

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Prehistoric pottery, by Melanie Johnson

#### 5.1.1 Introduction

Five hundred and eight sherds of handmade prehistoric pottery, weighing 3.847kg in total, were recovered. The sherds were sorted into sherd families and catalogued, according to dimensions, fabric, surface finish, decoration, and morphology. A maximum of 121 individual vessels are represented, some by only one sherd. Much of the pottery is in a fragmentary state and few of the pots have substantial portions of their profiles surviving. A full catalogue has been prepared for the site archive.

The assemblage is summarised and discussed by each group of features, with a final discussion on the affinities and dating of the assemblage as a whole.

#### 5.1.2 Beaker pits

The vast majority of the Beaker pottery (Table 2, *illus 28*) was recovered from the fill of Pit F168. Charcoal from context 168/4, the fill with the most pottery, has been radiocarbon dated to within the range 2550–2230 cal BC at 2 (Section 6.5) and lithic artefacts from Pit F168 (Ballin below) are also dated to the Early Bronze Age. This pit contained 112 sherds from 39 different Beaker vessels (P33–P71), with sherds spread throughout the fills. The majority of these are body sherds, with bases (P37, P44–46, P68), neck sherds (P38, P43, P55), and rims (P39, P41, P47–50, P64) also represented. Many of the vessels are represented by just one or two sherds.

The fabrics tend to be sandy, often orange or brown in colour on the surfaces with grey cores, with wall

thicknesses of 4–8mm, increasing to 11mm thick for bases. Several base diameters were measurable and these were 8cm (P44, P46), 10cm (P45) and 11cm (P49). Surfaces were generally well smoothed and sherds were often quite abraded. There were occasional grass marks and some corky fabrics, but these did not appear to form a significant part of the assemblage.

The vessels were highly fragmented so very little profile survived; it has therefore proved impossible to classify any of the vessel forms. The necks were concave and occasional carinations were visible, the rims were thin and rounded (P39, P41) and slightly flaring (P47–49, P64; *illus 28*); bases were slightly pedestal (P46, P68; *illus 28*) or flat (P44–45; *illus 28*).

Decoration was made by incision or by cord or comb impressions. The sherds were often small, resulting in only fragments of overall motifs being discernible; this has the result that the visible decoration on many of the sherds simply comprises parallel lines of either cord or comb impressions. However, several larger sherds were present, or small sherds with more complex patterns visible. These other motifs include overlapping lines (eg P33; *illus 28*), comb-impressed diagonals (P58; *illus 28*), chevrons (eg P53) and zigzags, often in combination with a border of parallel, presumably horizontal, lines (eg P34, P52; *illus 28*), and fingernail impressions also in combination with comb-impressed lines (P57; *illus 28*). There were also examples of lattice (P60; *illus 28*). The combs used were mostly square-toothed but there were examples of round-toothed combs as well (P40, *illus 28*, P65). Of the decorated vessels, seven had incised decoration, five had cord impressions only, eight had comb impressions only and four had combinations of techniques. P49 survived in profile

**Table 2 Beaker pottery by context**

Feature	Context	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Vessels
Pit F168	168	1	10	<i>1</i>
Pit F168	168/2	9	57	<i>2/3</i>
Pit F168	168/3	9	50	<i>3/4</i>
Pit F168	168/4	73	585	<i>20/6</i>
Pit F168	168/5	2	3	<i>1</i>
Pit F168	168/7	12	78	<i>4</i>
Pit F168	168/8	4	39	<i>1</i>
Pit F168	168/11	2	7	<i>2</i>
Pit F134	134/2	2	6	<i>1</i>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>114</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>34/6</b>

Vessel numbers in italics indicate where sherds are found in more than one context

from the rim to the carination and was undecorated (illus 28).

One slightly unusual vessel had an internally bevelled rim decorated with short incised dashes across the exterior and bevel (P50; illus 28). A body sherd with very similar decoration, and which may in fact be from the same vessel, was found in 171/1007 (P84).

