Annual Report 2024

Introduction

Mid Grampian Mesolithic is a community archaeology group established in December 2022 to investigate the evidence for Mesolithic (and Palaeolithic) activity in Mid Grampian (Catchments of Don, Ury and Ythan).

In our second, 2024 season, the group walked 10 fields in the Don catchment.
Lithic descriptions have been completed by Roslyn Hay and June Armstrong, experienced members of Mesolithic Deeside and Mid Grampian Mesolithic, following the categorisation methodology adopted by Ann Clarke.

Roslyn Hay, June Armstrong and the team also undertook a redescription of the lithics collected by James Kenworthy (Aberdeen University) between 2003 and 2009 from fields near Glenkindie. Results have been summarised in a separate report (MGM002,2024).

We have also completed a magnetic gradiometer survey of the Boatleys 1 field near Kemnay, which will help us plan future test pitting.

Community engagement is an important element of our activities. Last year we started to do school visits and held an Aberdeenshire DoorsOpen community event in Monymusk and participated in Scottish Archaeology Month event in the Cowdray Hall in Aberdeen.

Figure 1: Dougal holding his handaxe. Photo Roslyn Hay.

In December 2024 Mid Grampian Mesolithic was awarded a grant from the Gordon and Edna Baxter Foundation to support our community outreach.

Strategy for Winter/Spring 2024

The overall objective of Mid Grampian Mesolithic is to improve our understanding of Mesolithic activity in the Mid Grampian region. In the first, 2023 season, we sought to test the hypothesis that

the Dee was not unique and that other concentrations of activity occurred on the other rivers in the region, starting with the Don. The significant Mesolithic lithic scatter encountered at Boatleys-1 field near Kemnay confirmed this hypothesis. In the 2024 season we have extended our activities on the Don between Kirkton of Forbes in the Howe of Alford to Hatton of Fintray, including a focus on the area north of the Don near Boatleys-1.

This year the exceptionally high rainfall in December and January caused a significant number of fields to be waterlogged, which delayed ploughing, and reduced the number of fields available to be walked. Despite this we were able to maintain a full walking programme which conformed to our overall strategy.

Fieldwalking Techniques

Mid Grampian Mesolithic have followed Mesolithic Deeside's field-walking methodology (Wickham-Jones et al 2021). Ploughed fields were left to weather for at least 3 weeks where possible. Fields were walked at 2m spacing to remain consistent with Mesolithic Deeside. Each lithic was separately bagged and labelled with Field #, Date and a 10 digit OS National Grid GPS reading.

The lithics recovered were analysed by Roslyn Hay and June Armstrong, following the classification proposed by Ann Clarke (Wickham-Jones et al.,2021).

Once the lithics have been reviewed they will be archived, and appropriate information sent to Treasure Trove Scotland.

Figure 2: Recording location data in the field. Photo Simon Allerton.

Mid Grampian Mesolithic Winter/Spring Season 2023 - lithic classification

Lithics collected during 2023 were initially described and classified by Roslyn Hay and June Armstrong, and then the results reviewed by Ann Clarke, who provided a report on the results (Clarke, 2023). Her principal conclusions were that the lithic assemblage at Boatleys-1 is predominantly dated to the Late Mesolithic, with some Early Neolithic and Late Neolithic flint also present. She concludes "Most of the collection is formed by activity related to blade production. Pebbles were halved or quartered and then worked to detach blades. Crested blades are present indicating that cores were sometimes shaped more carefully in order to direct the removal of blades. Blades were used unmodified or else selected for further modification in order to make blanks for microliths, or for microliths and obliquely blunted blades. This activity dates to the Late Mesolithic and is typical of the large Mesolithic flint scatters identified along the Dee at Nethermills and East Park by the Mesolithic Deeside Group. Flake cores, scrapers and knives demonstrate a presence here dating to the Late Neolithic. Just two possible leaf points suggest earlier Neolithic activity along the river."

Mid Grampian Mesolithic Winter/Spring Season 2024 – fields walked

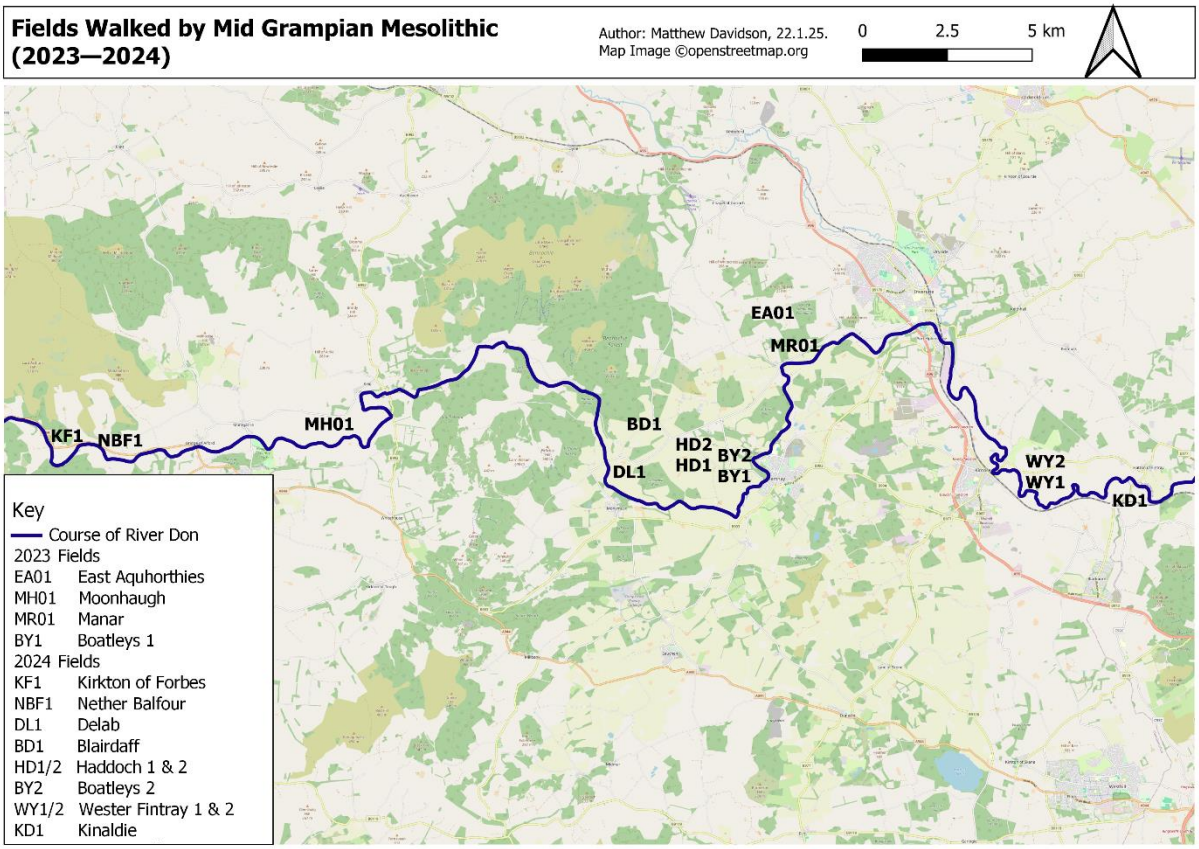


Figure 3: Fields walked by Mid Grampian Mesolithic in 2023 and 2024.

Fields walked by Mid Grampian Mesolithic in 2024

Field	Code	Date	#Walkers
Haddoch 1	HD1	13/01/2024	8
Nether Balfour	NBF1	27/01/2024	14
Kinaldie	KD1	04/02/2024	13
Wester Fintray 1	WY1	18/02/2024	16
Delab	DL1	23/02/2024	9
Delab	DL1	03/03/2024	24
Wester Fintray 2	WY2	09/03/2024	7
Blairdaff	BD1	17/03/2024	12
Haddoch 1	HD1	17/03/2024	12
Kirkton of Forbes	KF1	23/03/2024	7
Haddoch 2	HD2	31/03/2024	10
Boatleys 2	BY2	20/04/2024	10

Name	Code	Area walked	No. of lithics	Lithics/ha
Haddoch1	HD1	10.5	148	14.1
Nether Balfour	NBF1	4	33	8.3
Kinaldie	KD1	13.5	132	9.8
Wester Fintray1	WY1	7.5	179	23.9
Delab	DL1	29.5	421	14.3
Wester Fintray2	WY2	4	177	44.3
Blairdaff	BD1	6	3	0.5
Kirkton of Forbes	KF1	9.5	23	2.4
Haddoch2	HD2	7	136	19.4
Boatleys2	BY2	4	101	25.3

Results

Summary Results Table

Field code	HD1	NBF1	KD1	WY1	DL1	WY2	BD1	KF1	HD2	BY2	Total
Axehead	1										1
Blade	15	3	15	16	78	29	1	3	14	16	190
Chunk	13	2	7	19	41	30	1	6	15	9	143
Core	6		8	11	17	10			3	5	60
Flake	60	11	61	89	178	65	1	9	62	50	586
Other	3	1	4	4	7					1	20
Pebble			4	1	1	2				1	9
Retouched blade	1			5	9	3			1	2	21
Retouched flake	13	1	3	2	13	8			4	3	47
Small flake	23	12	20	17	42	21		4	26	4	169
Spall	13	2	10	9	34	11		1	11	10	101
Total	148	32	132	173	421	179	3	23	136	101	1348

