

Grieve Collection, Interim report on the analysis of a flint scatter.

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Introduction

The Grieve Collection of worked flint was recovered by fieldwalking from the north bank of the River Dee to the east of, Banchory, Aberdeenshire by Dr J Grieve in the 1970s. The collection contains material from several sites, but it was never catalogued. In the 1980s one of the sites, at Nethermills Farm, was excavated by James Kenworthy under the aegis of HES (Wickham-Jones *et al.* 2016). The excavated finds date mainly from the Mesolithic, but a few pieces have recently been identified as Palaeolithic (Ballin and Wickham-Jones 2017), and there is a small Neolithic and Bronze Age component. The present project set out to catalogue the Grieve Collection with the aim of assessing the periods, types of activity and raw materials contained within this early collection from the location. In addition, the existence of discrete assemblages of archaeological material drawn from the fields since the 1970s (by the excavation in the 1980s and by fieldwalking since then) offered the possibility of looking at the extent to which fieldwalked material is representative of a site and how, if at all, it is impacted by previous collection from the same location. To this end the results of the 2018 HLF Mesolithic Deesside Project (Cameron *et al.* 2018) will provide invaluable comparative information.

Results

The assemblage comprised 5701 pieces, from nine sites, all of which have been catalogued and rebagged to ensure the integrity of the assemblage in future years. In addition, some material had lost derivation.

Site (current site names)	Ballin Catalogue		Grieve total	Ballin Total
Site A Durris Bridge/Crathes 'Main' (= Site NM1 today) NO 79 NE 375050 796000	Irregular Debitage	26	Cat 1912 Uncat 335 Total 2247	937
	Blades	185		
	Flakes	499		
	Cores and Preparation	138		
	Microliths	19		
	Scrapers	29		
	Points			
	Other Retouched	41		
	Coarse Stone			
Site B Park Bridge (= East Park site today) NO 79 NE 379550 798180	Irregular Debitage	19	Cat 749	386
	Blades	108		
	Flakes	172		
	Cores and Preparation	17		
	Microliths	10		
	Scrapers	27		
	Points			
	Other Retouched	32		
	Coarse Stone	1		
Site C Nethermills (= Site NM4 today) NO 79 NE 375880 796160	Irregular Debitage	168	Cat 3151	3244
	Blades	867		
	Flakes	1738		
	Cores and Preparation	300		

	Microliths	30		
	Scrapers	49		
	Points	12		
	Other Retouched	79		
	Coarse Stone	1		
Site D Dalmaik In proximity to Dalmaik Farm NO 89 NW 380350 798500	Irregular Debitage	1		39
	Blades	5		
	Flakes	21		
	Cores and Preparation	5		
	Microliths			
	Scrapers	3		
	Points			
	Other Retouched	4		
	Coarse Stone			
Site E The Hatchery, Dalmaik NO 89 NW 381050 798500	Irregular Debitage			18
	Blades	4		
	Flakes	8		
	Cores and Preparation	6		
	Microliths			
	Scrapers			
	Points			
	Other Retouched			
	Coarse Stone			
Site F Near Milton Cottage NO 79 NW 374730 795950	Irregular Debitage	3		35
	Blades	6		
	Flakes	22		
	Cores and Preparation	2		
	Microliths			
	Scrapers	2		
	Points			
	Other Retouched			
	Coarse Stone			
Site G East of Birkwood NO 79 NW 371800 796200	Irregular Debitage			26
	Blades	6		
	Flakes	10		
	Cores and Preparation	8		
	Microliths	1		
	Scrapers			
	Points			
	Other Retouched	1		
	Coarse Stone			
Site H Maryculter Bridge NO 79 NE 385700 806000 (described by Grieve as the field to west of road and north of	Irregular Debitage	29	Cat 589	586
	Blades	163		
	Flakes	306		
	Cores and Preparation	49		
	Microliths	2		
	Scrapers	17		
	Points			
	Other Retouched	20		
	Coarse Stone			

river. Grid Reference must be wrong. Likely to be NJ 80 SE 385700 800600)	Coarse Stone			
Site J Birkwood To west of Birkwood 371050 795700	Irregular Debitage	17		264
	Blades	71		
	Flakes	149		
	Cores and Preparation	15		
	Microliths	4		
	Scrapers	1		
	Points	1		
	Other Retouched	8		
	Coarse Stone			
Garramore	Irregular Debitage	1		41
	Blades			
	Flakes	1		
	Cores and Preparation	38		
	Microliths			
	Scrapers	1		
	Points			
	Other Retouched			
	Coarse Stone			
No Derivation	Irregular Debitage	4		166
	Blades	47		
	Flakes	70		
	Cores and Preparation	11		
	Microliths	3		
	Scrapers	16		
	Points	11		
	Other Retouched	4		
	Coarse Stone			
TOTAL	NB: Aberdeen Museums registered 4819 pieces and Daly 8775		6741	5701

Table 1: Grieve Collection, general breakdown of the lithic assemblage by type.

