

# Mid Grampian Mesolithic

## Annual Report 2025

### Introduction

Mid Grampian Mesolithic is a community archaeology group established in December 2022 to investigate the evidence for Mesolithic (and Palaeolithic) activity in the Mid Grampian area including the catchments of the rivers Don, Urie and Ythan.

In 2025, the group's third season, ten fields were walked in the Don catchment. Lithic descriptions were completed by Roslyn Hay and June Armstrong, both experienced members of Mesolithic Deeside and Mid Grampian Mesolithic, following the categorisation methodology adopted by Ann Clarke.



*Figure 1: Barbed and Tanged Arrowhead from field MM2 (photo Roslyn Hay).*

We also completed our first test-pitting at the Boatleys-1 field near Kemnay, collecting samples for future dating.

Community engagement is an important element of our activities. Last year we visited Kemnay Primary School, participated in NHS Grampian's May Month of Wellbeing with "A stroll through 10,000 years" a History Walk in Monymusk, and attended a Doors Open event "Cultural Connections: Archaeology of Aberdeenshire", held at Aden Country Park.

### Strategy for Winter/Spring 2025

The overall objective of Mid Grampian Mesolithic is to improve our understanding of Mesolithic activity in the Mid Grampian region. In our first season (2023), we sought to test the hypothesis that the Dee was not unique and that concentrations of activity occurred on the other rivers in the region, starting our investigations with the Don. The significant Mesolithic lithic scatter encountered at Boatleys-1 field near Kemnay confirmed this hypothesis. In the 2024 season we 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. In 2025, we continued this approach, focusing on the area between Kemnay and Pitfichie, with two fields near Alford.

Boatleys-1 was the target of our first excavation, co-directed by Robin Worsman and Meg Mearns, and supported by Dr Will Mills (PalaeoScot). A report on this excavation will be shared at a later date.

Conditions were very good in 2025 and a lot of fields were ploughed early, so we were able to complete 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.

## Mid Grampian Mesolithic Winter/Spring Season 2025 – Fields Walked

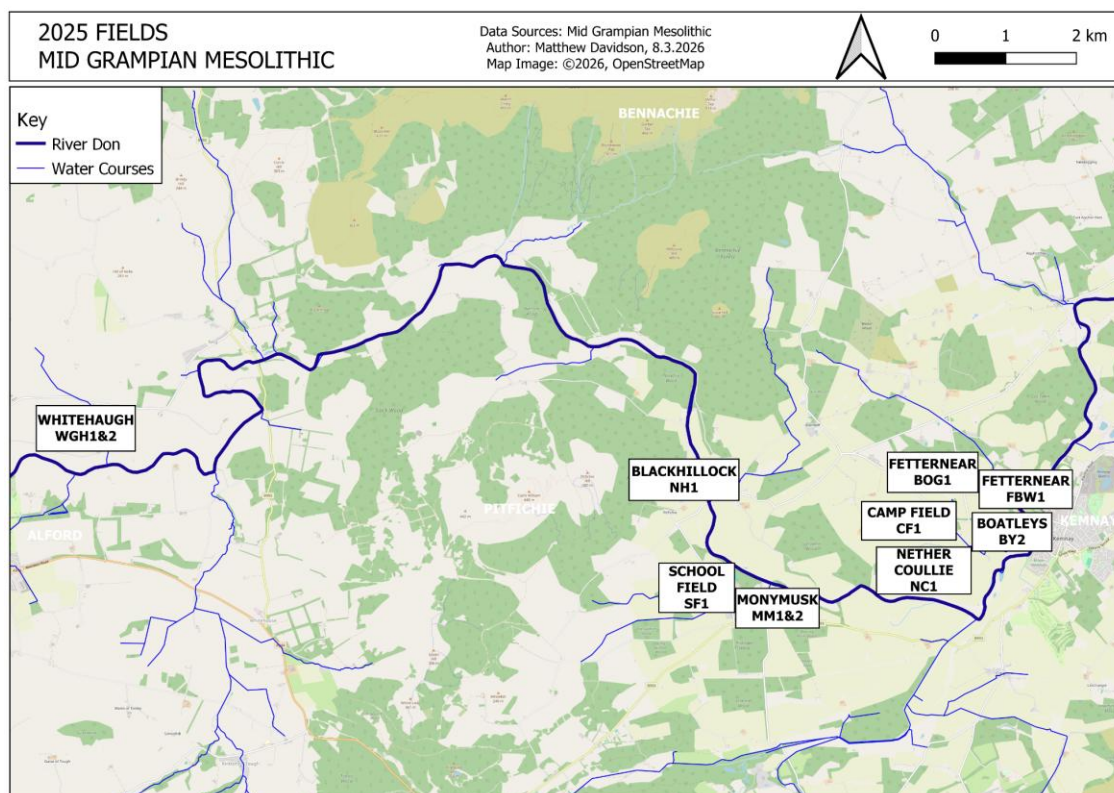


Figure 2: Fields walked by Mid-Grampian Mesolithic in 2025.

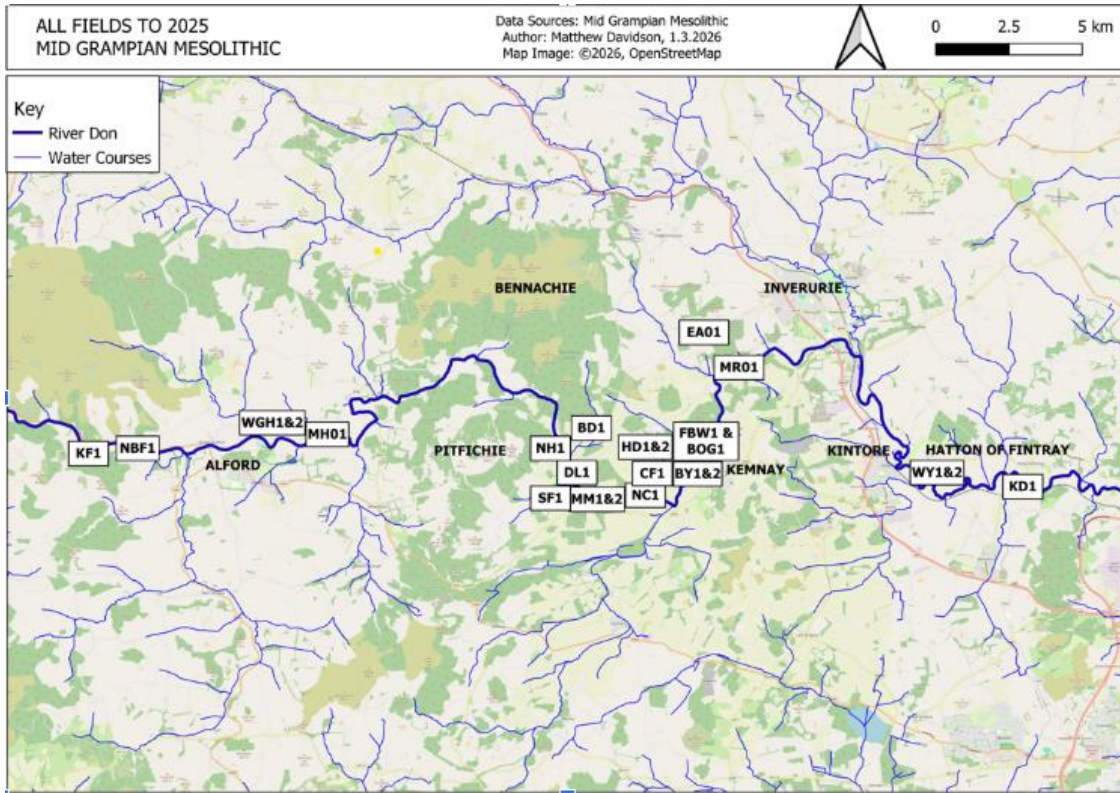


Figure 3: Fields walked by Mid-Grampian Mesolithic between 2023 and 2025.

Field	Code	Date walked	# Walkers	Centroid
Blackhillock	NH1	19/01/2025	25	NJ 67988 16854
Camp Field	CM1	25/01/2025	8	NJ 71435 16205
School Field	SF1	02/02/2025	22	NJ 67983 15380
Bogs	BOG1	08/02/2025	11	NJ 71472 16924
Walled Garden	MM1	16/02/2025	13	NJ 69124 15071
Goose Dam	MM2	16/02/25 19/02/25	13 8	NJ 68822 15087
Boatleys 2	BY2	22/02/2025	10	NJ 72117 16227
Merlin Cott 1	WGH1	02/03/2025	17	NJ 59177 17763
Merlin Cott 2	WGH2	02/03/2025	17	NJ 59363 17774
Nether Coullie 1	NC1	16/03/2025 23/03/25	6 4	NJ 71242 15775
Behind The Wall	FBW1	05/04/2025	10	NJ 72247 16516

Table 1: Field Identifications and locations

Field	Code	Partfield #	Area walked, ha	# Lithics	Lithics/ha
Blackhillock	NH1	1	9	132	14.7
Camp Field	CM1	1	7.5	17	2.3
School Field	SF1	1	8.75	99	11.3
Bogs	BOG1	1	7	8	1.1
Walled Garden	MM1	1	3.25	8	2.5
Goose Dam	MM2	1	7.2	72	10.0
Boatleys 2	BY2	2	10	81	8.1
Boatleys 2	BY2	1 & 2 combined	14	183	13.1
Merlin Cott 1	WGH1	1	5.3	10	1.9
Merlin Cott 2	WGH2	1	2.4	1	0.4
Nether Coullie 1	NC1	1	8.75	39	4.5
Behind Wall	FBW1	1	6.3	41	6.5