Field code	HD1	NBF1	KD1	WY1	DL1	WY2	BD1	KF1	HD2	BY2	Total
Axehead	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Blade	10%	9%	11%	9%	19%	16%	33%	13%	10%	16%	14%
Chunk	9%	6%	5%	11%	10%	17%	33%	26%	11%	9%	11%
Core	4%	0%	6%	6%	4%	6%	0%	0%	2%	5%	4%
Flake	41%	34%	46%	51%	42%	36%	33%	39%	46%	50%	43%
Other	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Pebble	0%	0%	3%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Retouched blade	1%	0%	0%	3%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Retouched flake	9%	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%	0%	0%	3%	3%	3%
Small flake	16%	38%	15%	10%	10%	12%	0%	17%	19%	4%	13%
Spall	9%	6%	8%	5%	8%	6%	0%	4%	8%	10%	7%

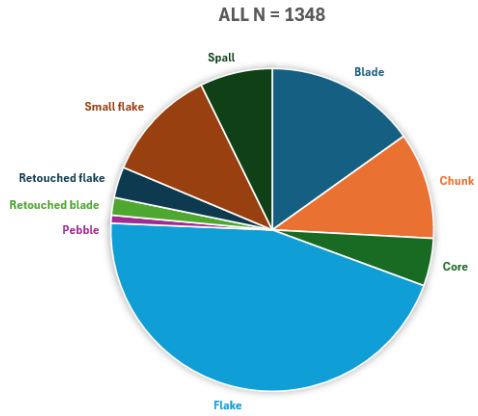


Figure 4 Pie diagram of all lithics from 2024

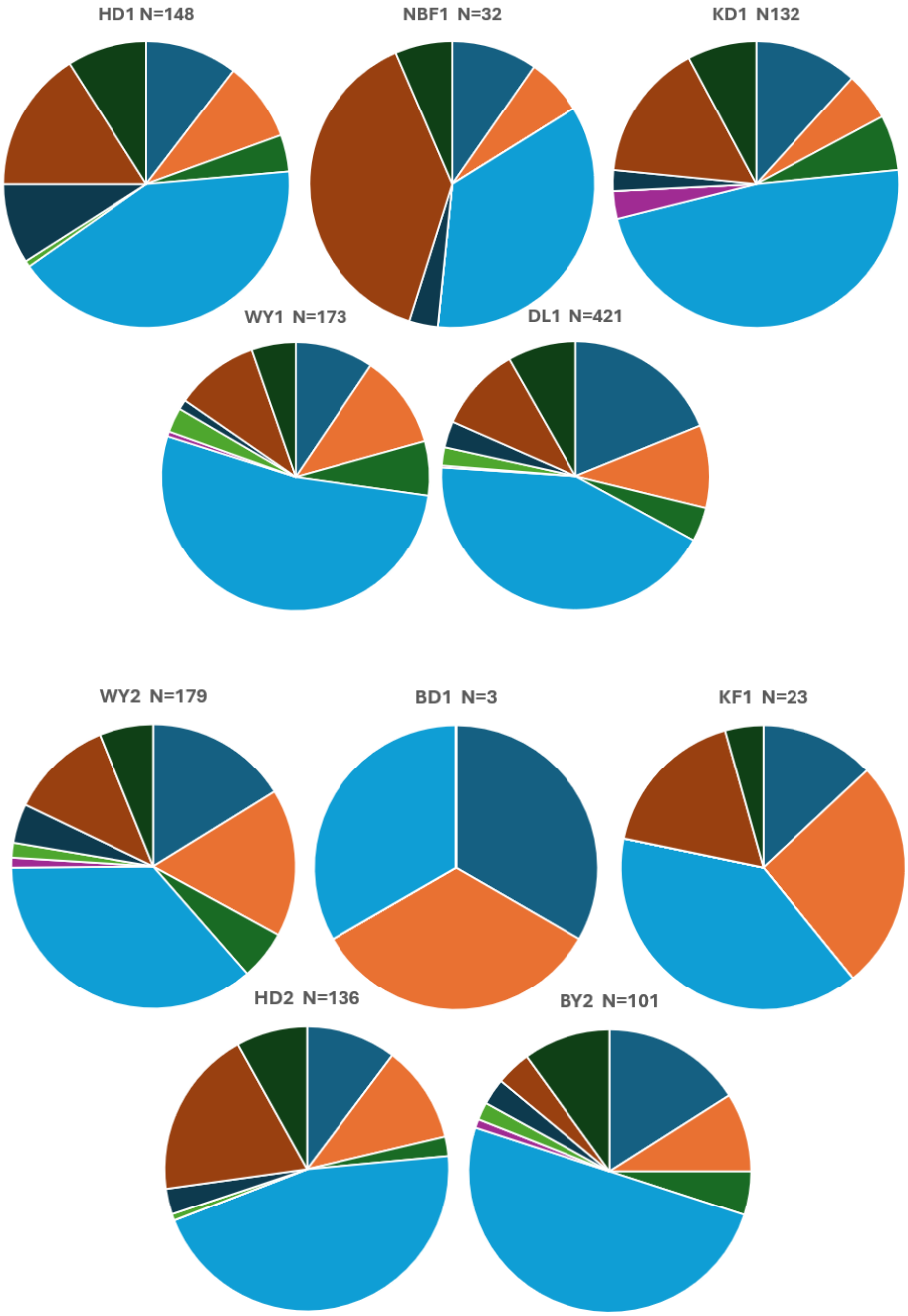
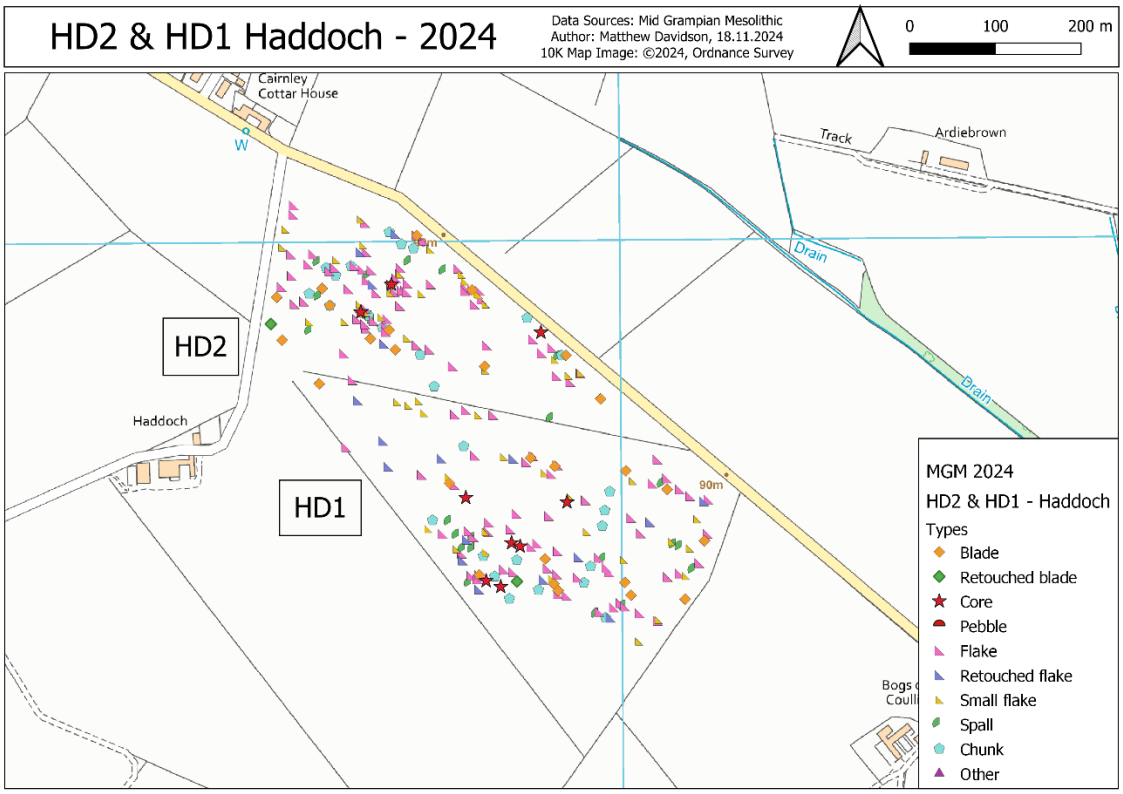


Figure 5: Pie diagrams of lithic classification for fields walked in 2024.