Two sherds of Beaker pottery (P08; illus 28) were also recovered from Pit F134, part of the alignment to the north-west (illus 22). These were the only sherds found in this pit, and were decorated with a comb-impressed geometric design comprising zigzag and parallel lines. The vessel was fine, thin-walled, with orange well-smoothed surfaces and a grey core. The sherds were abraded. Charcoal from this pit has been dated to 2570–2200 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ .

Sites with Beaker assemblages are known from across the Inner and Outer Hebrides from a variety of site types including settlement, funerary, ceremonial and cave contexts (Gibson 1982; Armit 1996; Dunwell et al 2003).

The best comparative material can be found at Northton on Harris (Simpson et al 2006), where two horizons of Beaker midden material were identified along with stone structures in the earlier horizon. The assemblage therefore was seen as domestic, and has been radiocarbon dated to 2140–1680 cal BC. The fabrics here were also sandy with organic voids, with a range of coarse and fine vessels present. Decorative techniques were dominated by incision, along with comb, reed, cord and shell impressions in small quantities, and the same general geometric motifs are present.

It is not clear whether the Beaker deposits at Kiltaraglen demonstrate evidence for ritual or domestic activity. The disturbed cremation burial found in the stony fill of the large enclosure context 171/303 (Unit 4), has been radiocarbon dated to the Early Bronze Age, 2140–1880 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ , which is acceptable as a later Beaker period date. The excavator concludes that this burial has been disturbed and redeposited. It may be that the cremation burial was disturbed from Pit F168 and that it was a Beaker burial, but there is a range of sherds and lithic artefacts deposited in F168, rather than a whole vessel which would be more typical, and there is some considerable discrepancy between the dates. However, it is possible that a Beaker cremation or an unurned Early Bronze Age cremation burial was present in the vicinity of these features and through post-depositional disturbance the burial has become incorporated into the enclosure ditch's upper fill. Associations of Beaker pottery with cremations are known from Skye, for example the secondary short cist inserted into Cnocan nan Gobhar chambered cairn at Kilmarie, excavated in 1926 to reveal a Beaker and a cremation (Callander 1928).

Beaker settlement sites are rare but there are examples from the Hebrides, unlike the rest of the British Isles where inhumations with Beaker

grave-goods are much more common than domestic deposits of Beaker pottery (Gibson 1982). These domestic sites include middens and structures at Northton, Harris (Simpson et al 2006), Rosinish, Benbecula (Shepherd 1976), Allt Chrìsal, Barra (Branigan & Foster 1995) and Dalmore, Lewis (Sharples 1983; Ponting & Ponting 1984). There were no examples of fingernail rusticated vessels at Kiltaraglen, so commonly attributed to Beaker domestic pottery (eg Gibson 1982), but neither were there any recorded at Northton (Simpson et al 2006): it is possible that domestic assemblages in Skye and the Hebrides were lacking in the rustication so typical elsewhere. There is little firm evidence at Kiltaraglen that the two pits containing Beaker pottery form part of, or are associated with, a domestic settlement site.

Extensive re-dating of Beakers is currently underway with two major, inter-related research projects, the Beaker People Project and the Beakers and Bodies Project (Sheridan 2007; Sheridan et al 2006, 2007; Curtis et al 2007). The Kiltaraglen radiocarbon dates from the Beaker features are noticeably early, the two features dating to 2570–2200 BC and 2550–2230 cal BC. Another early Beaker date for the Hebrides comes from the cist burial at Sorisdale on Coll (Ritchie et al 1978) associated with a Low Carinated (Needham 2005) All-Over-Cord decorated vessel. In fact, the burial associated with the AOC Beaker from Sorisdale provides one of the earliest Beaker dates in the British Isles (Kinnes et al 1991; Ashmore 1996; Sheridan 2007): it has been re-dated to 2470–2230 cal BC (Sheridan 2007), but is not alone in Scotland as Beakers from Keabog, Borrowstone and Broomend of Crichtie, all Aberdeenshire, Dornoch Nursery, Highland and Skateraw, East Lothian, all fall within the general range of 2480–2200 BC (Sheridan 2007). Sheridan has observed that Beaker use could have started in Scotland as early as the 25th century BC (Sheridan 2007: 96).