Table 2: Lithics recovered and field areas examined

## Results

### Summary Results Table

	BOG1	BY2	CM1	FBW1	MM1	MM2	NC1	NH1	SF1	WGH 1	WGH 2	Grand Total
<b>Blade</b>		29	2	5	1	4	3	12	3	1		<b>60</b>
<b>Chunk</b>	1	20	1	4		7	4	7	15			<b>59</b>
<b>Core</b>	1	8	2	3		3	1	11	7	1		<b>37</b>
<b>Flake</b>	4	91	8	16	6	33	17	58	43	3	1	<b>280</b>
<b>Small flake</b>	1	8		3		13	3	24	18	2		<b>72</b>
<b>Pebble</b>		1		1				4	2			<b>8</b>
<b>Retouched blade</b>		2		1		2		5				<b>10</b>
<b>Retouched flake</b>	1	5	3	3	1	8	3	6	8	3		<b>41</b>
<b>Spall</b>		17	1	5		2	8	4	4			<b>41</b>
<b>Axehead</b>		1										<b>1</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>609</b>

Table 3: Numbers of different find types

	BOG1	BY2	CM1	FBW1	MM1	MM2	NC1	NH1	SF1	WGH 1	WGH 2	Grand Total
<b>Blade</b>	0%	16%	12%	12%	13%	6%	8%	9%	3%	10%	0%	<b>10%</b>
<b>Chunk</b>	13%	11%	6%	10%	0%	10%	10%	5%	15%	0%	0%	<b>10%</b>
<b>Core</b>	13%	4%	12%	7%	0%	4%	3%	8%	7%	10%	0%	<b>6%</b>
<b>Flake</b>	50%	50%	47%	39%	75%	46%	44%	44%	43%	30%	100%	<b>46%</b>
<b>Small flake</b>	13%	4%	0%	7%	0%	18%	8%	18%	18%	20%	0%	<b>12%</b>
<b>Pebble</b>	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	0%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Retouched blade</b>	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	3%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	<b>2%</b>
<b>Retouched flake</b>	13%	3%	18%	7%	13%	11%	8%	5%	8%	30%	0%	<b>7%</b>
<b>Spall</b>	0%	9%	6%	12%	0%	3%	21%	3%	4%	0%	0%	<b>7%</b>
<b>Axehead</b>	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>

Table 4: Find type percentages per field

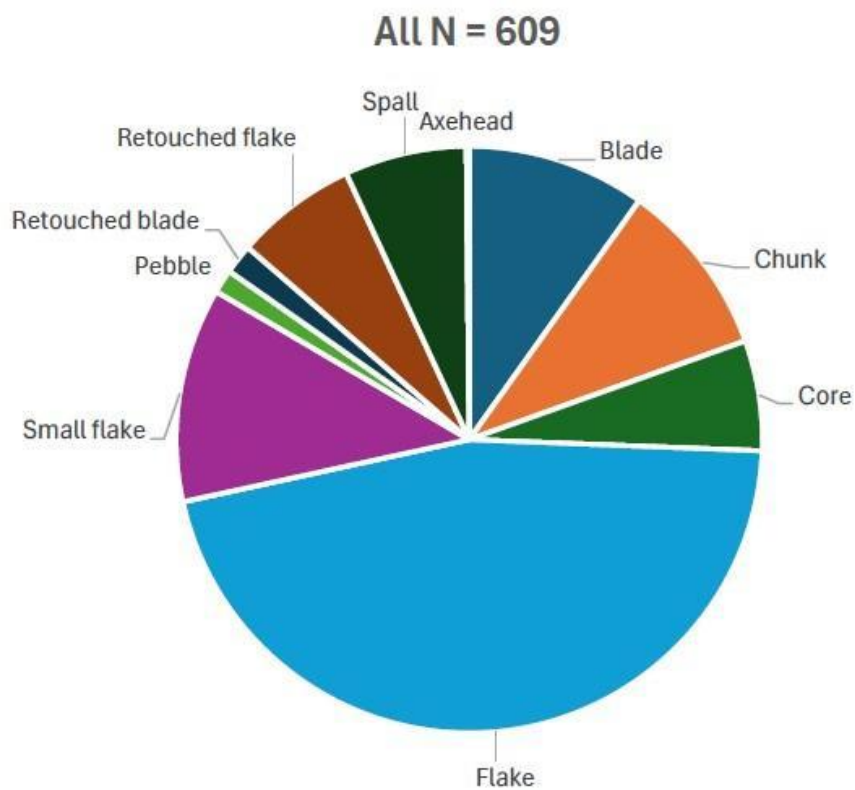


Figure 4: Pie diagram of all lithics from 2025

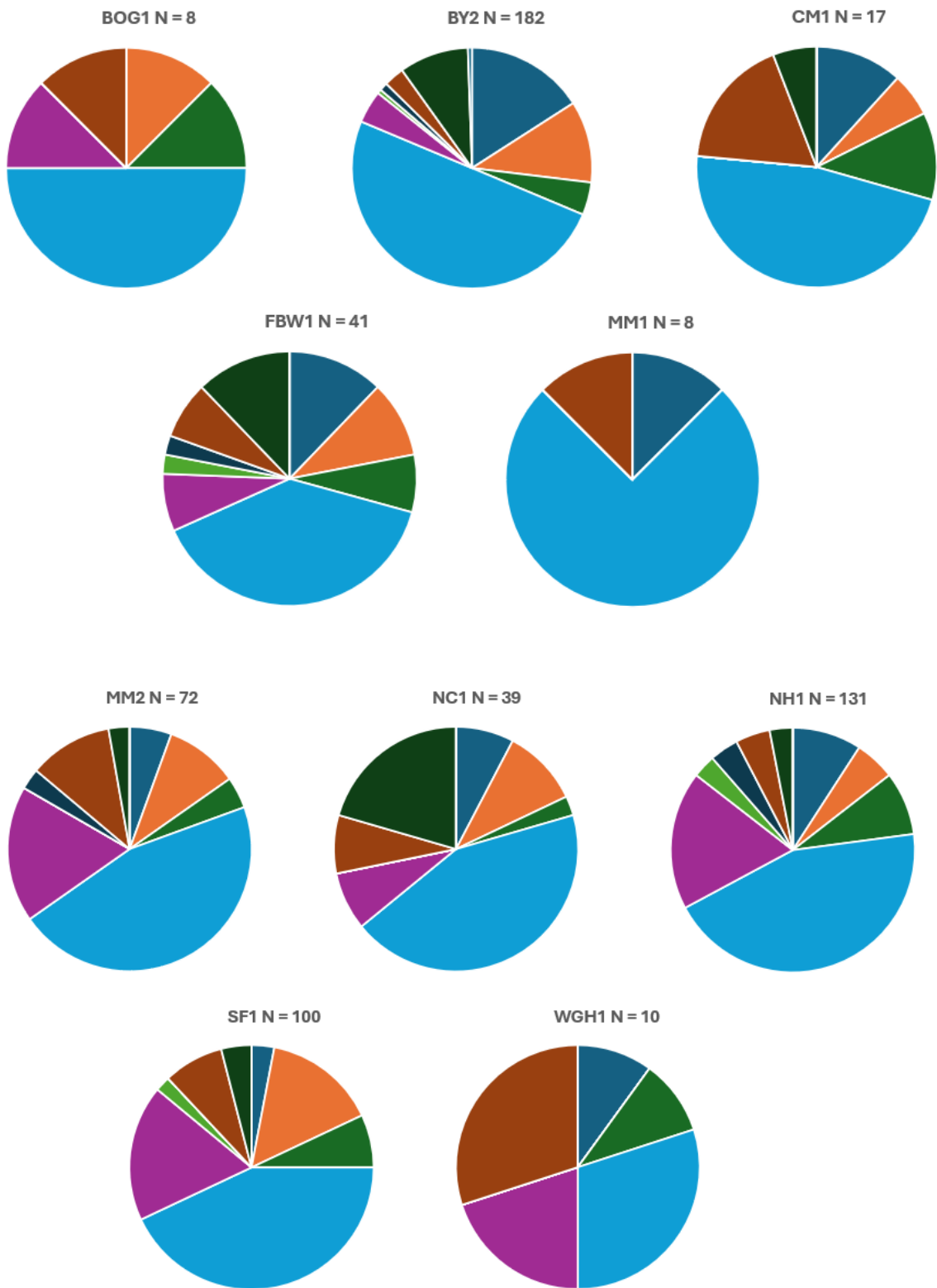


Figure 5: Pie diagrams of lithic classification for fields walked in 2025, see Figure 4 for colour key