5 MGM003

Haddoch 1 (HD1) and Haddoch 2 (HD2)



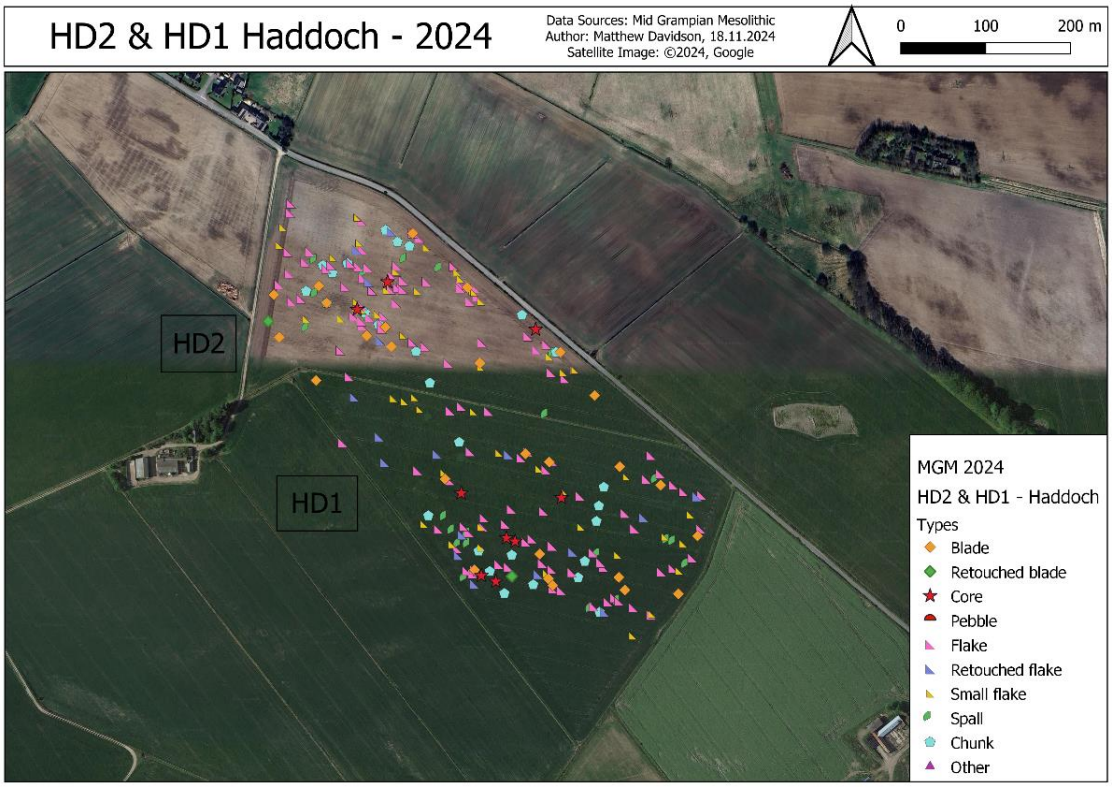


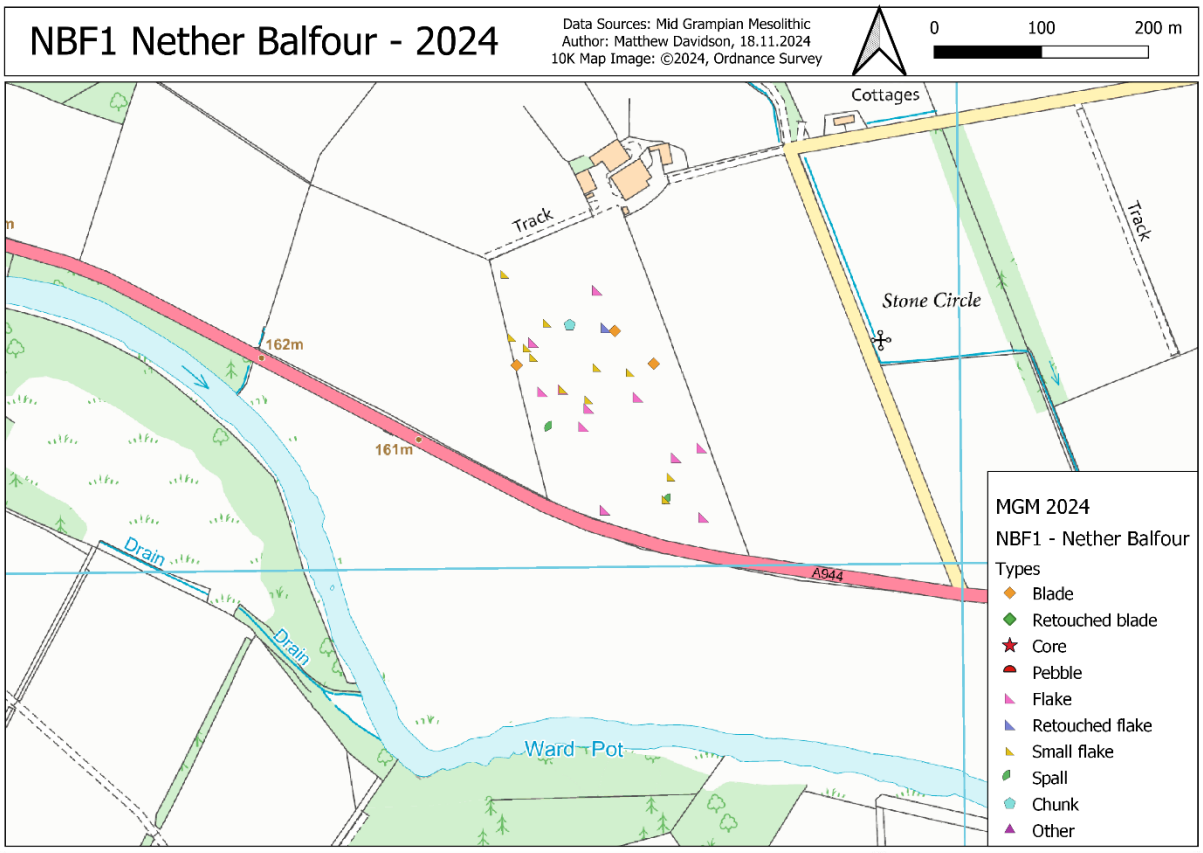
Figure 6: Example of lithics found at HD1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

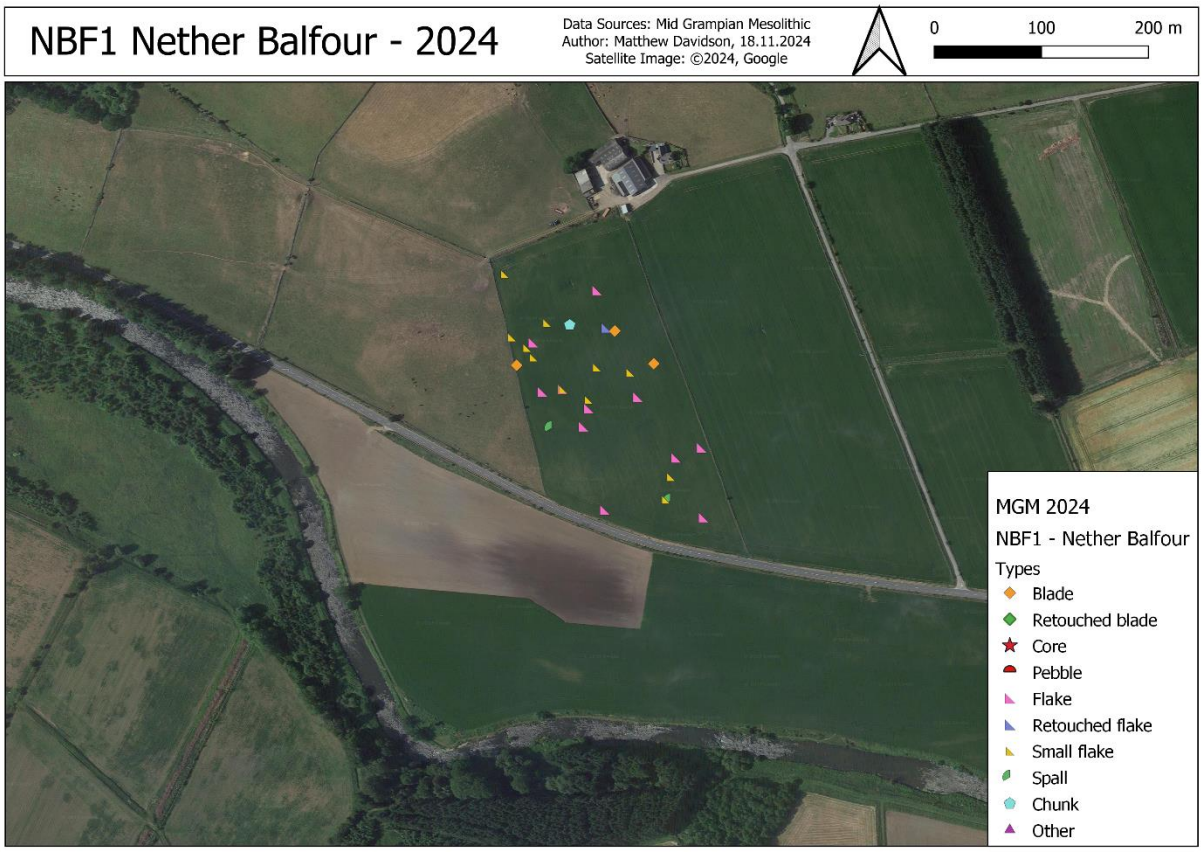
Figure 7: Early Neolithic polished stone axehead from HD1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Figure 8: Neolithic leaf points from HD1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

