting knights especially the crusaders.

The quarterfoil is probably made famous from the seal of John Balliol.

The sword that is most often referred to as the Claymore was most likely a larger version of this sword.

However, from all reports, it seems however that Claymore is the wrong term for this formidable weapon.

To get to the reason for the above statement we need to go forward in time to the Jacobites who predominantly used the basket hilted swords.

The Scottish version was broader than similar swords of the time.

This sword was called a claidheamh-mór. This is Gaelic and translates into Great Sword due to its larger size than its contemporaries.

It is well accepted that Claymore is derived from the Gaelic claidheamh-mór.

The Basket hilted sword was also called the Scottish Broad Sword.

There was also a version called the claidheamh cuil which means back sword.

The back was blunt with just one sharp edge.

The long two hander was called a claidheamh dà làimh, translated it literally means two handed sword.

In the romanticised period after the Jacobites the term Claymore was then applied to the the long medieval sword.

The British army and many other armies had similar hilted swords but the blades were more slender.

Claymore

1. Hilted Sword

2. From the Gaelic Claidheamh-mór – great sword

3. *Pronounced 'Clayav Mor'*

4. *Used in the Jacobite era*

Two-Handed Sword or Long Sword

1. *Claidheamh dà làimh to – two-handed sword*

2. *Pronounced 'Clayav da lav'*

3. *Quarterfoil design*

4. *Two handed medieval sword used between 1400 to 1600 with some smaller version used before this time*

Claymore or Scottish Basket Hilted Broadsword

1. *A common weapon among the clansmen during the Jacobite rebellions of the late 17th and early 18th centuries was the Scottish Basket Hilted Broadsword, commonly known as claidheamh mor or "claymores" – meaning "great sword" in Scottish Gaelic.*

IDEAL WEAPON



In close quarters, the claymore was the ideal weapon of choice for combating British soldiers armed with long, unwieldy, muskets with plug bayonets.

When paired with a “targe”, or light buckler a highlander was provided with a staunch defense, allowing him to block a bayonet with the targe and then deliver a thrust with the sword into his opponent’s torso.



At range, this strategy would do little against musket armed troops firing in volleys or artillery using canister shot (while effective against bayonets, the targe would not fare so well against a musket ball), which necessitated tactics such as the “Highland Charge”, which required a Jacobite war band to close with their targets as quickly as possible, normally under heavy fire, using the smoke from musket and cannon fire to cover the last leg of the assault before attacking the line.

Naturally, even this risky strategy, led to many casualties among the Jacobite clansmen against disciplined volley fire and massed artillery firing grape and canister shot.

In between rebellions, after the disastrous Jacobite defeat at the Battle of Culloden and the overall failure of the rebellions, it would become illegal to carry the claymores and targes and so many Highlanders would hide these weapons in the heath.

It is not an uncommon story that features a hiker finding such a blade while walking.

Two Hander details (mistaken Claymore)

- *The average two hander ran about 140cm in overall length, with a 33cm grip, 107cm blade, and a weight of approximately 2.5 kg.*
- *Some also believe the sword, although double edged was blunt up to the last 30cm of the point.*
- *This allowed you to hold the blade in your hand in order to block blows.*
- *Fairly uniform in style, the sword was set with a wheel pommel often capped by a crescent-shaped nut and a guard with straight, forward-sloping arms ending in quatrefoils, and langets running down the centre of the blade from the guard.*

Lodge Tullibardine has a number of old swords in its possession and a few of these are "basket hilted".

It is not known if the swords are actual Claymores or not.

At most Initiations the Lodge decorations consist of two basket hilted swords and a poniard in group in front of the Master's podium.

An additional poniard is to be seen situated for the Lodge Inner Guard and outside the door of the Lodge the Bro. Tyler is provided with a sword, without scabbard, which has a slightly curving blade.

Ownership of the "Lodge" swords is in contention.

There are those who say that all the swords belong to the Lodge Tullibardine while other claim that the swords are the property of the "St Mungo" Royal Arch Chapter.

One thing is sure. Irrespective of the ownership the swords should be properly cared for and treated with dignity. They are "historic" items and truly need to be looked after. The current method of storage leaves a lot to be desired.

Who does own them ? I have no idea ! Do you ?

No doubt in the fullness of time the question of ownership will be established beyond doubt and once that is determined a suitable storage system should be immediately constructed to preserve the swords.

If it should come to pass that Lodge Tullibardine does **not** own the swords in question then the Lodge should immediately seek to purchase such swords as it requires and these then be identified as Lodge property and stored accordingly.

If you are assisting to "de-tyle" the Lodge after a meeting, please remember that the swords **MUST** always be returned to their rightful place in the storage systems owned by the Lodge.