# Blackhillock, Pitfichie (NH1)

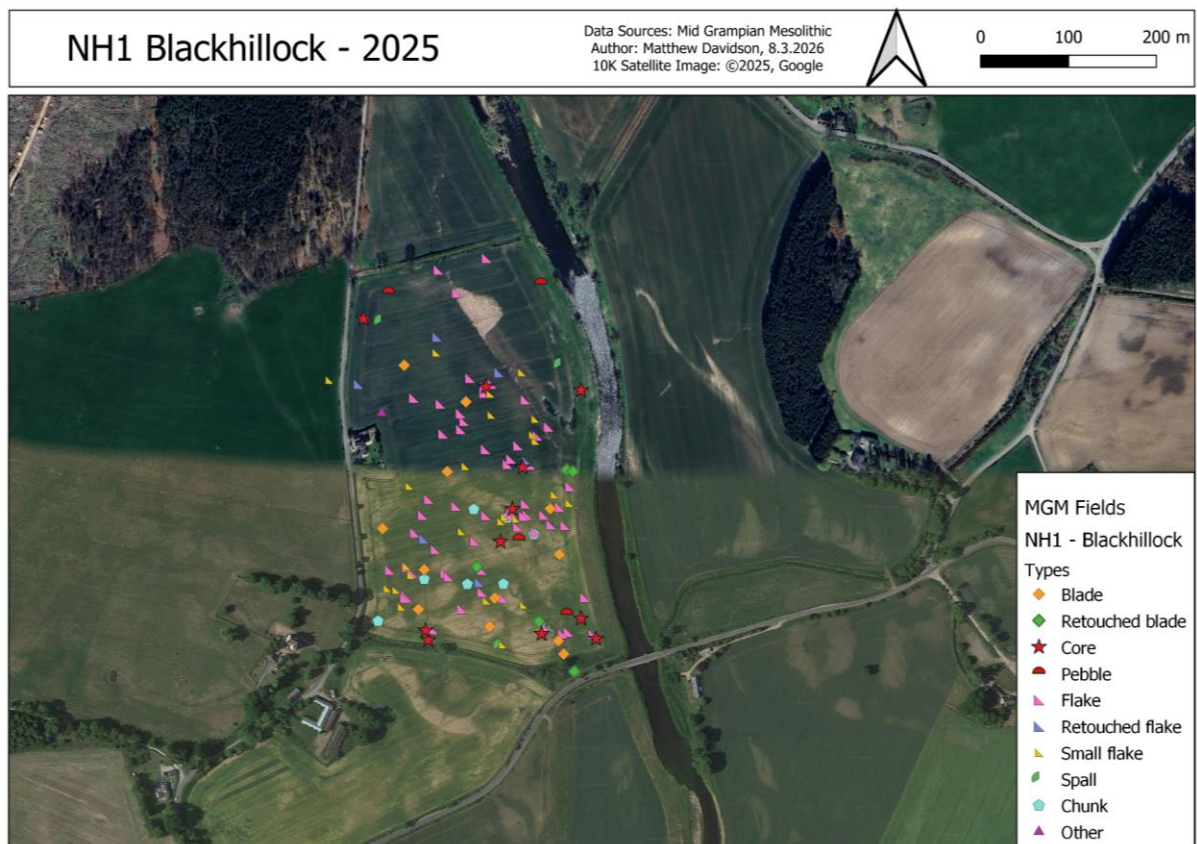
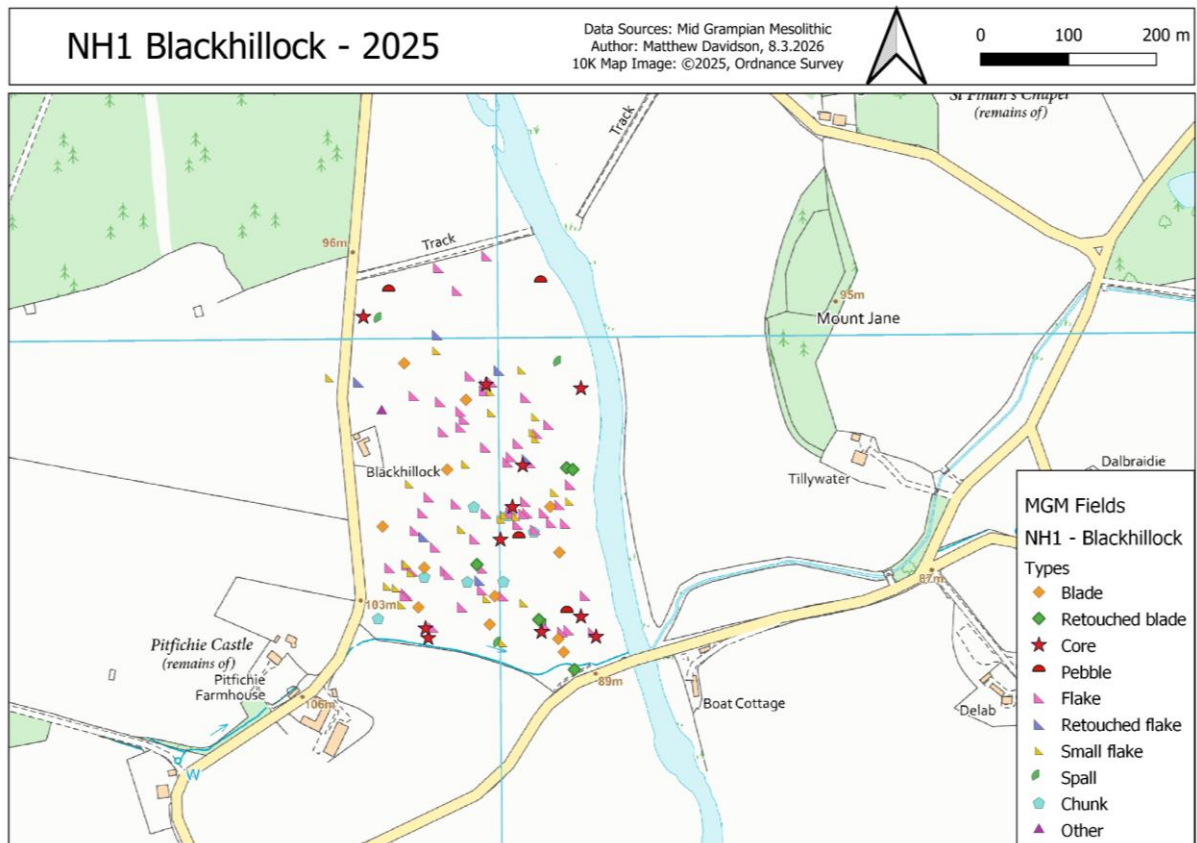


Figure 6: Lithics found in NH1



Figure 7: Example lithics from NH1 (photos Roslyn Hay)

### Camp Field, Pitfichie (CM1)

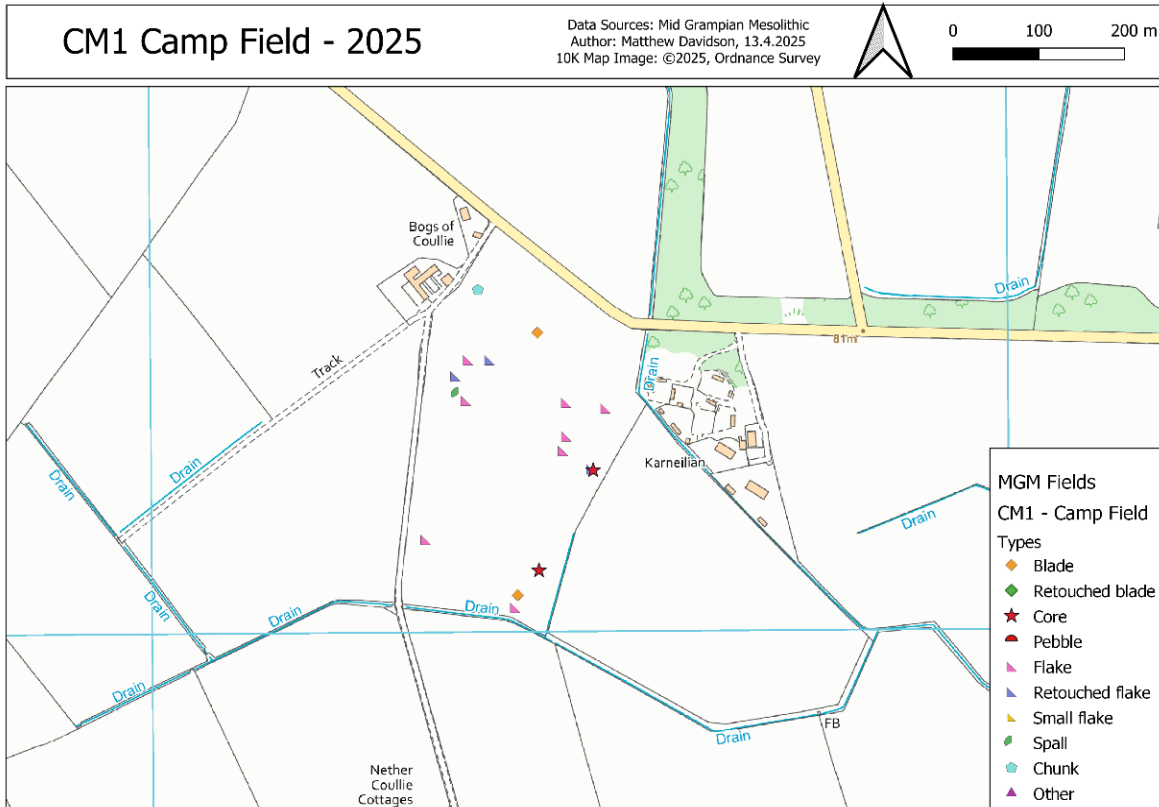




Figure 8: Lithics found in CM1



Figure 9: Examples of lithics found in CM1 (photos Roslyn Hay)