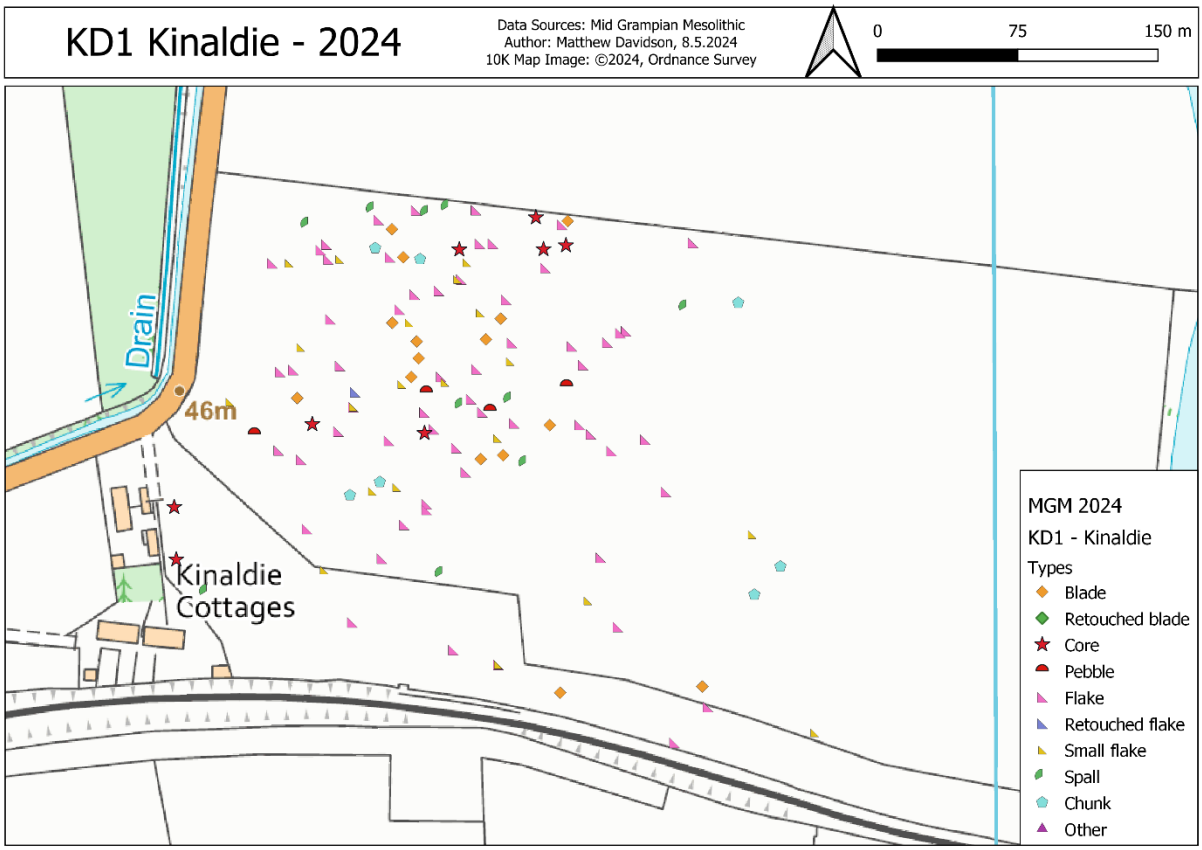
7 MGM003

Nether Balfour (NBF1)

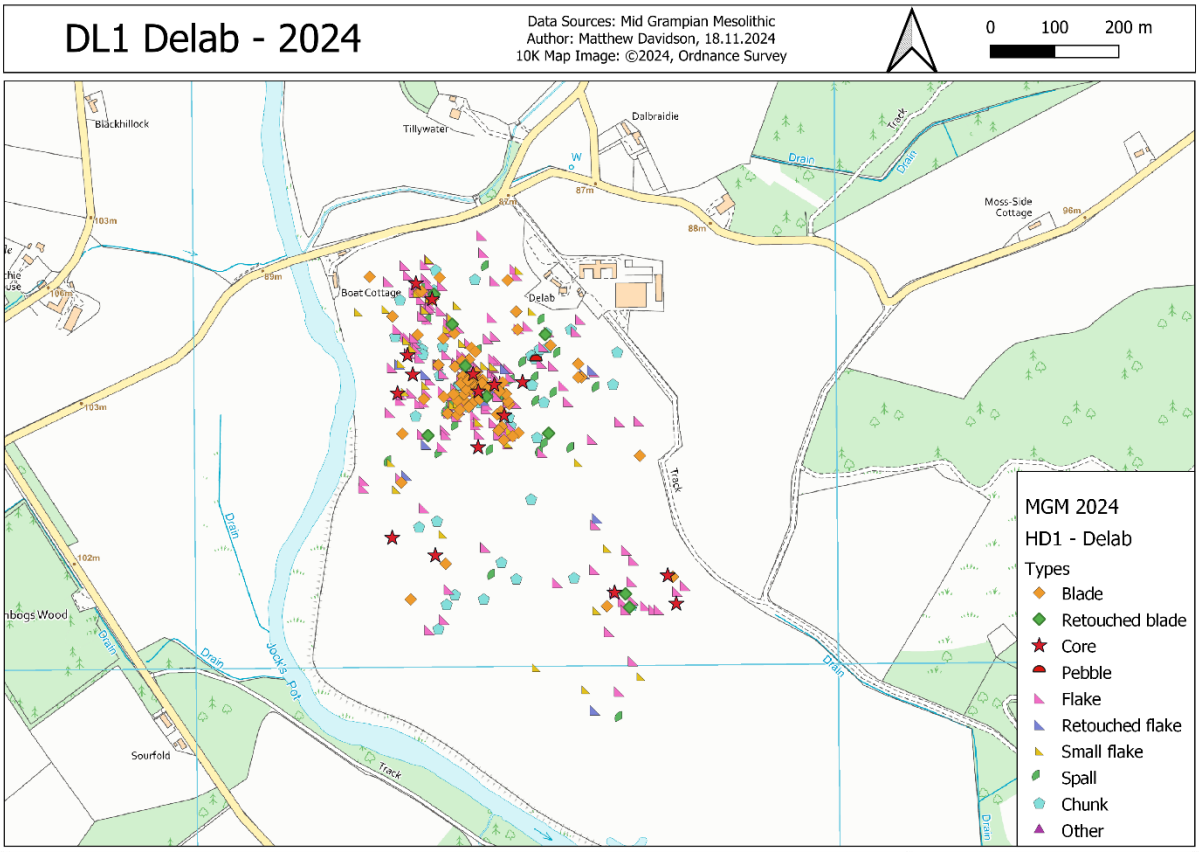




Kinaldie (KD1)



Delab (DL1)


DL1 Delab - 2024
Data Sources: Mid Grampian Mesolithic
Author: Matthew Davidson, 18.11.2024
10K Map Image: ©2024, Ordnance Survey
0 100 200 m
Blackhillock
Tillywater
Dalbraidie
Moss-Side Cottage
Boat Cottage
Delab
Sourfold
Jock's Pot
Drain
Track
MGM 2024
HD1 - Delab
Types
Blade
Retouched blade
Core
Pebble
Flake
Retouched flake
Small flake
Spall
Chunk
Other

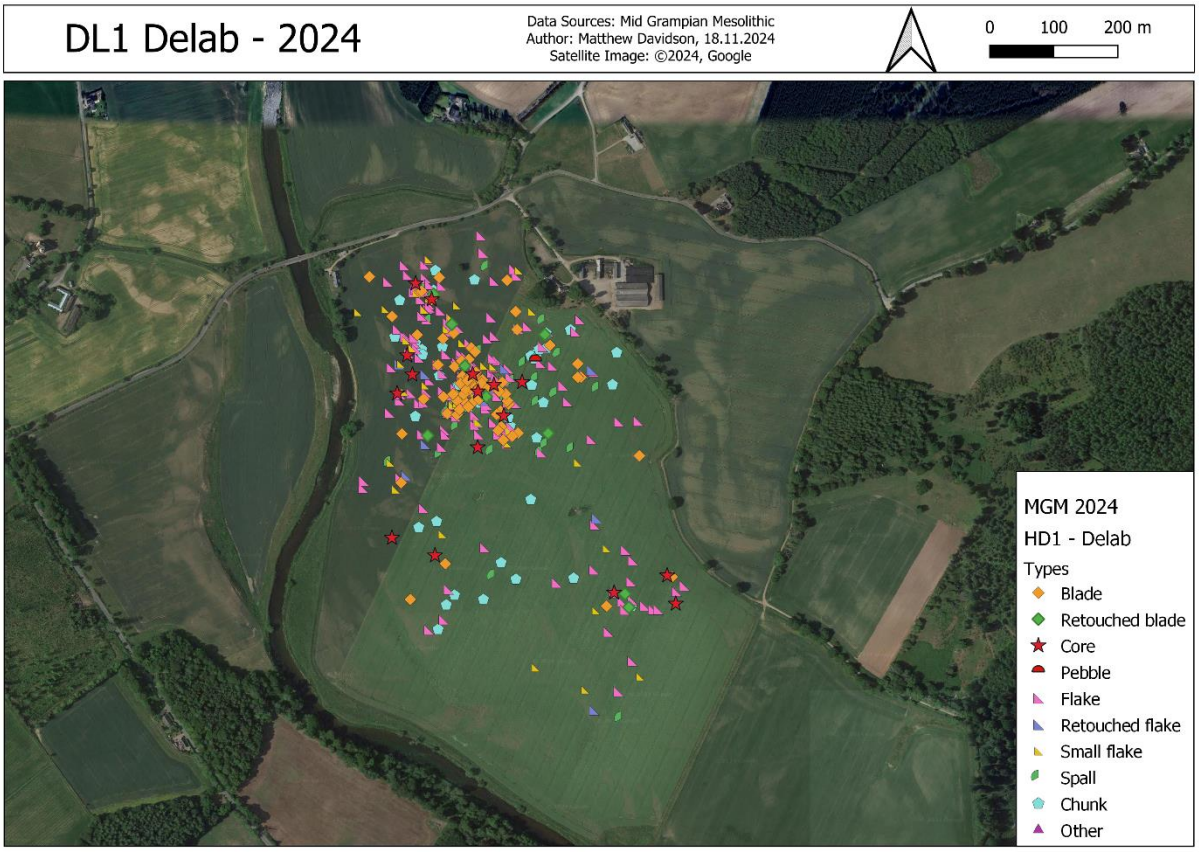

DL1 Delab - 2024
Data Sources: Mid Grampian Mesolithic
Author: Matthew Davidson, 18.11.2024
Satellite Image: ©2024, Google
0 100 200 m
MGM 2024
HD1 - Delab
Types
Blade
Retouched blade
Core
Pebble
Flake
Retouched flake
Small flake
Spall
Chunk
Other

