

3. The Small Finds

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3.1 Introduction

The following reports present and discuss the small finds recovered during excavation. They are arranged by material and vary from artefacts of recognisable material culture to animal and plant remains, although it should be noted that sampling and analysis was not exhaustive in relation to carbonised botanical remains. Consideration must be given to the nature of the material recovered and what we can reasonably assume to have been lost through the acidic nature of the soils (Section 2.3). Later cultivation and the process of bioturbation within the collapsed turf of the buildings have also disturbed the upper levels of stratigraphy across much of the site. Given this, the survival of the iron work assemblage is notable, as is the preservation of bone within pit C278 of Building 3's annexe (Section 2.3), though bone preservation was otherwise poor, and the charred unidentified bark fragments within the turf wall of Building 1 (C3). However, the site is free-draining and no water-logged deposits were found. While the distribution of artefacts is considered further in Chapter 4, individual artefacts are discussed below within each specialist report and can be cross-referenced with ¹⁴C dates (Table 2.1). Note: Artefacts recovered from sample processing have only catalogue (Cat) numbers as their unique identifier.

3.2 Lithics

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The assemblage comprises 38 pieces, of which 21 are of quartz and 17 of flint. Whilst the quartz could be from local sources, there are no known flint sources near Lair, and Lossiemouth, Moray and a number of other locations in Aberdeenshire are the nearest recorded sources (Wickham-Jones and Collins 1977: 9-12). The pitted cortex of the flint suggests that it was derived from glacio-fluvial sediment or glacial till. References to specific artefacts cite the catalogue number followed by the small finds number, where available.

The lithics are fresh apart from a burnt flint core fragment (Cat 34), a flint flake (Cat 2, SF2), and a quartz flake (Cat 5). The frequency of burnt pieces is probably underestimated. Experimental work on flint indicates that some burnt pieces need not retain evidence of burning (Finlayson 1990: 53). Table 3.1 shows the character of the assemblage.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of the lithic assemblage.

	Total	Flint	Quartz
Tested Split Pebbles	2		2
Chunks	1		1
Core	1	1	
Core fragment	1	1	
Flakes	24	8	16
Primary	4	1	3
Secondary	11	3	8
Tertiary	9	4	5
Primary regular			
Primary irregular	4	1	3
Secondary regular			
Secondary irregular	11	3	8
Tertiary regular			
Tertiary irregular	9	4	5
Blades	2	1	1
Primary			
Secondary	1	1	
Tertiary	1		1
Primary regular			
Primary irregular			
Secondary regular	1	1	
Secondary irregular			
Tertiary regular			
Tertiary irregular	1		1
Small Fraction	3	2	1
Modified	4	4	
Awl	1	1	
Barbed-and-tanged arrowhead	1	1	
Scraper	2	2	
Total	38	17	21

Table 3.2 Analysis of recovery locations by context and sub-analysed between primary and secondary technologies.

	Context(s)	Total	Primary	Secondary
Unstratified	001	5	5	
Linear hollow	016	1		1
Pit/post-hole: Building 1	020	1	1	
Collapsed walls: Buildings 1, 2 & 4	002, 003, 005, 119, 120, 195	19	19	
Collapsed wall: Building 1	005	1		1
Hearth deposit: Building 2	120	1	1	
Interior floor: Building 3	162	7	5	2
Interior sunken area: Building 3	166	2	2	
Burnt material within interior floor: Building 3	209 (within 162)	1	1	
		38	34	4

Contexts

Table 3.2 shows the contexts from which lithics were recovered. All the lithics are likely to have undergone secondary re-deposition to some extent, meaning the contexts that they were recovered from may not reflect where the artefacts were initially deposited.

Primary technology

The flint core (Cat 25, SF37) and core fragment (Cat 34) have simple platforms for flake production. A platform reduction strategy produced eight of the nine flint and five of the quartz blanks, i.e. flakes and blades. A flint core rejuvenation flake (Cat 6) and four of the quartz blanks have evidence for anvil support. This refers to the placing of the platform core on an anvil for support in facilitating the removal of blanks. The other quartz blanks, two tested split pebbles, one chunk and a flint flake are bipolar. Generally, bipolar blanks will be under-represented because not all debitage products will

present attributes associated with a bipolar reduction strategy (after Kuijt *et al.* 1995: 117). Anvil support suggests that platform and bipolar reduction strategies may have been coeval (cf. Wright 2012).

Secondary technology

Flint awl (Cat 1, SF1), Figure 3.1:

Recovered from a disturbed deposit (C5) post-dating the slumped turf bank of Building 1. There is inverse scalar retouch to the distal end and to both sides of the flake fragment. The lateral retouch combines to create the awl/borer point.

Flint barbed-and-tanged arrowhead (Cat 10, SF7), Figure 3.1:

A barbed-and-tanged arrowhead was recovered within an accumulation of material (C16) above the linear burnt feature which ran beneath Building 1. The

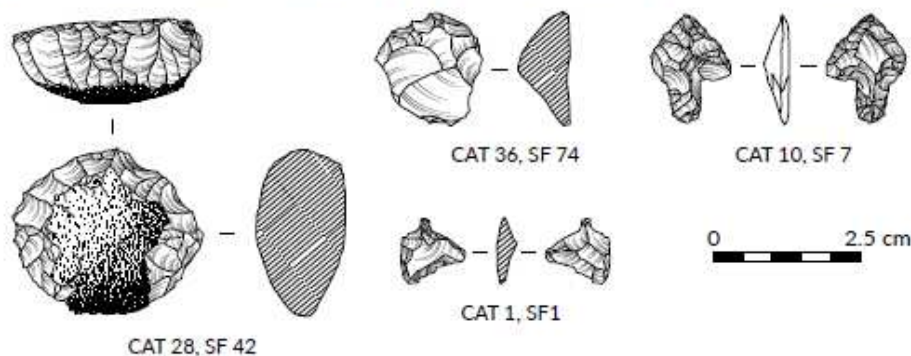


Figure 3.1 Flint artefacts: Cat 1, 10, 28 and 36.

left hand side barb was broken during manufacture leading to abandonment and discard of the artefact. The retouch to the dorsal covers the whole surface. The ventral retouch is only semi-invasive, suggesting that the artefact was incomplete. The arrowhead is a Kilmarnock type [sub-type O] (Green 1980).

Flint sub-angled scrapers (Cat 28, SF42 and Cat 36, SF74), Figure 3.1:

Recovered from the floor/working surface (C162) of Building 3. Both artefacts have scalar retouch to two edges meeting to create the sub-angled scraper attribute. Other artefacts from C162 include a flint core (Cat 25, SF37), flint and quartz flakes, pottery, burnt bone, miscellaneous ferrous objects, slag and a spindle whorl.

Discussion

The limited evidence of the cores, tested split pebbles and primary flakes suggest that primary knapping of flint and quartz was undertaken near the structures at Lair. A Bronze Age provenance may be ascribed to the awl and the barbed-and-tanged arrowhead (Edmonds 1995: 205; Green 1980). Other lithics are non-diagnostic and cannot be ascribed to a specific archaeological period.