### 5.1.3 Circular enclosure F171

#### Fill of Ditch F171

Sherds from 40 different vessels (P72–P111, illus 28, Table 3) were recovered from the fills of the enclosure ditch. The ditch fills produced carbonised material from Unit 3 (171/1020) which has been dated to 1300–1050 cal BC, the interface between Units 3 and 4 (171/609), which has been dated to 1310–1020 cal BC, plus a deposit of cremated human bone from Unit 4 dating to 2140–1880 cal BC. Features cutting the top of F171 have been dated to 760–400 cal BC. Most of the pottery was recovered from 171/502 (Unit 5) and 171/902–4 (Units 3–5). The earliest stratified pottery consisted of ten sherds from a single vessel recovered from Unit 2 (171/802) in Slot 8, one of whose sherds was a footed base (P89). There is nothing to suggest that this latter vessel is of a different date from the rest of the assemblage, and likewise with the material from Units

**Table 3 Pottery from enclosure F171 & associated features**

Feature	Unit	No. of sherds	Weight (g)	Vessels
Ditch F171	None	5	69	2
Ditch F171	2	10	138	1
Ditch F171	3	2	54	2
Ditch F171	4	69	554	17
Ditch F171	171/903–4 (4–5)	28	482	5
Ditch F171	5	103	761	15
Pit F212	212/2	1	5	1
Feature F232	232/2	5	31	2
Feature F233	233/2	3	19	1
<b>Totals</b>		<b>226</b>	<b>2113</b>	<b>46</b>

3–5; the assemblage is uniform and fits well with the Late Bronze Age dates from this feature, apart from those examples discussed below from Unit 5. Examples of disturbance and re-working within the assemblage were found. P84 (Unit 5, 171/1007), a body sherd decorated with incised dashes appears to be the same vessel as P50 from the nearby Beaker Pit F168. A further sherd (P98, from 171/903, Unit 5; *illus 28*), decorated with stacked chevrons, is also likely to be Beaker in date and again is residual and may derive from F168. These sherds may have been disturbed and redistributed when feature F170 was cut between F168 and F171. They certainly attest to a degree of movement and disturbance of the pottery assemblage around the site from feature to feature.

A single footed base sherd (P89) was recovered from 171/802 (Unit 2). A further base sherd was found in 171/903–4 (Unit 4–5) (P109). Neither diameter was measured.

Several flat-topped, slightly necked vessels were found. Some of these had a closed mouth (eg P111; *illus 28*), or closed mouths with flat tops slightly expanded to each side (P87; *illus 28*). Non-necked forms included closed-mouth vessels with flat-topped rims (P99, P100; *illus 28*) or concave rim tops (eg P77, P80; *illus 28*), both of which had rim forms which were slightly expanded to each side. Another variation was an open-mouthed, slightly necked vessel with a flat-topped rim (eg P73; *illus 28*).

Internally bevelled rims were also found, also slightly necked to give the appearance of a very short everted rim on the exterior (eg P88, P90, P96, P97, P102, P110; *illus 28*). These tended to have rounded bodies where visible. One of these, from 171/102 (Unit 4), was decorated: P74 (*illus 28*) had a short everted rim with an internal bevel and a rounded body, and was decorated with faint diagonal incised lines across the body just below the neck. A variant was P101, where the rim was bevelled but expanded to each side as well (*illus 28*).

The vessels tend to be medium-coarse, with smoothed surfaces and a fairly high proportion of sooted surfaces. There are a variety of pastes, with sandy fabrics, some grass marking, and variable

quantities of stone and grit present. There are also a variety of firing techniques and colours present, ranging through oranges, browns and greys, all typical of low-fired handmade pottery. Sherd thicknesses range from 6mm to 12mm. Some of the sherds are also very abraded, suggesting some post-depositional movement.