Figure 9: Examples of cores from DL1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

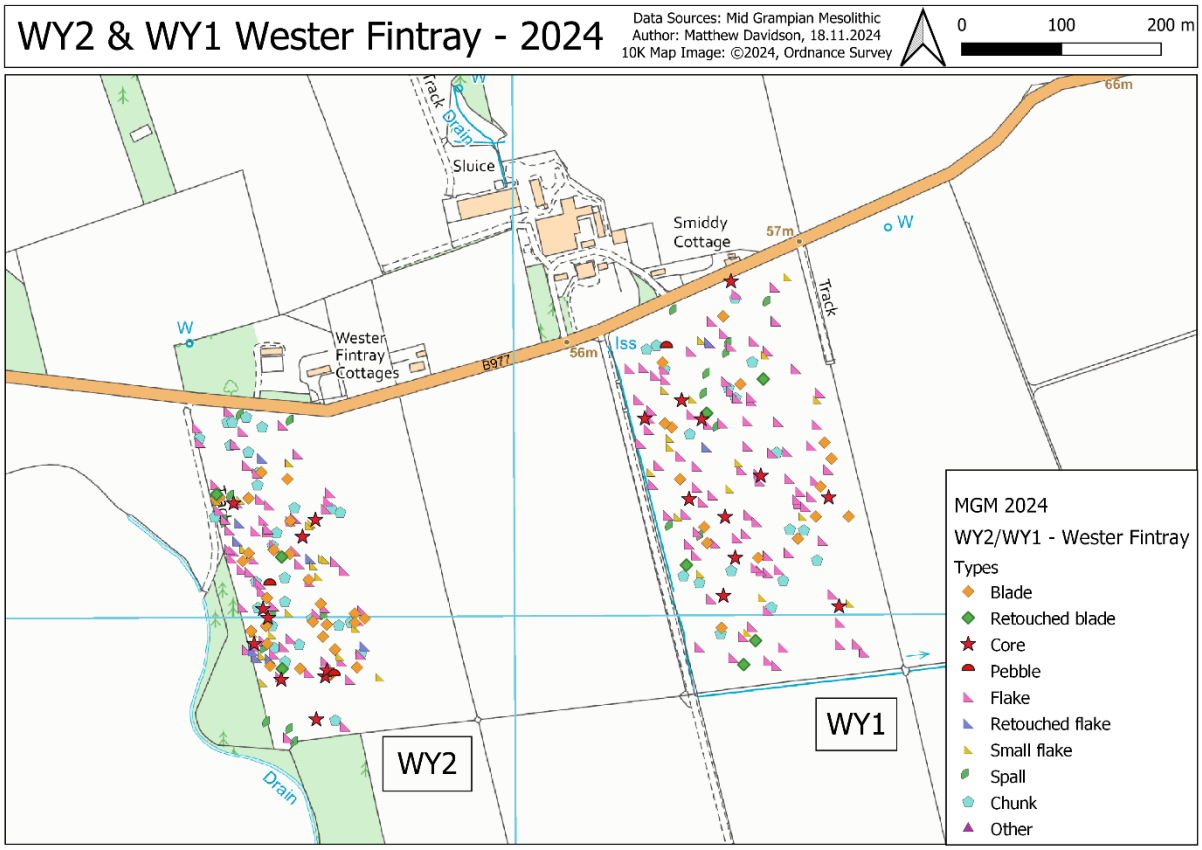
Figure 10: Example of blades from DL1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Figure 11: Example of scrapers from DL1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Figure 12: Example of Blades from DL1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Figure 13: Example of Flakes from DL1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Wester Fintray 1 (WY1) and Wester Fintray 2 (WY2)



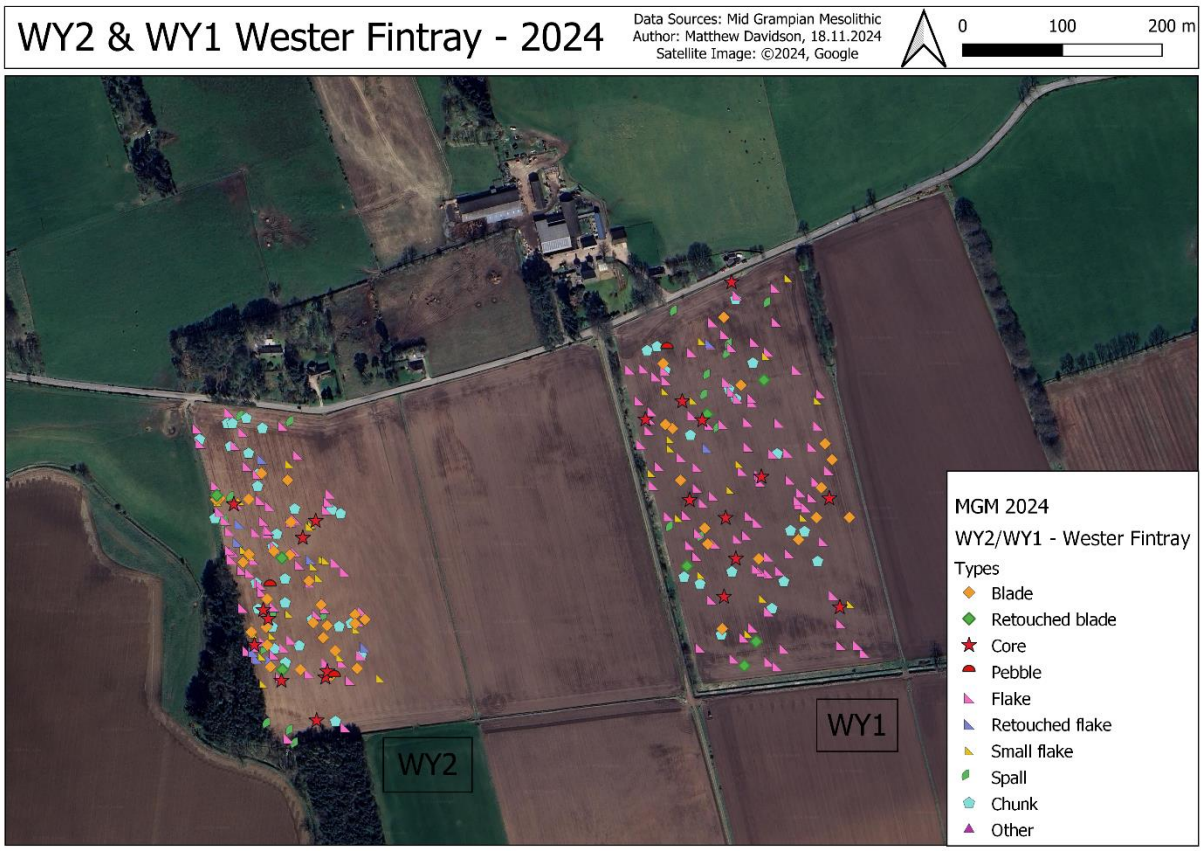


Figure 14: Example of blades from WY1 and WY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.