Discussion

The Grieve Collection has been housed in cardboard boxes with groups of lithics placed into plastic bags by type and site. In addition to the boxes containing the Grieve Collection, Aberdeen Museum holds paperwork comprising notes on the collection made by Grieve in the 1970s and written up by R Daly in 2001. There are also notes made by other researchers, not all of which agree, and variations in cataloguing have made it impossible to reconcile the lithic totals between individual research analyst. One of the boxes of Grieve material was passed to CWJ in early 2017 whereupon it became apparent that the original plastic bags into which finds had been placed were beginning to disintegrate with a subsequent loss of derivation. For this reason, as well as the general desire to examine and analyse the material, the present project was initiated in order to rebag and label everything before further loss of context occurred.

Previous estimates of the size of the Grieve Collection varied between 4819 – 8775. This work has produced a definitive total, 5701, and highlighted gaps where it is possible that some bags of material (such as the single platform cores from Site B, Park Bridge) may have been removed for analysis and not returned. A similar fate may have befallen material from the Birkwood site (Site J), where Aberdeen Museums list 831 pieces but only 264 were present in the boxes. In addition, material from three smaller sites noted by Aberdeen Museums, (though not in other notes), is totally missing:

Site	Number of Pieces
Site I, Balbridie Farm	5
Site K, Heughhead Farm	18
Site L, Peterculter Farm	9

Table 2: Grieve Collection, missing sites.

One site that did exist, Garramore, is not mentioned in any of the existing notes about the Grieve collection. This is a small collection, comprising mainly cores, and relates to a site at Cowden, Clackmannanshire. Grieve does not mention this site and it is, of course, possible that the material was added to the collection at a later date.

The material comes from a number of sites in the vicinity of the River Dee (fig. 1). The most prolific sites are those to the east of Crathes, and include the field at Nethermills Farm which was later excavated. In general, the evidence suggests that the bulk of the assemblage from these fields is Mesolithic in date, though some pieces were indicative of later (Neolithic and Bronze Age) activity, and a few pieces are likely to be Palaeolithic in origin. This is in line with the likely chronological composition of the excavated assemblage. Other sites with notable Mesolithic components include (using current nomenclature) East Park, Birkwood and Maryculter Bridge though fewer microliths were collected from the latter two sites.