These vessels are likely to be Late Bronze Age in date, belonging to the second half of the second millennium and perhaps into the first part of the first millennium BC, and have some similarities with the pottery from the ring-ditch structure, especially vessel P2. The Late Bronze Age pottery of the Hebrides has been discussed elsewhere (*Gilmour 2002; Johnson 2002; 2005; 2006*), but in summary it is apparent that there is a surprising lack of excavated pottery assemblages dating to the Bronze Age, compared with the profusion retrieved from earlier and later prehistoric sites. The post-Beaker Bronze Age is poorly understood and poorly dated, with burials and other types of site securely dated to the period, scarce. It is also apparent from the sites we do have that there is a great deal of variation through the Bronze Age, making it very difficult to pinpoint any ceramic sequences. Bronze Age assemblages are known from funerary sites such as Rosinish, Benbecula (*Crawford 1977*), Cnip, Lewis (*Close-Brooks 1995; Dunwell et al 1995*), Olcote cairn, Lewis (*Neighbour 2005*) and settlement sites such as Northton, Harris (*Simpson et al 2006*), Ceann nan Clachan burnt mound site, North Uist (*Armit & Braby 2002*), and Cladh Hallan, South Uist (*Atkinson et al 1996; Marshall et al 1998*). The Olcote, Rosinish and Cnip vessels are datable to the first half of the second millennium. The settlement sites are dated slightly later, through the second half of the second millennium and into the first millennium BC. However, the presence of incised decoration on the rim bevel and on the upper bodies of the vessels in simple motifs could be seen as characteristic of funerary pottery of the second millennium BC even when there is some variation in vessel shape. A trend for simple vessel shapes with flattened or rounded rims seems to be a theme in the first mil-

lennium, with slight everted rims and incised and applied decoration appearing towards the middle of the first millennium. These perhaps developed out of the closed-mouth and slightly necked vessels we see at Kiltaraglen.

While there are good local parallels for this pottery, there are also parallels from further afield and some of the pottery at least would not look out of place on roundhouse settlement sites across Scotland during this period, fitting within the ‘flat-rimmed ware’ tradition. Comparable assemblages of similar date are noted at Ormiston Farm, Fife (Sheriff 1988), Kintore, Aberdeenshire (Cook & Dunbar 2008), Lintshie Gutter, Lanarkshire (Terry 1995), and Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire (White & Richardson 2010), to name just a few.

It should be borne in mind that there may or may not be regional manifestations of wider traditions, local regional variations and distinctions between funerary and domestic pottery, and the lack of securely dated second millennium BC sites and comparative material on Skye itself means that the typologies are at present not well understood: as further sites are excavated and dated, it should become possible to tie down the chronological and regional sequences.

#### Internal to enclosure F171

A single small, very abraded, body sherd (P17) was found in feature F212, which lies inside the area enclosed by F171. It is impossible to assign this sherd to a specific period but is more likely to be later prehistoric than earlier.

#### Features cutting upper fills of F171

F232 contained five sherds (P19–20). Three of these were abraded body sherds (P19). P20 (illus 28) comprised rim sherds with an internal bevel present; however, very little of the profile survived and the sherds were very abraded. Linear feature F233 contained three body sherds (P21). It would seem likely for the sherds to be later Bronze Age, similar to those recovered from the enclosure ditch fills.

#### Feature 170

Ditch F170 lay between F171 and the Beaker Pit F168, and cut both of those features. It contained six sherds from two vessels (P22–P23). P22 was a single fairly large body sherd, while P23 formed a possible carination or base sherd. This latter was in poor condition. It is impossible to pinpoint a date for this material.

#### 5.1.4 Later prehistoric structures

##### Roundhouse 1

A single sherd of undiagnostic pottery (P1) was recovered from a pit (F9) within the group of features representing a post-built structure (Table 4). This small (3g), abraded body sherd is impossible to assign to a specific period but is more likely to be later prehistoric than earlier. This is corroborated by the radiocarbon determinations from F40 which provide a calibrated date range of 1310–1050 cal BC at 2 $\sigma$ .