# Monymusk School Field (SF1)

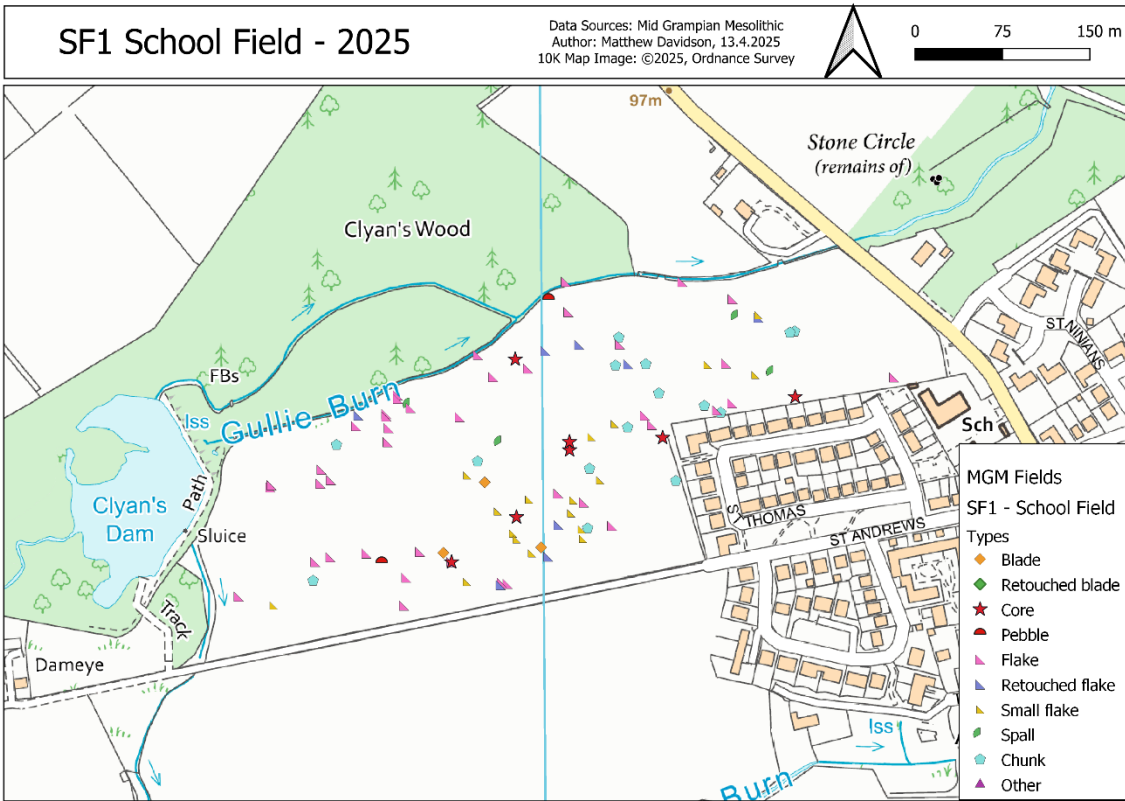


Figure 10: Lithics found in SF1



Figure 11: Examples of lithics found in SF1 (photos Roslyn Hay)

### Bogs, Fetternear, Kemnay (BOG-1)

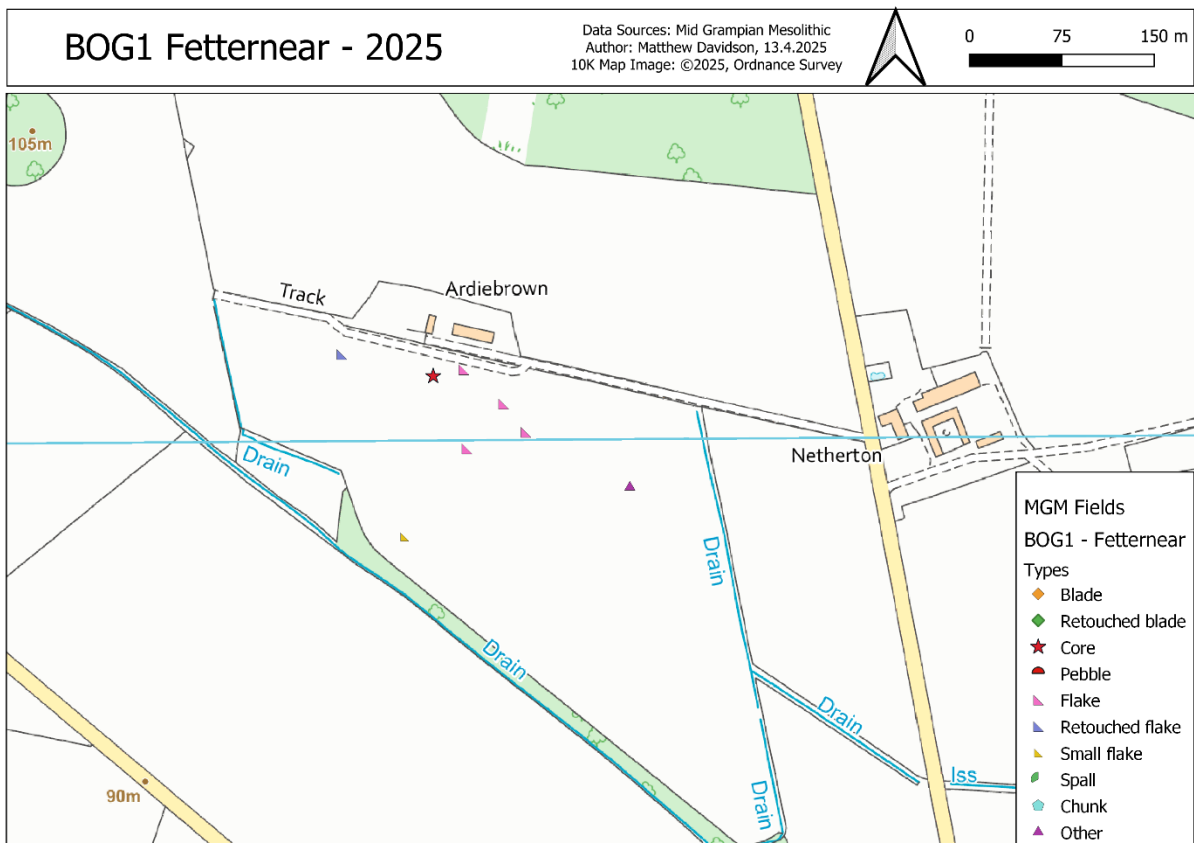




Figure 12: Lithics found in BOG1



Figure 13: Examples of lithics found in BOG1 (photos Roslyn Hay)