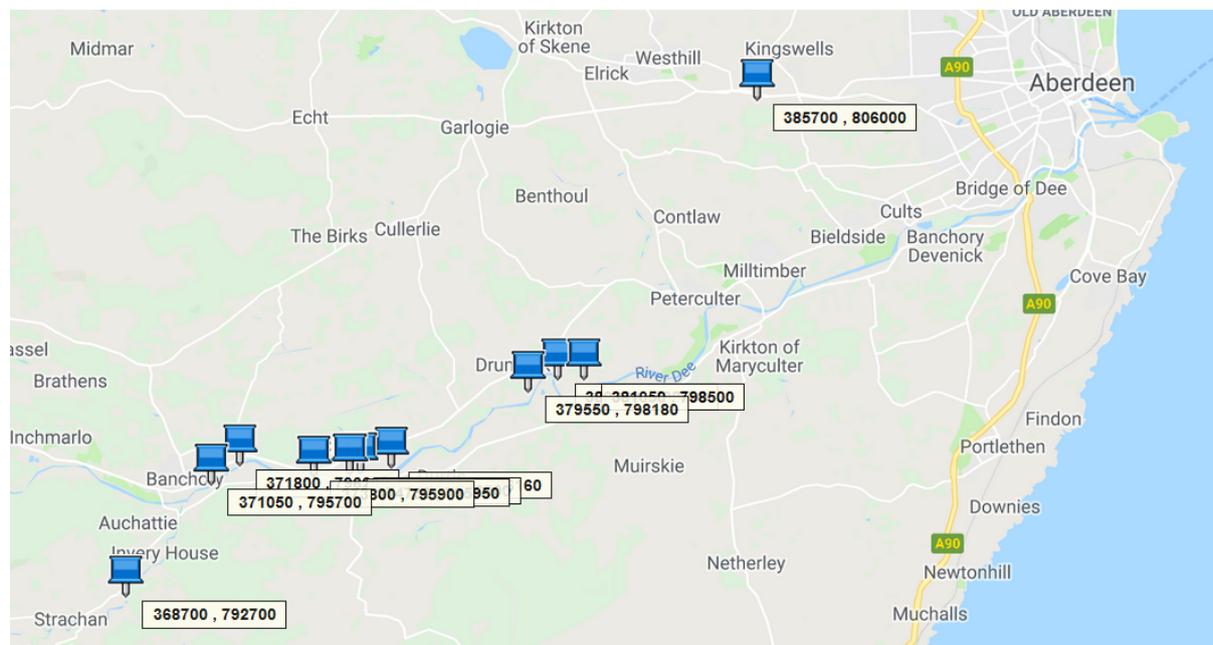


Fig 1: The Grieve Collection, site locations.

Conclusions

The research has highlighted the interest of the collection, not least in the number of sites represented and the variety of material from each. Overall, the collection is clearly multi-period and supportive of the existence of a focus of activity in the area of Crathes and Nethermills Farm that lasted, if not continuously, for several millennia in early prehistory. Not surprisingly, the most prolific site is that at Nethermills Farm which also has the most comprehensive evidence for Mesolithic activity (as represented by blades, blade cores and microliths) as well as some evidence for activity in other periods. While other sites also yielded Mesolithic material, a few of the smaller sites did not. Nevertheless, the significance of the River Dee as a focus for activity throughout prehistory is confirmed.

The activity of a recent (HLF funded) fieldwalking project in the area has indicated that a considerable prehistoric resource survives in many of the fields, though the preservation of *in situ* material has not been tested to date (test pitting is planned for East Park in November 2018 and field NM4 at Nethermills will be test pitted in February 2019).

Site Current Name	Grid Reference	Grieve Collection Ballin total (original Grieve total where given)	Recent fieldwalking NB where there is no total given the field was under grass in 2018
Nethermills Farm NM1	NO 79 NE 75050 96000	937 (2247)	181
Nethermills Farm NM4	NO 79 NE 75880 96160	3244 (3151)	2976 Excavation > 30,000
East Park	NO 79 NE 79550 98180	386 (749)	108
Dalmaik Farm	NO 89 NW 80350 98500	39	
Dalmaik Hatchery	NO 89 NW 81050 98500	18	
Milton Cottage	NO 79 NW 74730 95950	35	
Birkwood East	NO 79 NW 71800 96200	26	
Birkwood West	NO 79 NW 71050 95700	264	
Maryculter Bridge	NJ 80 SE 85700 00600	586 (589)	

Table 3: Grieve Collection: results of 2018 fieldwalking.

One notable aspect of the recent catalogue is the apparent loss of some of the assemblage. While it is possible that Grieve's original numbers were inaccurate, there is no reason to believe that Grieve was unable to count his material. It has thus to be concluded that over the years some pieces have gone missing. In some cases, specific categories are missing, suggesting that certain (nice) pieces had, perhaps, been laid aside for study (as with single platform cores at Park Bridge), or lent out for demonstration and exhibition. As the assemblage has been loaned out for examination on several occasions, it is also possible that some of the missing material has been lost in this process. It is also noteworthy that 166 pieces had become separated from their bags and now lack derivation. The

drawbacks of the uncontrolled storage of lithic material in inadequate packaging within large boxes is clear. The collection has, no doubt, lain within the original packaging and, in the absence of funds for museums to repackage and catalogue material when it is accessioned, this situation must be replicated for other sites in various locations across the country. Work on the Grieve Collection is timely, work on other collections would no doubt also be repaid.

Future work

Production of a definitive report over the winter will discuss the reduction techniques, composition and chronological affinities of the material.

Research in 2019 and 2020 will attempt to analyse the growth of the collection from Nethermills and any significant differences between material picked up at the different stages in the recent life of the site (1970s field walking; 1980s excavation; 1990-2018 fieldwalking).

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