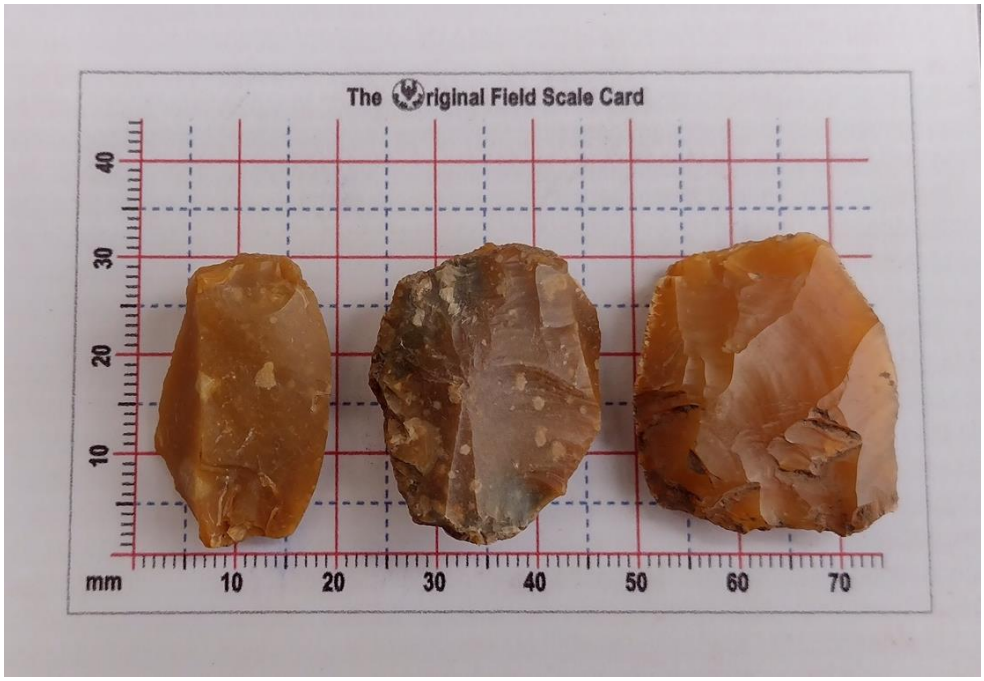
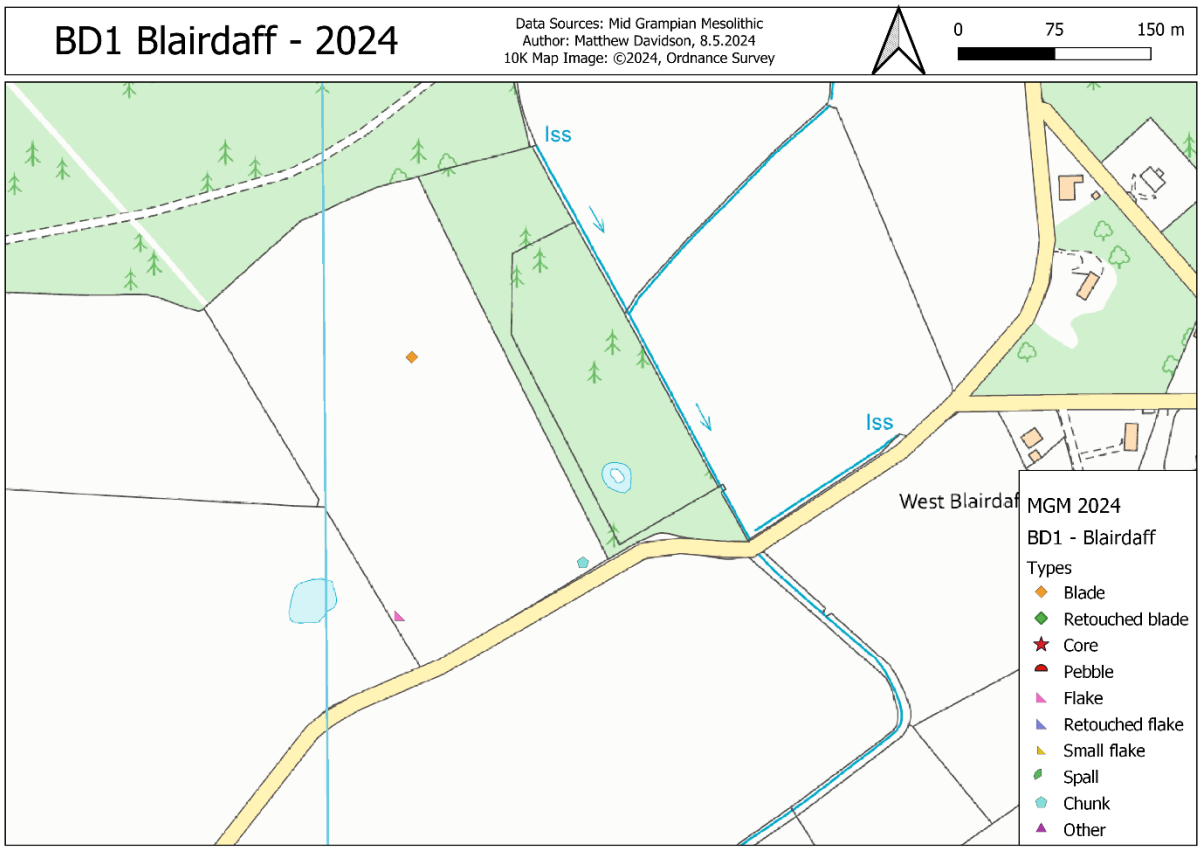


Figure 15: Example of cores from WY1 and WY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.

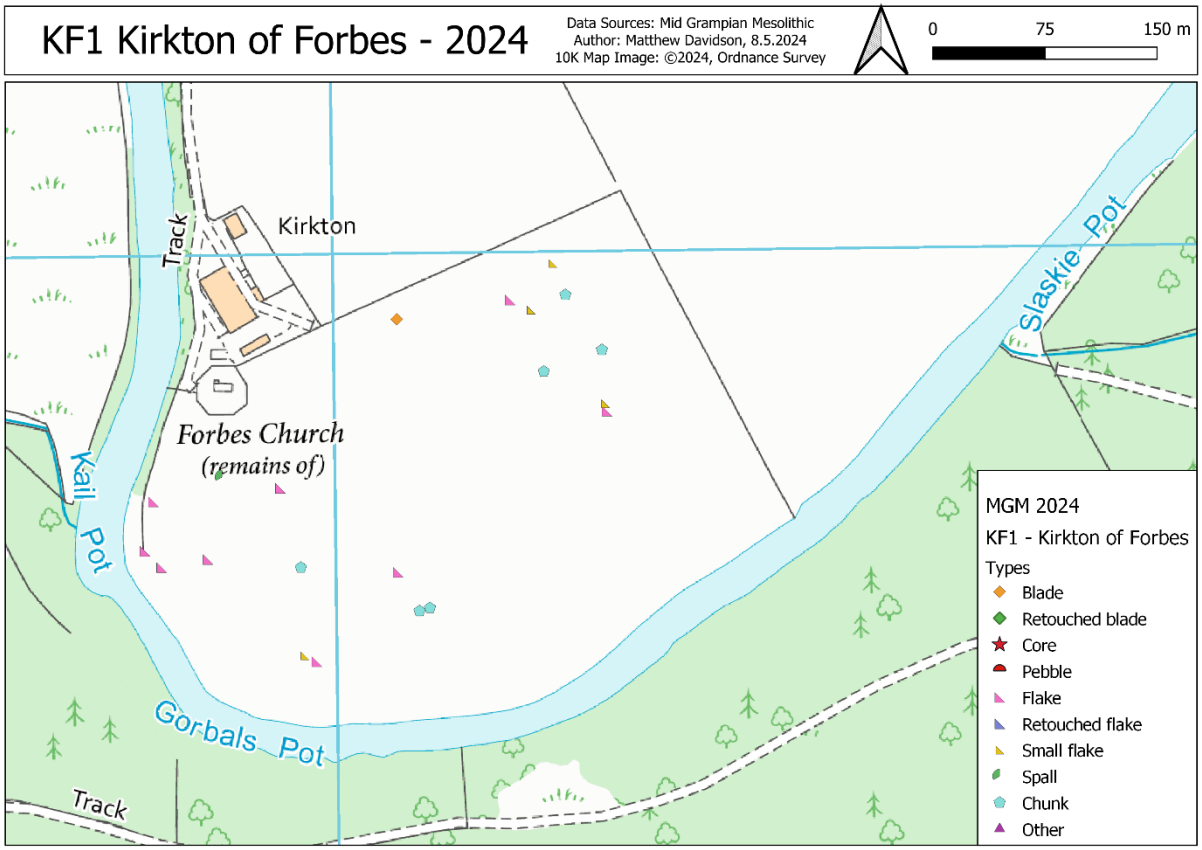
Figure 16: Example of Cores from WY1 and WY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.


Figure 17: Example of flakes from WY1 and WY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Blairdaff (BD1)



Kirkton of Forbes (KF1)