# Walled Garden, Goose Dam, Monymusk House (MM1 & MM2)

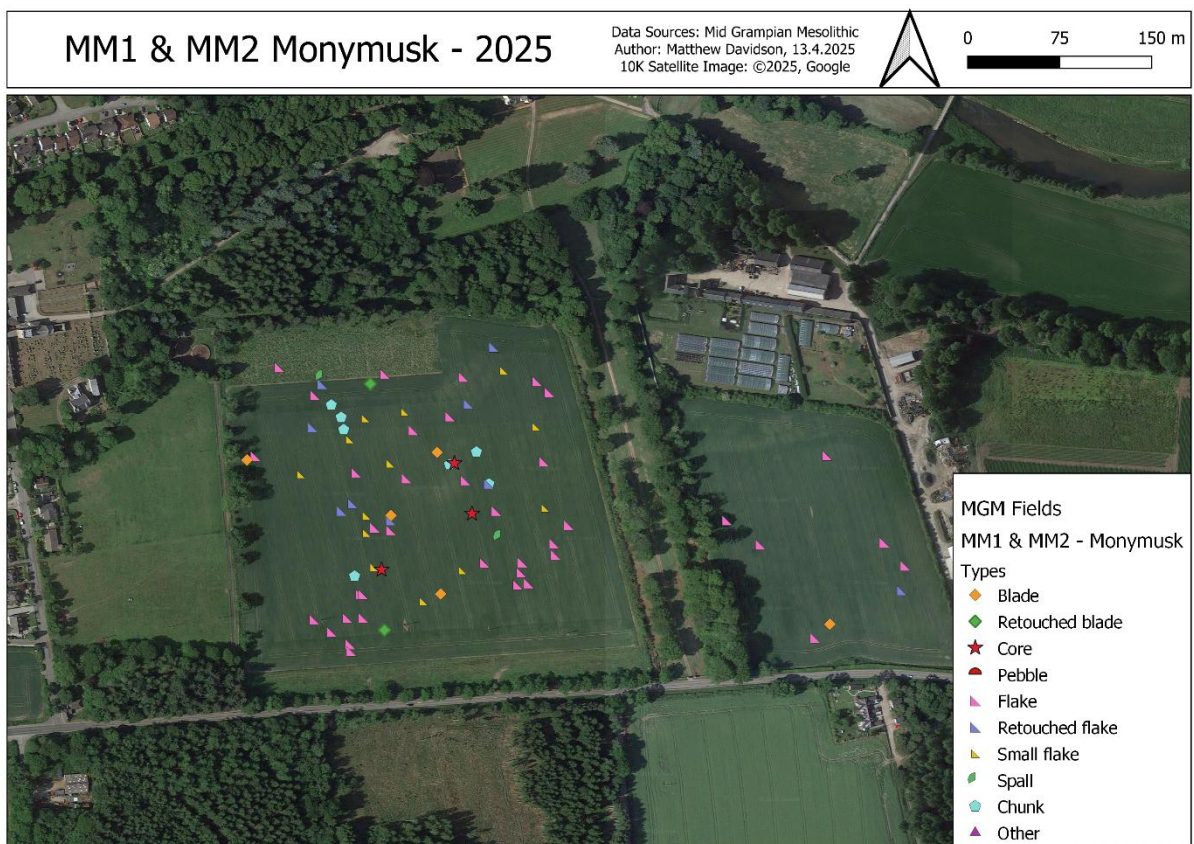
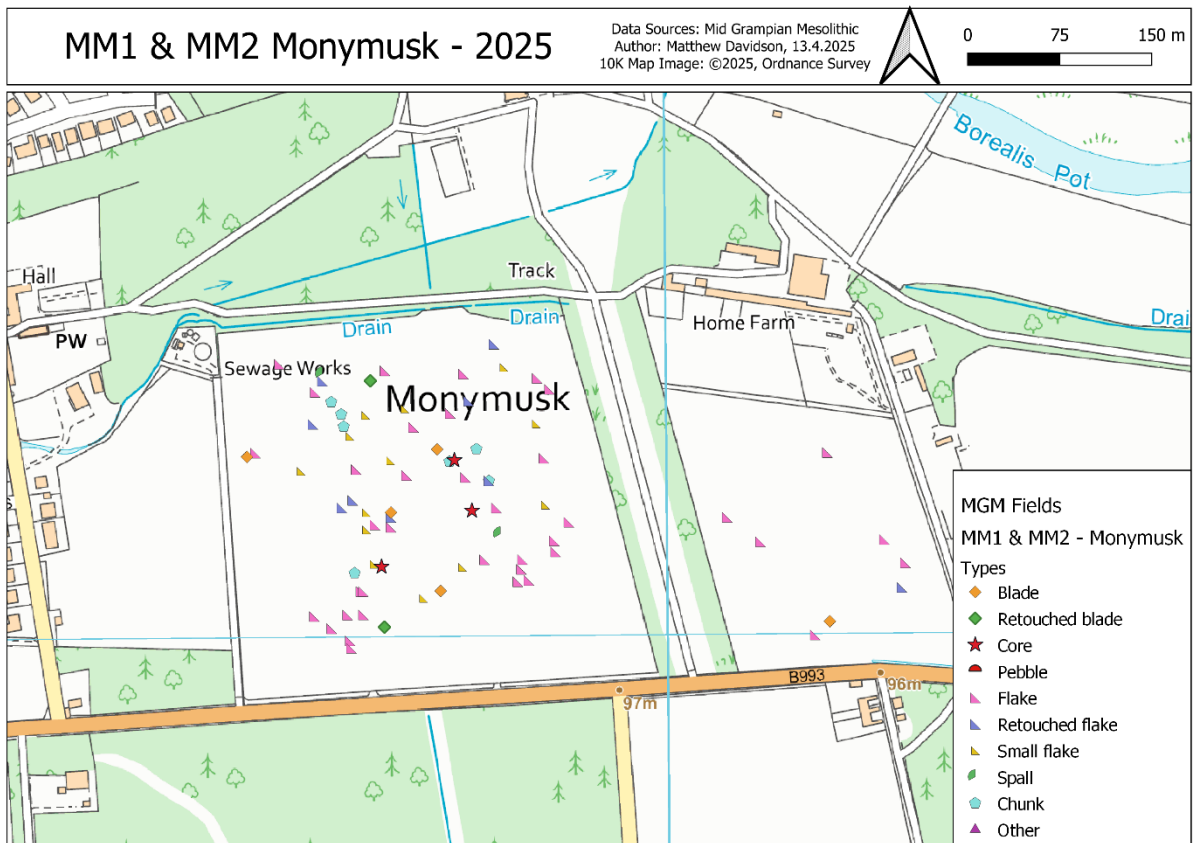


Figure 14: Lithics found in MM1 and MM2



Figure 15: Example of lithics found in MM1 and MM2 (photos Roslyn Hay)

# Boatleys 2, Kemnay (BY2)

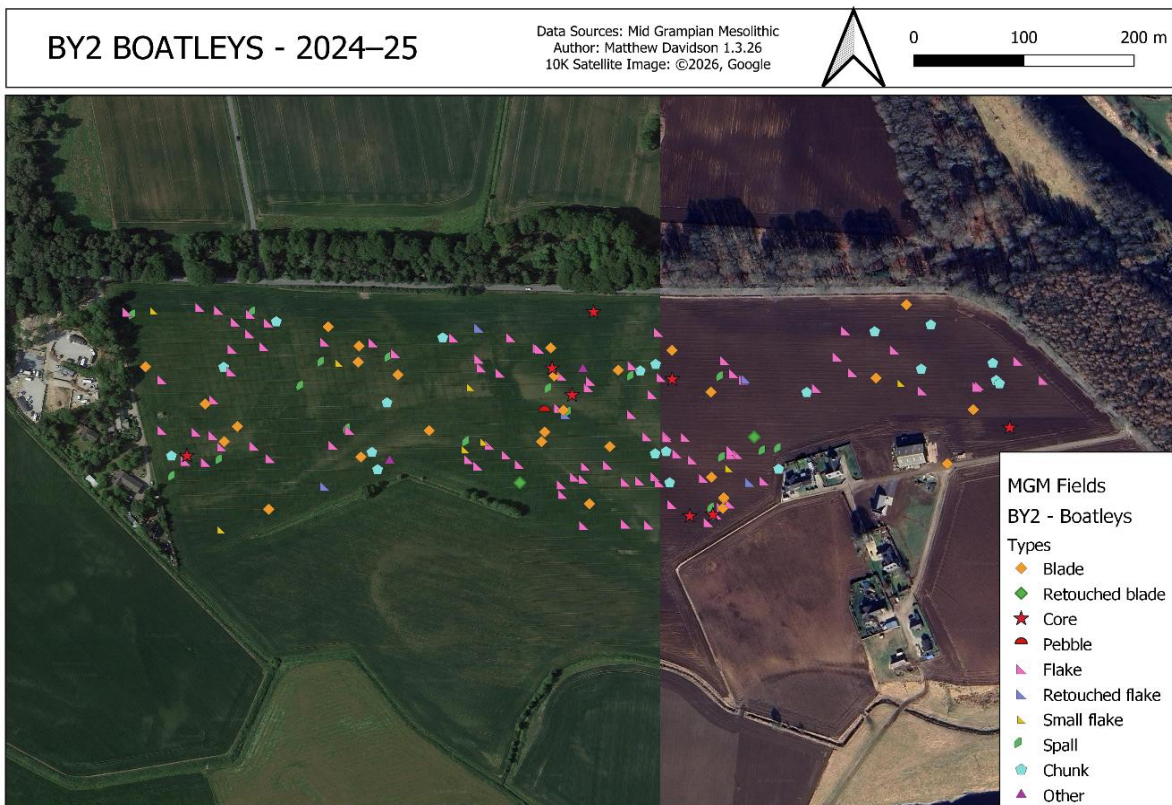
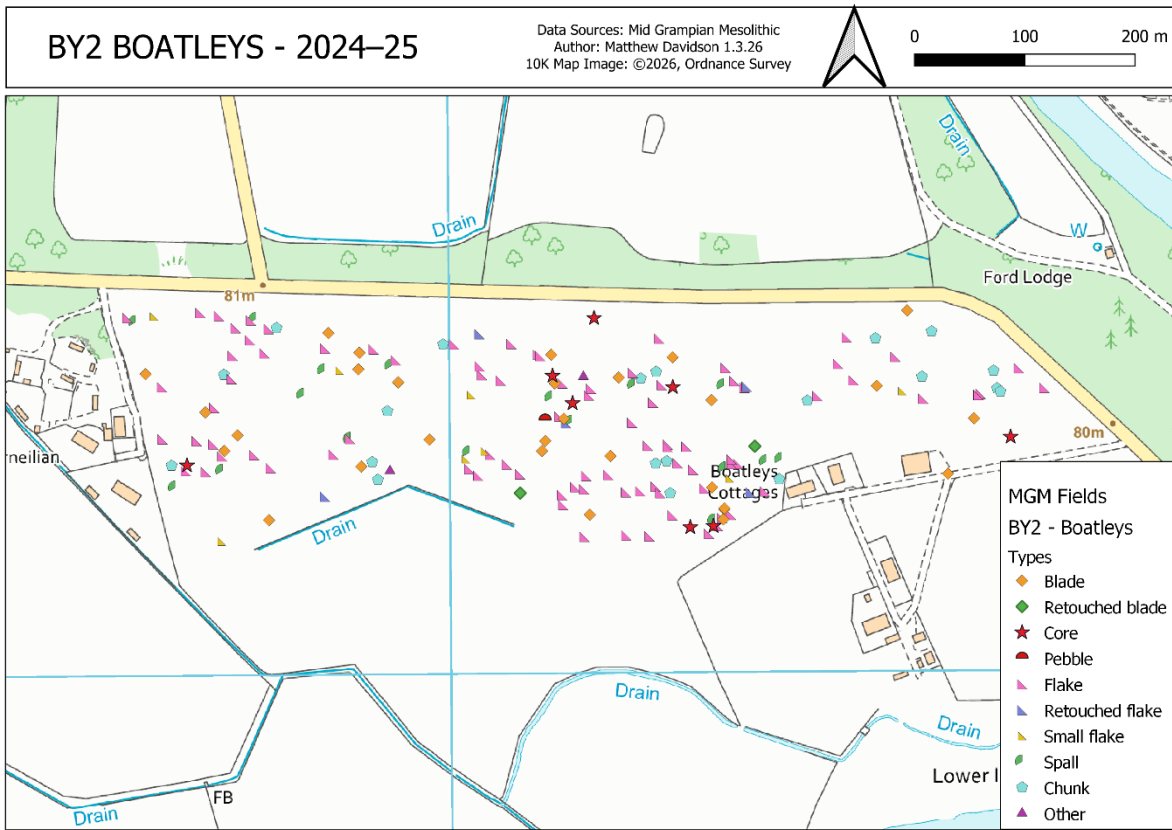