##### Roundhouse 2 and ring-ditch structure

Eight sherds of pottery were recovered from features making up Roundhouse 2 and the ring-ditch structure (Table 4). Three of these were rim sherds (P02, P04, P06; illus 28) while the rest were undiagnostic body sherds. The fabrics were very similar, comprising fairly coarse fabrics with generally 1–7% grit. One of the sherds had vegetation impressions on the interior. They were generally light brown or orange to dark grey in colour, ranging from 4–20mm thick. Where visible, surfaces had been finished by smoothing. Some of the sherds had sooting present.

P04 (illus 28) was a narrow flat-topped rim recovered from F76, part of the primary post-ring. P02 (illus 28), was a thick flat-topped rim with a slight internal bevel, from F75, also part of the primary post ring. It was decorated with diagonal incised lines along the bevel. This sherd had a high sand content, unlike the other fabrics from this structure, which, along with the form and decoration, may suggest a slightly different date from the other rim sherds.

**Table 4 Pottery from Later Prehistoric structures**

Feature	Context	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Vessels
Pit F9	009/2	1	3	1
Pit F75	075/3	1	28	1
Pit F76	076/2	2	26	2
Pit F92	092/3	2	13	1
Ditch F99	99/04	1	4	1
Ditch F100	100/102	1	45	1
Ditch F100	100/33	1	22	1
<b>Totals</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>8</b>

Rim P06 (illus 28) came from F100, the fill of the ring-ditch. This was an upright flat-topped rim, slightly expanded on either side, and from a slightly barrel-shaped vessel. It was very similar in fabric to P4, both being dark grey in colour and with sooting present.

Although a small assemblage, on morphology and fabric the sherds (apart from P04 perhaps) fit comfortably within the known assemblages of Late Bronze Age pottery. This is corroborated by the radiocarbon dates from ring-ditches F99 and F100, which provide a calibrated range of 1200–840 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ , with a more recent second date (530–380 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ ); the only pottery from F99 was a single small body sherd.

### 5.1.5 Miscellaneous and undated features

#### Feature 116

A small sherd (P10) was recovered from F116 to the south-east of the ring-ditch structure (Table 5). This was highly vitrified, suggesting it had been used in metalworking, and came from the fill of a large pit. Charred grain from this pit has been radiocarbon dated to cal AD 1270–1420 at  $2\sigma$ , the medieval period.

#### Features F163 and F181

An irregular linear feature (F163) to the south of the ditched enclosure contained an assemblage of 142 sherds from nine vessels (Table 5). There were eight base sherds (P27, P29, P31, P32) and six rim sherds (P24, P26, P31; illus 28), with the remainder being undecorated body sherds. Two of the vessels (P27, P29) were possibly the same.

Fabrics tended to be coarse but hard fired, greys and browns in colour primarily, with wall thicknesses of 5–8mm. Fabrics had either very few inclusions visible or were sandy, and some had grass impressions visible. Surfaces were generally smoothed and overall the assemblage was in fairly good condition. The bases were heavily grass-marked on their undersides, suggesting that they had been formed with the vessel sitting on a grass pad while the vessel was still wet.

Of the three rim forms represented, two were everted rims (P26, P31; illus 28). The third was a very small, thin flat-topped rim with very little profile present (P24), and so it is difficult to say much about the vessel’s morphology. The everted rims are both decorated with faint fingertip dimples along the neck. P31 also has a hole drilled through the upper body, which may have been for repairing the pot. Rim diameters could not be measured.