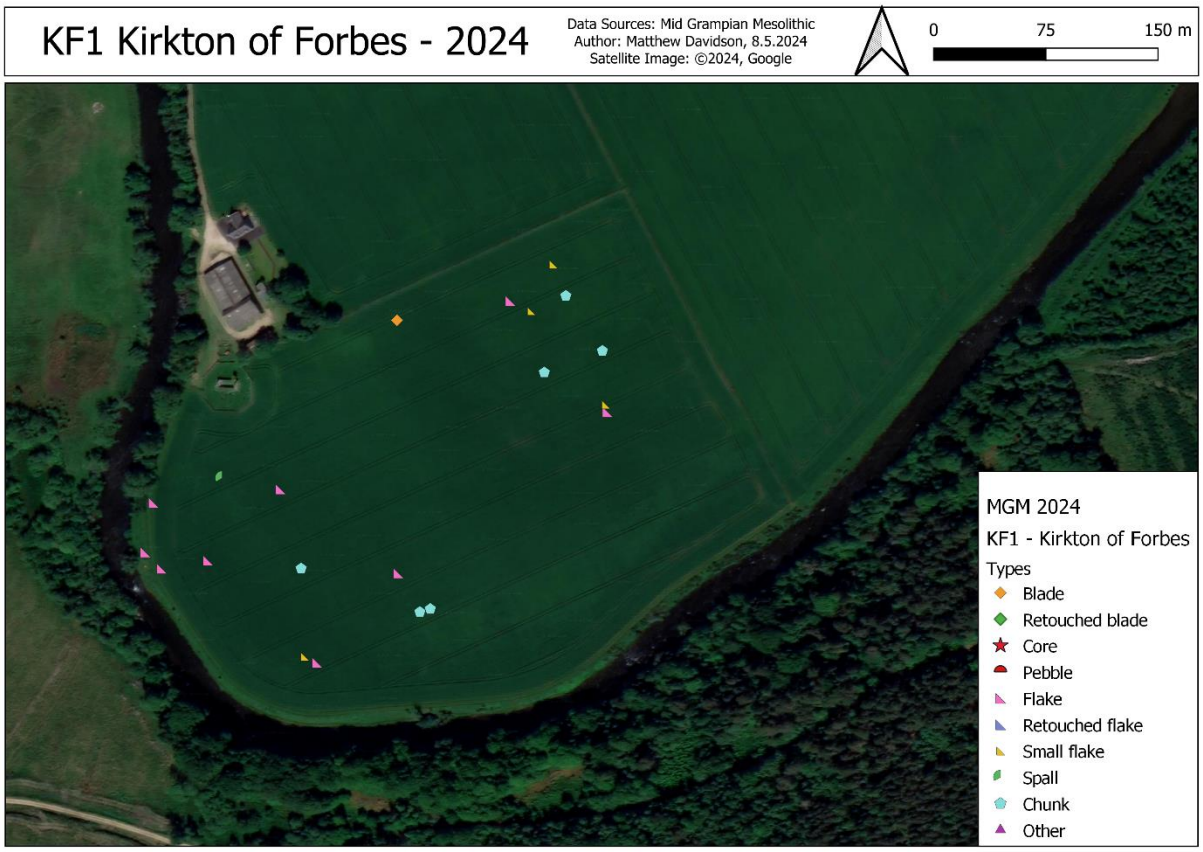
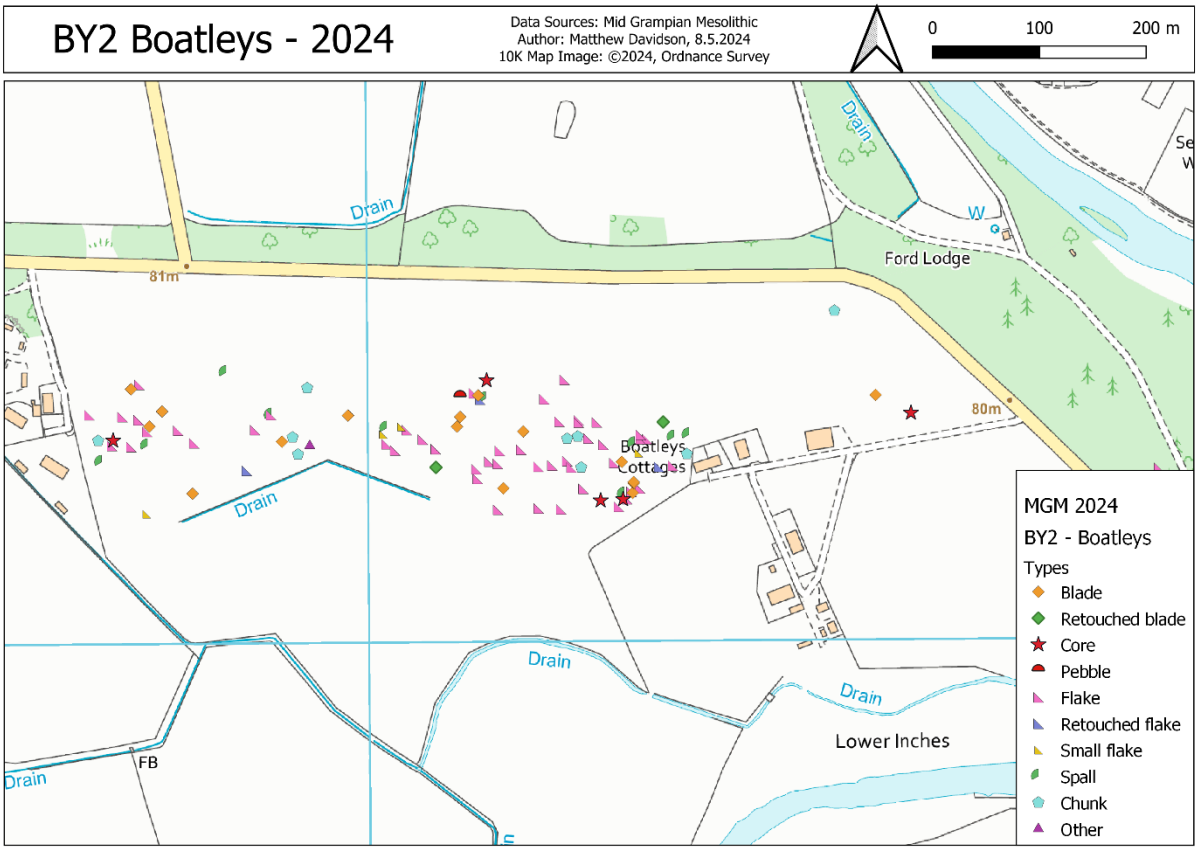


Figure 18. Example of blades and flakes from KF1. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Boatleys 2 (BY2)



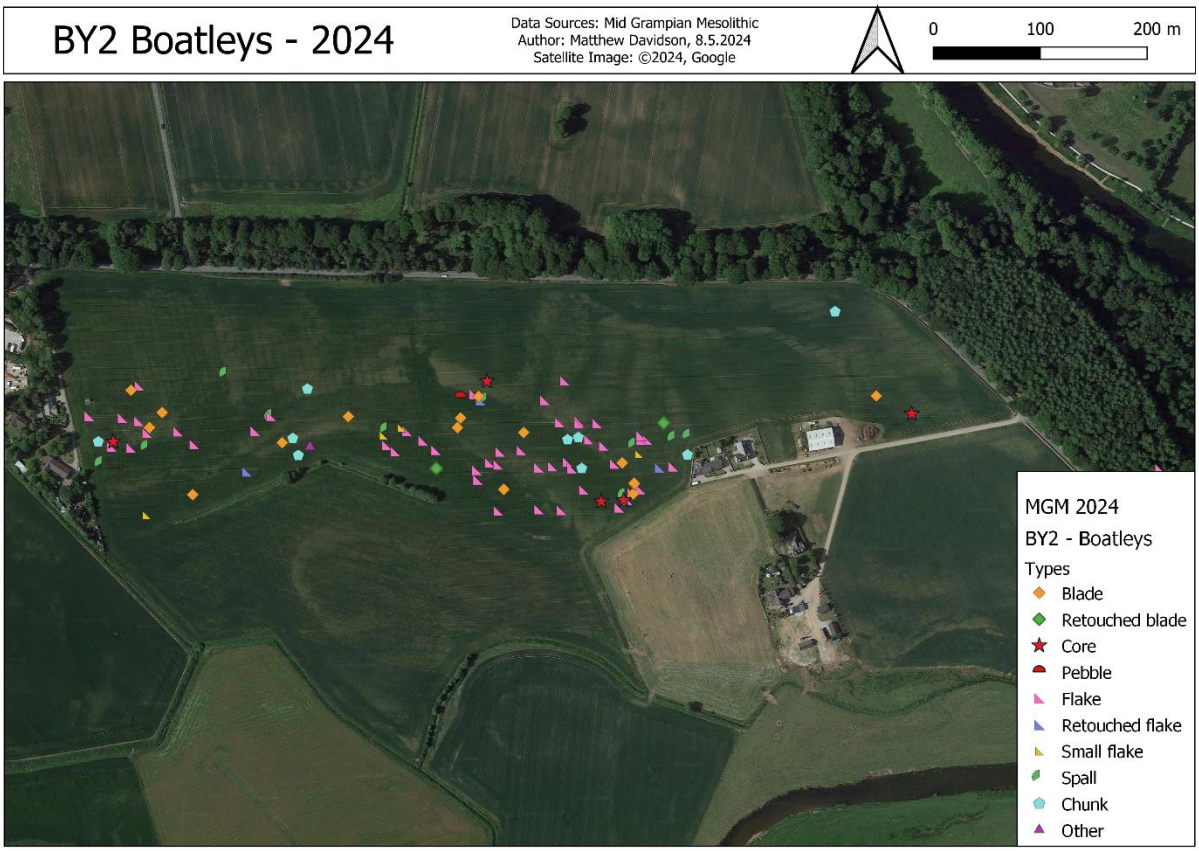


Figure 19. Example of Blades from BY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Figure 20. Example of scraper (left) and retouched flake from BY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Figure 21: Example of cores from BY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.

Figure 22: Leaf point (left) and obliquely blunted blade from BY2. Photo Roslyn Hay.