Figure 16: Lithics found in BY2 (2024 and 2025)

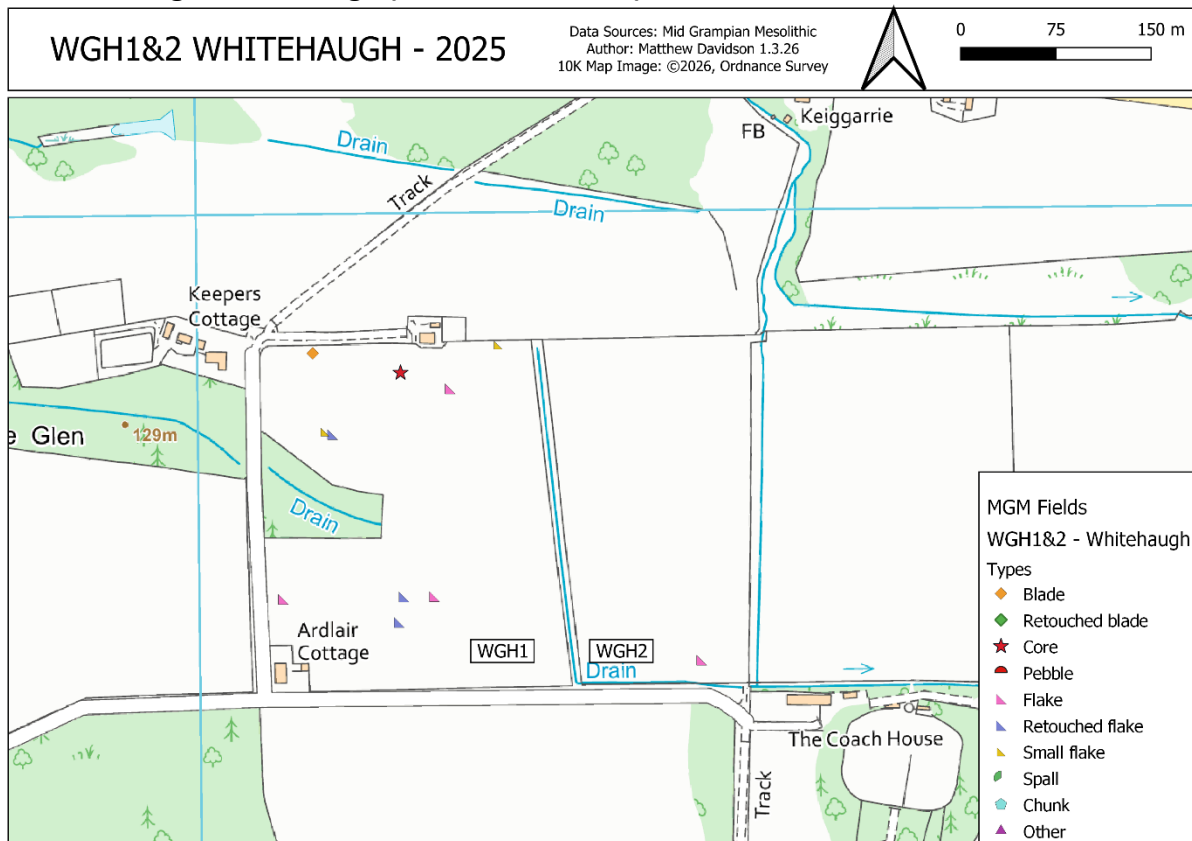


BY2 130



Figure 17: Examples of lithics found in BY2 (photos Roslyn Hay)

### Merlin Cottage, Whitehaugh (WGH1 and WGH2)



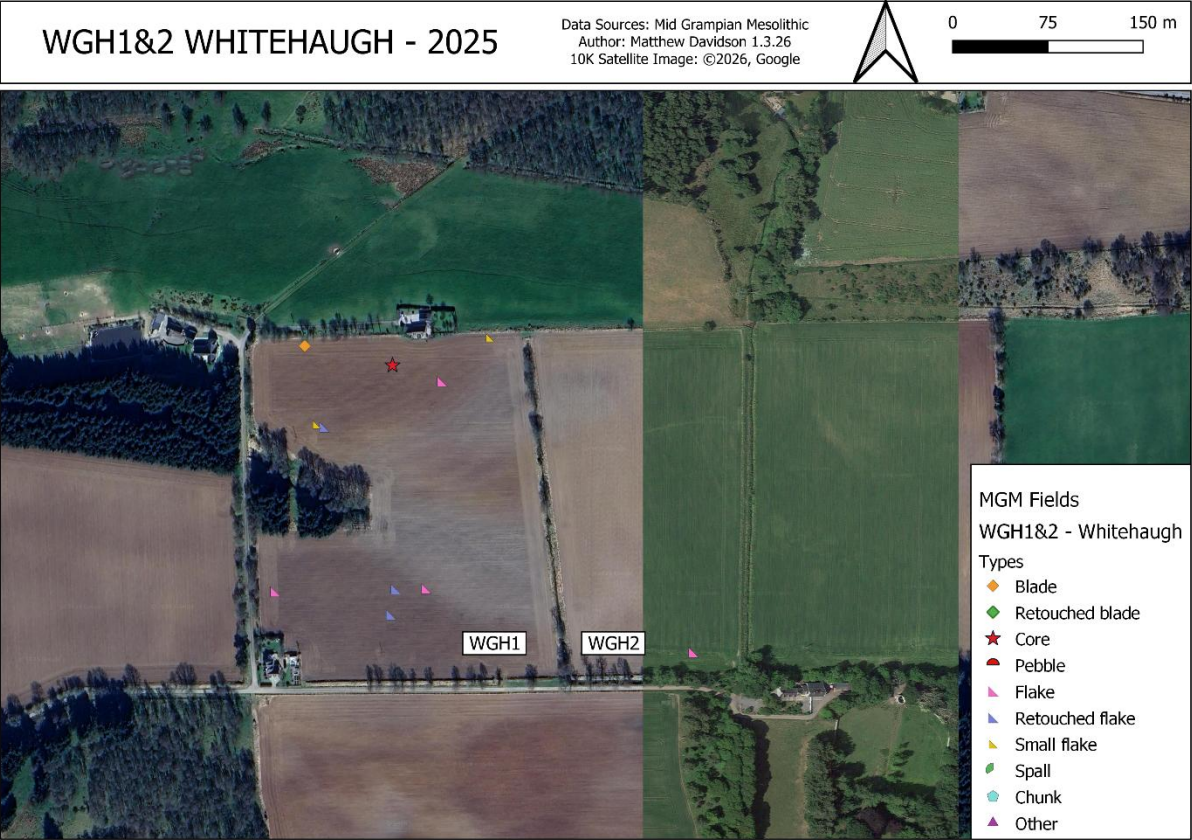


Figure 18: Lithics found in WGH1 and WGH2



Figure 19: Examples of lithics found in WGH1 and WGH2 (photos Roslyn Hay)