Everted rims, and fingertip decoration, are typical of the Middle Iron Age in the west and north, a phenomenon which is well documented; characteristic assemblages are known on Skye and on sites throughout the Hebrides where they tend to be associated with Atlantic Roundhouses, wheelhouses, or Middle Iron Age cellular structures (Johnson 2005). Similar ware was also recovered from Tungadale souterrain on Skye (Miket 2002) and the date is also consistent with the known period of use of souterrains. There is no other pottery of this date from the site and the pottery can confidently be said not to be medieval Craggan Ware on the basis of both form and fabric (Cheape 1993) and so lies in contradiction to the radiocarbon dates obtained from this feature: charcoal has been dated to AD 1175–1220. This feature also contained an iron nail and an undated object which

**Table 5 Pottery from miscellaneous and undated features**

Feature	Context	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Vessels
Pit F116	116/3–4	1	2	1
Miniature Souterrain F163	163	13	42	1
Miniature Souterrain F163	163/02	18	61	1
Miniature Souterrain F163	163/12	1	11	1
Miniature Souterrain F163	163/22	48	168	2
Miniature Souterrain F163	163/23	10	79	1
Miniature Souterrain F163	163/32	4	12	2
Miniature Souterrain F163	163/52	48	275	1
Ditch F170	170/2	1	26	1
Ditch F170	170/3	5	10	1
Miniature Souterrain F181	181	1	14	1
Post-Pit F204	204/02	1	2	1
Pit F208	208/05	4	36	3
Pit F208	208/06	2	18	1
Post-Pit F228	228/03	2	2	1
<b>Totals</b>		<b>159</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>19</b>

may be a belt slide from a horse harness or possibly a chain link (Anderson [below](#)).

Curvilinear feature F181, 8m to the south-west of F163, contained a single rim sherd (P11). This was an upright rounded rim and is very difficult to ascribe to a specific period as it has no distinguishing features. The fabric was very sandy and was grass marked, and the surfaces were roughly smoothed, suggesting a later prehistoric date.

#### Features 204 and 228

A pit, F204, to the south-east of the enclosure F171, contained a single body sherd (P12) ([Table 5](#)). Another isolated feature, Pit F228 on the west side of the enclosure, contained two very small body sherds (P18).

#### Feature 208

F208 was a large pit on the west side of F171. It contained six sherds from four vessels (P13–P16), all of which were body sherds ([Table 5](#)). Radiocarbon dates obtained from charcoal in this pit calibrate to cal AD 1020–1210 at  $2\sigma$ . The sherds are impossible to ascribe to a specific period on fabric alone.

#### 5.1.6 Unstratified finds

A single large sherd of later Neolithic pottery was found in topsoil near to Area 5. This decorated rim sherd was abraded, and was from a carinated jar with an internally bevelled rim, expanded to each side to form a T-shape in profile. It was decorated with deep incised lines, forming two rows of short diagonal lines along the rim bevel and blocks of short parallel lines on the neck, the blocks running both diagonally and almost horizontally; there was no decoration visible below the carination. This vessel is likely to be a variation of the Hebridean deep multiple-ridged jars, common in the Neolithic and seen, for example, at Northton, Harris ([Johnson 2006](#)).

#### 5.1.7 Conclusions

Pottery was recovered from a number of features across the site, but in many instances just a few featureless sherds were recovered from a fill which proved difficult to ascribe to any given period, and so help little in either establishing a date of use of the features or a function.

Three significant groups of pottery were found. The first of these was an assemblage of Beaker pottery recovered principally from two pits *c* 50m apart. The second was a range of Late Bronze Age pottery, primarily recovered from the upper fills of the circular enclosure and from the ring-ditch structure dated to the second half of the first millennium BC. This latter assemblage is the more

significant as this period is one which is poorly understood in both the inner and outer Hebrides and as such contributes towards a new understanding of the types of pottery in use at that time and the sites it is associated with. The third group is the small assemblage of Middle Iron Age pottery which came from linear feature F163, a type of pottery more commonly known from the stone-built structures of this period.

While radiocarbon dating has indicated activity during the Early and Late Bronze Age, the Early Iron Age and the medieval periods, the pottery assemblages are Early and Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age; no medieval pottery was recovered from the site.

