CC11 and CC12: SERF Archive Report: Lithics

Introduction
There are 18 lithics recovered from the Castle Craig excavations, 14 in 2011 and 4 in 2012.

Methodology
The methodology, type and attribute terminologies employed for the analysis of the primary and secondary technologies follows the format devised and adopted for the Southern Hebrides Mesolithic Project (Finlayson et al. 2000). This augmented the research design used for the analysis of the lithic assemblage from the site at Kinloch on Rùm (Wickham-Jones 1990), derived from earlier terminologies and technological classifications (Tixier et al. 1980), and subsequently enhanced (Inizan et al. 1999). This format lends itself to the incorporation of later prehistoric forms such as projectile points, ‘knives’, certain types of scrapers and Post-Medieval gunflints (cf. Wright 2012). The database for the typological and technological analysis of the lithics uses Access™ 2016.

Primary Technology speaks to those initial procedures of the chaîne opératoire relating to the choices made in the selection and the obtaining of appropriate raw material, the reduction strategies, the production of blanks, e.g. flakes and blades through to the discard of cores. The knapping reduction strategies undertaken in the past are determined by reference to the detailed analysis of the characteristics and attributes of the cores and debitage products recovered during archaeological fieldwork (Finlay et al. 2000a, 553; Woodman et al. 2006, 78).

Secondary Technology refers to the later stages of the chaîne opératoire, which considers the process of the modification of blanks, their utilisation and discard. Following the removal of a blank from a core, modification is generally achieved by the application of pressure to the edge of the blank. In the case of scrapers, the modified edge functions as the working edge. However, that may not be the case for all retouched artefacts. For example, the modification may be undertaken to facilitate hafting (Finlay et al. 2000b, 571; Wickham-Jones and McCartan 1990, 87). Invasive and inverse retouch are generally particular features of secondary modification during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods (Ballin 1999 and others).

For individual lithics, the first number is the catalogue reference followed by the small finds number.

Raw Materials
Agate is the most common raw material at 38.89% followed by quartz 27.78%, flint 22.22%, and jasper 11.11% (Figure 1).
Character
The character of the assemblage is set out at Table 1. 44.44% of the lithics are chunks; flakes 27.78%, small fraction debitage 16.67%, and modified forms 11.11%.

Table 1: Character of the assemblage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Agate</th>
<th>Quartz</th>
<th>Flint</th>
<th>Jasper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chunks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flakes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary regular</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary irregular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary regular</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary regular</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary irregular</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Fraction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condition
All of the lithics are fresh save for three burnt pieces; two chunks (0127/6209; 0467/6103) and one flake (0132/6310).
Primary technology
There are no primary flakes and all are irregular; two are secondary and three tertiary. There was a platform reduction strategy employed for three of the flakes (0128/6209; 0129/6308; 0132/6310). The other two flakes (0134/6320; 0475/6590) and the chunks are bipolar.

2011
Two chunks (0467/6103; 0469/6105) and one piece of small fraction debitage came the demolition debris.

2012
The recovery locations of the lithics from 2012 are:

- A jasper flake (0128/6209) and an agate chunk (0127/6205) from backfill (100) of 2011 trench;
- Quartz flake (0475/6590) from an old ground surface (126) overlying paving stones (128). There is a radiocarbon date of 50 cal BCE-208 cal CE (1945 ± 45 BP; SUERC-45396 on charcoal from (126);
- Two flakes, one jasper (0129/6308) and the other flint (0132/6310) from top surface of turf (600). Other lithics recovered are a quartz chunk (0130/6310), agate chunk (0131/6310), and one piece of agate small fraction debitage (0133/6310);
- Two agate chunks (0472/6538; 0473/6538) and single piece of quartz small fraction debitage (0135/6316) from surface of demolition rubble (601);
- A flint flake (0134/6320) from a lens of burning (602) overlying midden and debris (605). There is a radiocarbon date of 751-408 cal BCE (2440 ± 30 BP; SUERC-29217 on charcoal from (605); and
- An agate chunk (0474/6539) from paving (907) under tumbled wall stones (905), and overlying pre-wall occupation charcoal rich matrix of clay with stones and burnt bone (909), and sub-soil (911).

Secondary technology
The modified lithics comprise two scrapers. These artefacts require illustration.

2011: Flint disc scraper (0468/6104)
It is from demolition debris from the wall core (006). There is direct semi-abrupt retouch around the entire circumference of the flake, with inverse retouch at the proximal end removing the bulb of percussion. There is further inverse retouch at the median, right hand side.

2012: Quartz convex scraper (0471/6417)
The scraper is from the demolition debris from the wall core (821). There is inverse scalar retouch to a bipolar quartz flake with a siret fracture, and proximal spalling. The coarse character of the raw material accounts for the poor quality of retouch.
Discussion
The disc scraper is a form found in Late Neolithic contexts (Butler 2005, Figure 53; Edmonds 1995, 104-105).

Other than the disc scraper, none of the lithics are truly diagnostic and cannot be ascribed to any given prehistoric archaeological epoch. However, there are characteristic elements of the assemblage ascribed to Iron Age events. Humphrey’s (Humphrey 2003, 2004) research into Iron Age flint utilisation in central and southern Britain suggests markers such as the use of local materials, prevalence of secondary and tertiary flakes, and a high incidence of chunks (Humphrey 2004, 56-57). The modest size of the assemblage determines that is not possible to state categorically an Iron Age provenance.

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27 March 2018
References