# Nether Coullie, Kemnay (NC1)

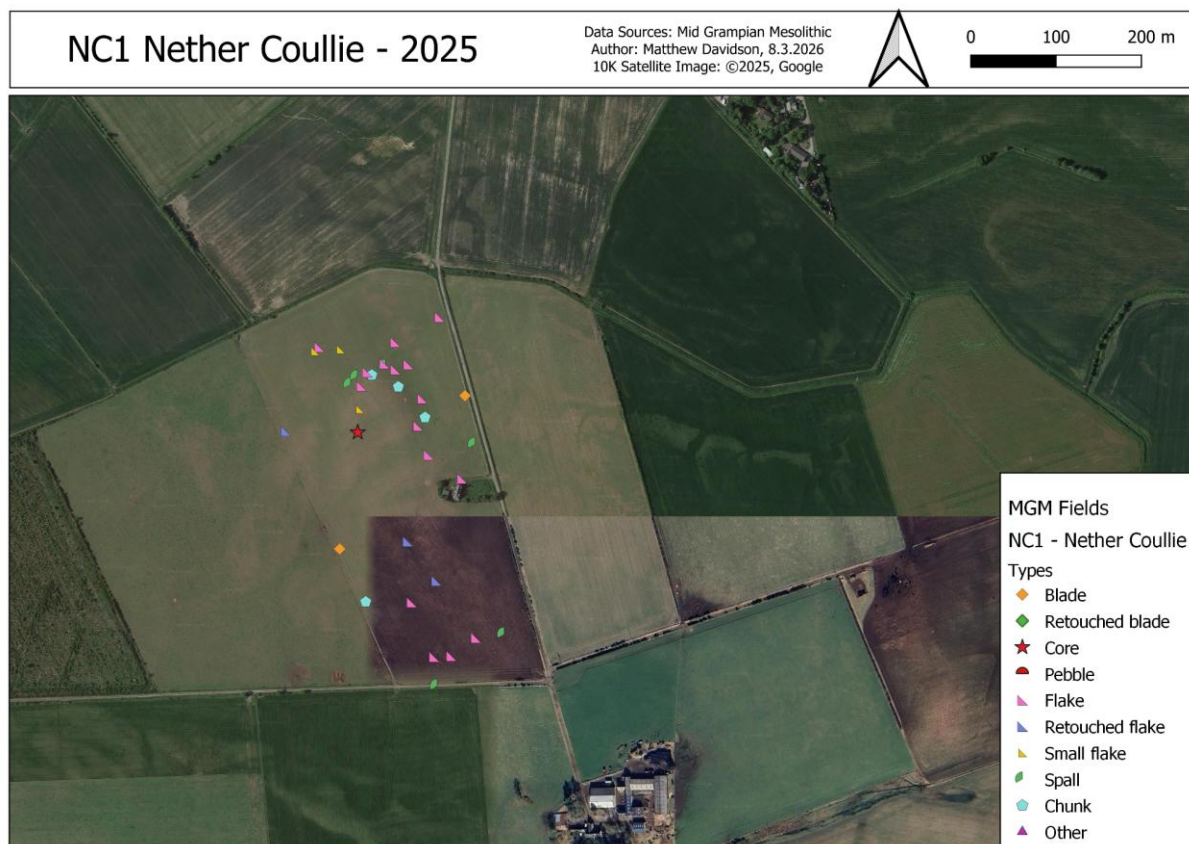
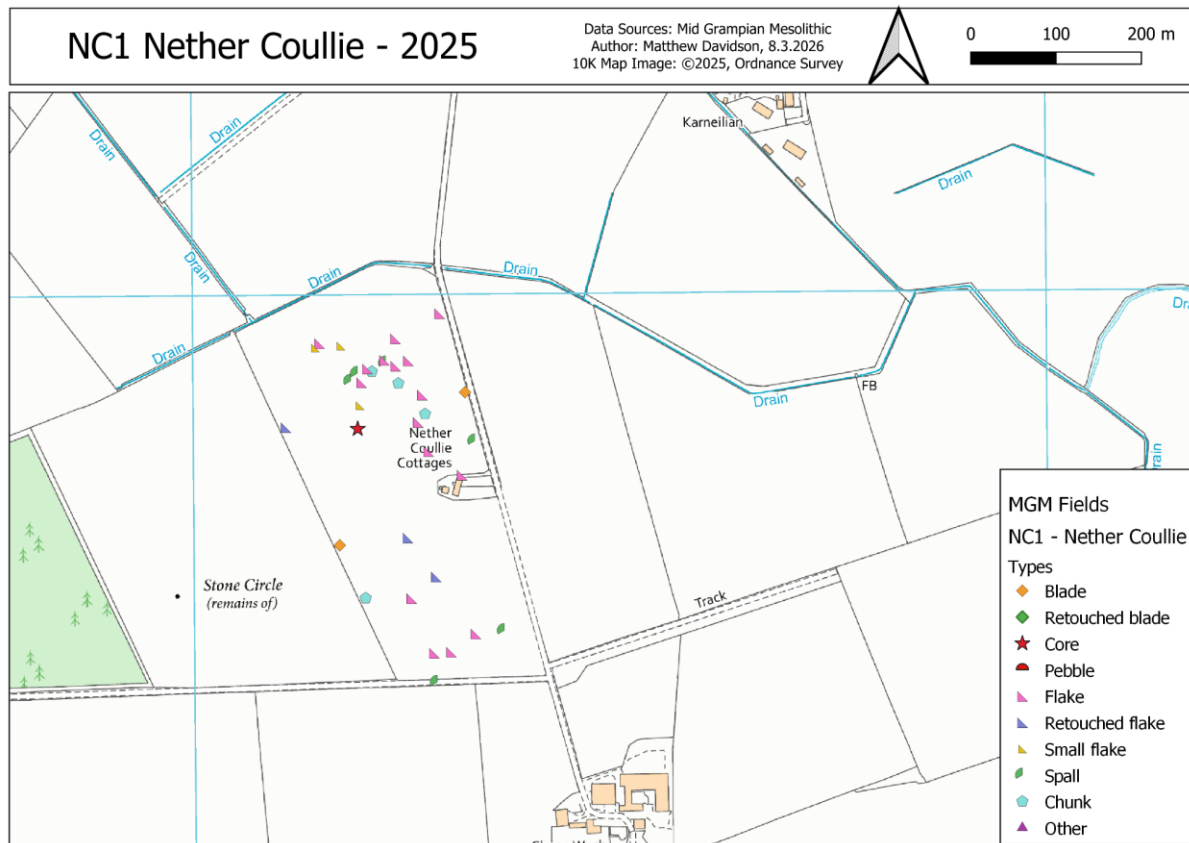
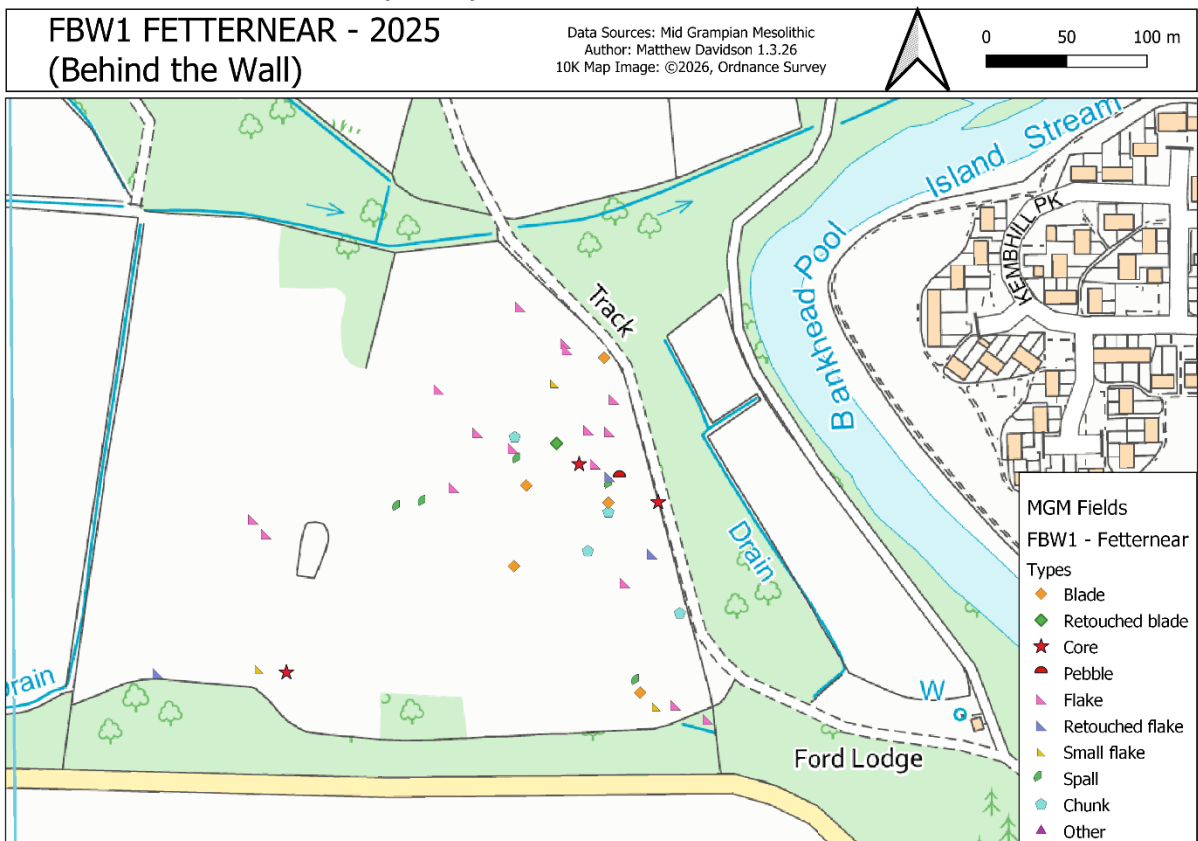


Figure 20: Lithics found in NC1



Figure 21: Example of lithics found in NC1 (photos Roslyn Hay)