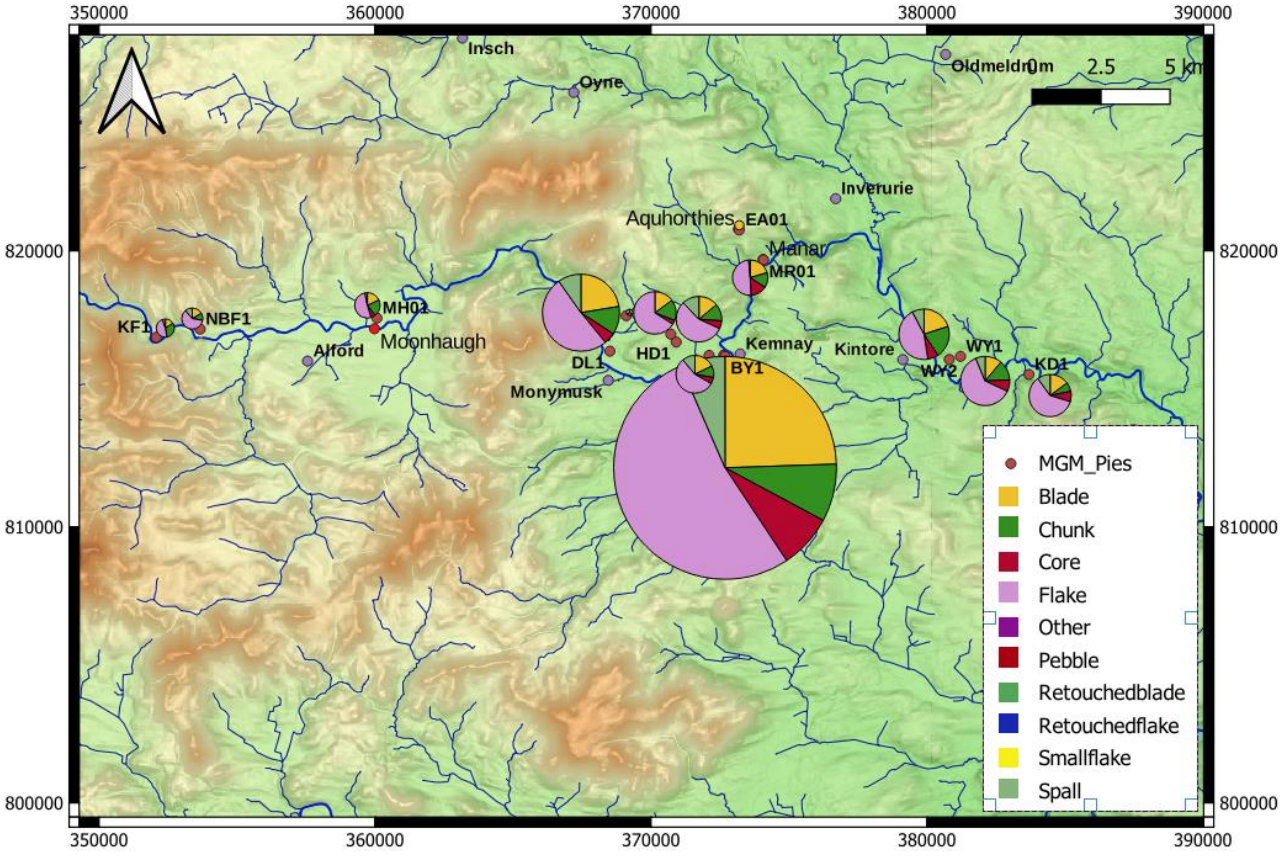


Figure 23: Pie map of lithic types from 2023 and 2024 field seasons. Image Simon Allerton.

Magnetic gradiometry survey of Boatleys 1 field

In November and December 2024, in collaboration with Dan Pratt from Aberdeen University Archaeology Department, we completed a magnetic gradiometry survey of Boatleys 1 field. The instrument was a SENSYS 5 sensor cart-based system provided by the Aberdeen University. The objective was to provide additional information prior to future test-pitting at Boatleys 1.

Figure 24: Simon Payne using the SENSYS magnetic gradiometer. Photo Simon Allerton.

The results of the survey have identified some interesting features.
The strongest anomaly is associated with a cable in the northern part of the field. Medieval rig and furrow features stand out clearly as WNW-ESE anomalies spaced approximately 10m apart. Igneous boulders and cobbles (gabbros and granites for example) often have strong magnetic properties, and a lot of the individual point anomalies are likely to be associated with these or perhaps buried ferrous metal objects. There are also magnetic anomalies aligned with the acquisition direction which are likely an artefact of the acquisition. Perhaps most interesting are some longer wavelength low amplitude anomalies which may be related to palaeochannels, which may either predate or postdate Mesolithic activity. Importantly, we do not identify any structures which we would want to avoid during test pitting.

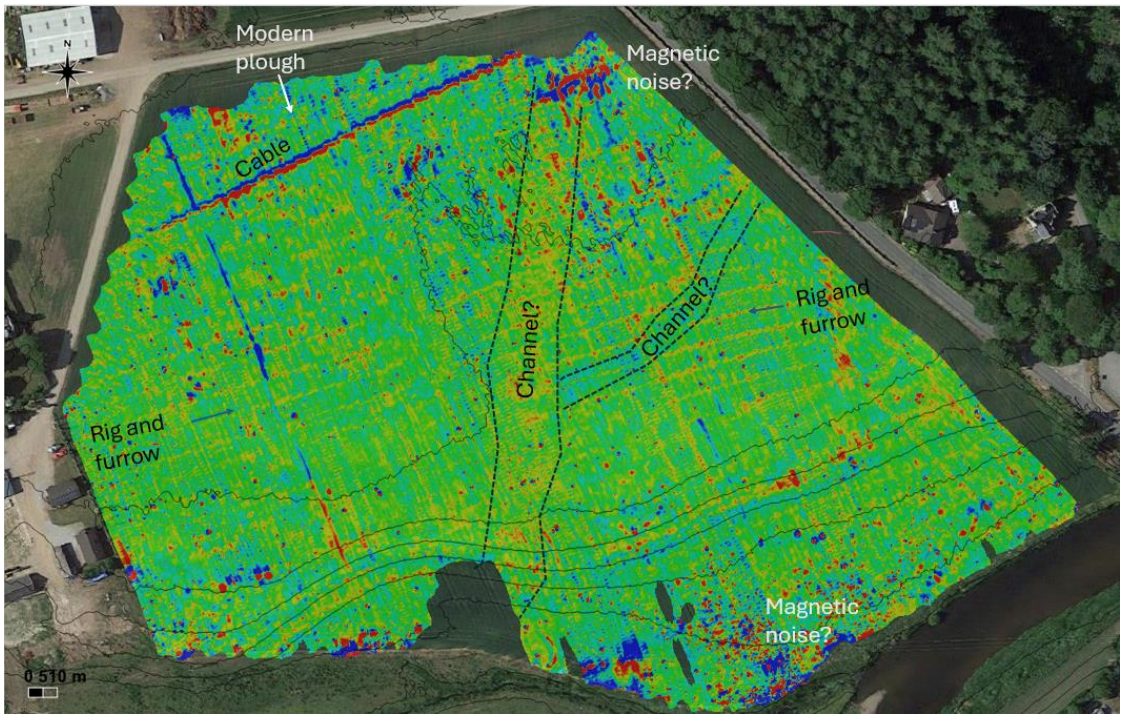


Figure 25: Magnetic gradiometry results from Boatleys 1 field. Image Simon Allerton.

About MGM

Committee Officers

Field walking and finds coordinator: David Hood
Treasurer: Simon Allerton
Secretary: Tracey West
Mapping: Matthew Davidson
(Chair of the group rotates round the officers)

Other Committee Members

Archaeological support: Stewart MacIntyre
Robin Worsman
Simon Payne

Support with lithic analysis and classification

Roslyn Hay
June Armstrong

Steering Committee: Coordinated by Bruce Mann, County Archaeologist.

Mid Grampian Mesolithic Membership

Mid Grampian Mesolithic Field-walkers email distribution list has 74 members (13th January 2025). In addition, the MGM Facebook group has 218 members (13th January 2025), increased from 41 members (on 28th July 2023).

Meetings held

Committee Meeting 8th January 2024
Committee Meeting 6th February 2024
Committee Meeting 2nd March 2024
Lithics Workshop with Ann Clarke 21st March 2024
Committee Meeting 1st April 2024
Mesolithic Supergroup meeting 17th April 2024
Committee Meeting 22nd April 2024
Annual General Meeting 18th May 2024
Committee Meeting 17th June 2024
Committee Meeting 22nd July 2024
Committee Meeting 19th August 2024
Committee Meeting 17th September 2024
Committee Meeting 14th October 2024
Mesolithic Supergroup meeting 4th October 2024
Committee Meeting 11th November 2024
Committee Meeting 9th December 2024

Community engagement

- **www.midgrampianmesolithic.org** *webpage published January 2024*
- *Flinty Chat joint with Mesolithic Deeside, 6th January 2024*
- *Hatton of Fintray Primary School visit, joint with Mesolithic Deeside, 28th March 2024*
- *Scottish Archaeology Month Event, Cowdray Hall, 14th September 2024*
- *Prehistory in the Garioch, Monymusk Hall, 21st Sept 2024*

Grants

Many thanks to ACAS for support to cover Ann Clarke's Lithic classification and accompanying report (December 2023).
Many thanks to George and Edna Baxter Foundation for support for outreach activities (December 2024).

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to Mid Grampian Mesolithic, particularly those landowners who have given us permission to fieldwalk on their land and to the farmers whose cooperation has been so helpful.