### Behind The Wall, Fetternear (FBW1)



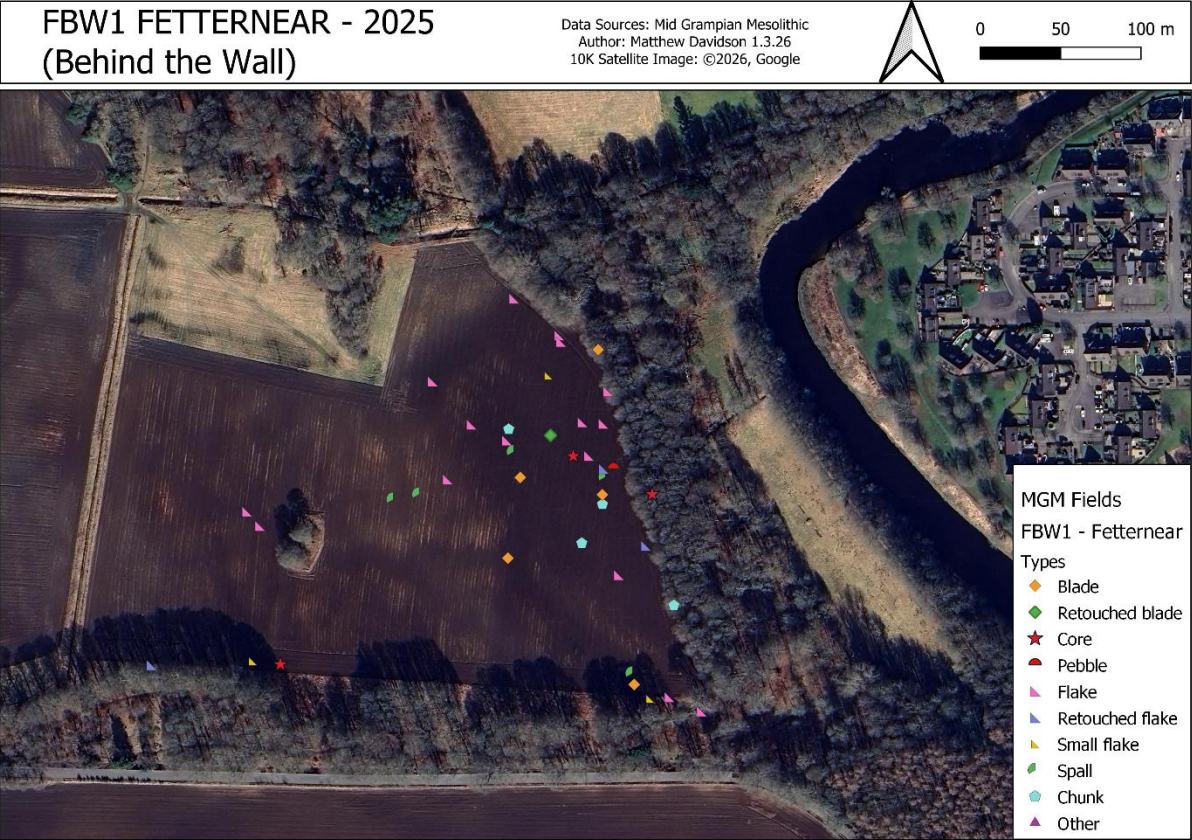


Figure 22: Lithics found in FBW1



Figure 23: Example of lithics found in FBW1 (photos Roslyn Hay)

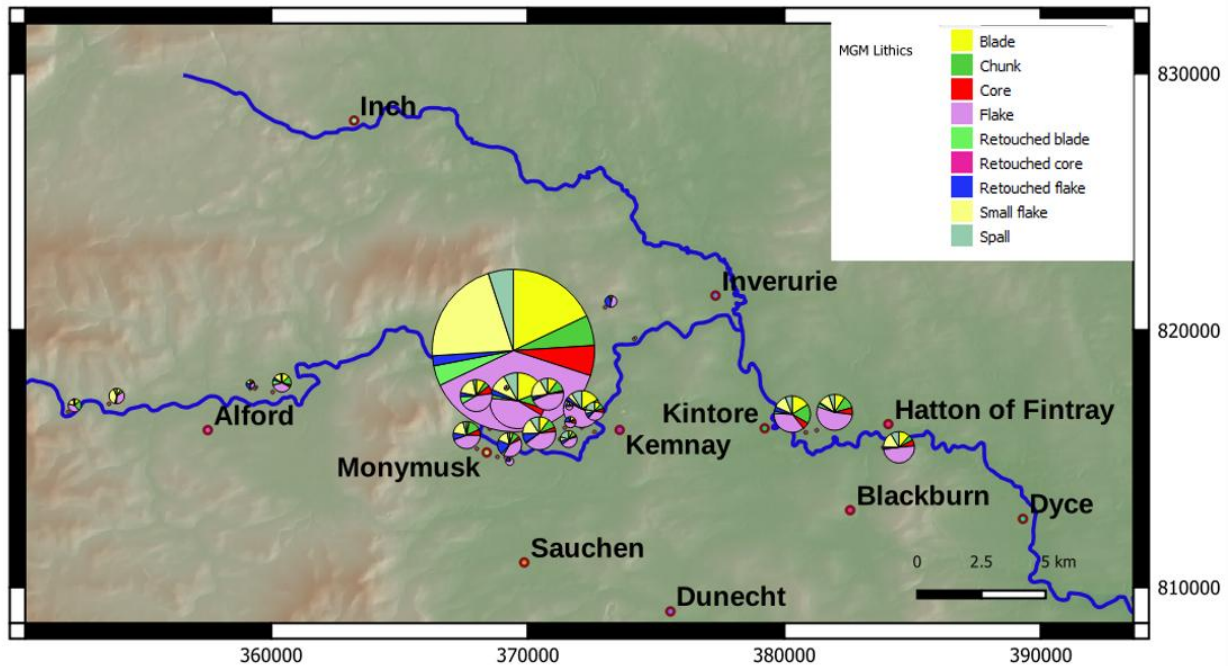


Figure 24: Pie map of lithic types from 2023 to 2025 field seasons (Image Simon Allerton)

## Preliminary Test-Pitting at Boatleys-1 Field

A group of MGM members undertook excavation of two small exploratory test pits at Boatleys Farm over Saturday and Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September. The purpose was to explore whether the distribution of surface lithics was replicated in subsurface layers, to reveal the nature of the underlying soil and sediments and to look for microliths through 100% wet sieving of excavated material. The test-pitting also enabled relatively inexperienced members to learn excavation techniques and expand their practical archaeological skill sets.

Provisional results appear to be promising: further lithics and microlithics were identified throughout the subsurface along with a concentration of charcoal which we hope to send for radiocarbon dating once funding is secured. Further samples were taken to be OSL dated by Dr Tim Kinnaird as well as sediment samples for future analysis. Funding for this has yet to be secured. The lithics will be analysed and a final report of the test-pitting and dating will be produced and published.

## About MGM:

### Committee Officers

Field Walking and Finds Coordinator: David Hood  
 Treasurer: Simon Allerton  
 Secretary (currently vacant): Tracey West  
 Mapping: Matthew Davidson  
 (Chair of the group rotates round the officers)

### Other Committee Members

Robin Worsman  
 Simon Payne  
 Nicola Seal

## **Support with Lithic Analysis and Classification**

Roslyn Hay  
June Armstrong

## **Mid Grampian Mesolithic Membership**

Mid Grampian Mesolithic Field-walkers email distribution list has 88 members (27<sup>th</sup> February 2025). In addition, the MGM Facebook group has 302 members (27<sup>th</sup> February 2025), increased from 218 members (13<sup>th</sup> January 2024).

## **Steering Committee**

Coordinated by Bruce Mann, County Archaeologist.

## **Committee Meetings held**

13<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025  
10<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2025  
12<sup>th</sup> May 2025  
16<sup>th</sup> June 2025  
14<sup>th</sup> July 2025  
11<sup>th</sup> August 2025  
15<sup>th</sup> September 2025  
20<sup>th</sup> October 2025  
17<sup>th</sup> November 2025  
15<sup>th</sup> December 2025

## **Mesolithic Supergroup meetings**

16<sup>th</sup> May 2025  
15<sup>th</sup> January 2026

## **Annual General Meeting**

17<sup>th</sup> May 2025

## **Community Engagement**

- **www.midgrampianmesolithic.org** Webpage first published January 2024
- *Flinty Social joint meet with Mesolithic Deeside, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2025*
- *“A stroll through 10,000 years”, led by Robin Worsman, as part of NHS Grampian’s May Month of Wellbeing, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2025.*
- *Kemnay Primary School visit, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2025*
- *Experimental Archaeology Workshop, jointly with Mesolithic Deeside, led by Nicola Seal, and Dr Will Mills (Aberdeen University) 28<sup>th</sup> June 2025*
- *University Explorathon Family activity day (supporting PAlaEoScot) “Aberdeen 12000BC, Fearsome Beasts and Ice Age Adventures”. Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2025*
- *“Cultural Connections: Archaeology of Aberdeenshire” Doors Open Day event at the Aden Country Park Aberdeenshire Farming Museum 20<sup>th</sup> September 2025.*
- *Boatleys Test-pitting followed by residue session at Midmar Hall 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025*
- *Presentation to Garioch Probus Club, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025*

## **Grants**

- George and Ena Baxter Foundation, support for outreach activities (December 2024)
- Marr Area ACT2 award (June 2025)

- Garioch Small Grant Award, support for test-pitting and outreach (September 2025)

***Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to Mid Grampian Mesolithic, particularly those landowners who have given us permission to fieldwalk on their land.***



*Figure 25: The Don at Boatleys, 3rd February 2026. (photo David Hood)*