### 5.2 *Lithic artefacts, by Torben Bjarke Ballin*

#### 5.2.1 Introduction

In total, 155 lithic artefacts were found. They were recovered from a circular enclosure and nearby features; a post-built structure (Roundhouse 1), a feature adjacent to a second roundhouse (Roundhouse 2), and as unstratified finds.

The lithic collection is heavily dominated by flint, baked mudstone and tuff ([Table 6](#)), and as baked mudstone (properties, technology etc) is currently poorly understood, due to the recovery of few assemblages in this material, one specific objective of this report is to increase our understanding of this material. This is of great importance to the interpretation of the region's territorial structures and exchange networks, as it has been suggested that the mylonite frequently recovered from excavations on the Western Isles may be Isle of Skye 'banded mudstone' (eg [Wickham-Jones 1986](#): 7). The evaluation of the lithic assemblage is based upon a detailed catalogue of all the lithic finds, and the artefacts in this report are referred to by their number (CAT no.) in the catalogue.

#### 5.2.2 The Assemblage

The 155 lithic finds are listed in [Table 6](#). The definitions of the main lithic categories are as follows:

*Chips*: All flakes and indeterminate pieces the greatest dimension (GD) of which is  $\leq 10$  mm.

*Flakes*: All lithic artefacts with one identifiable ventral (positive or convex) surface,  $GD > 10$  mm and  $L < 2W$  ( $L$  = length;  $W$  = width).

*Indeterminate pieces*: Lithic artefacts which cannot be unequivocally identified as either flakes or cores. Generally the problem of identification is due to irregular breaks, frost-shattering or fire-crazing. *Chunks* are larger indeterminate pieces, and in, for example, the case of quartz, the problem of identification usually originates from a piece flaking along natural planes of

**Table 6 Lithic artefact summary**

	Flint	Mudstone	Tuff	Quartz	Quartzite	Sand-stone	Chalcedony	Jasper	Felsite	Jet	Total
<i>Debitage</i>											
Chips	2										2
Flakes	38	16	13	3	2	2		1		1	76
Blades	3								1		4
Microblades	1			1							2
Indeterminate pieces	12	15	12	1	1	1	1				43
Platform rejuvenation flakes			1								1
<i>Total debitage</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>128</i>
<i>Cores</i>											
Irregular cores	1		1								2
Other cores	1										1
Core fragments	1		1								2
<i>Total cores</i>	<i>3</i>		<i>2</i>								<i>5</i>
<i>Tools</i>											
Discoidal scrapers	1										1
Short end-scrapers		2									2
Side-scrapers	1		1								2
Side-/end-scrapers	3	1									4
Backed knives			1								1
Scale-flaked knives		2									2
Piercers	3										3
Pieces with edge-retouch	7										7
<i>Total tools</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>								<i>22</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>155</b>

weakness rather than flaking in the usual conchoidal way.

*Blades and microblades:* Flakes where  $L \geq 2W$ . In the case of blades  $W > 8\text{mm}$ , in the case of microblades  $W \leq 8\text{mm}$ .

*Cores:* Artefacts with only dorsal (negative or concave) surfaces – if three or more flakes have been detached, the piece is a core, if fewer than three flakes have been detached, the piece is a split or flaked pebble.

*Tools:* Artefacts with secondary retouch (modification).

### 5.2.3 Raw material – types, condition and sources

The lithic assemblage is predominantly in flint (48%), baked mudstone (23%) and tuff (19%), supplemented by small amounts of quartz, quartzite, sandstone, chalcedony, jasper, felsite and jet. The

supplementary raw materials were all recovered in numbers ranging from one to five pieces.

Some of the flint is relatively fine-grained with good flaking properties (including the collection's scrapers), but many of the flint artefacts are in medium-grained varieties, with occasional impurities and flaws. One discarded flint nodule was covered by several centimetres of thick cortex. Although vitreous orange pieces occur (eg microblade CAT 148), most flints are matt, marbled and grey, cream or light brown. No local sources of flint appear to be known (cf maps in [Wickham-Jones & Collins 1978](#): 10; [Saville 1994](#): 58; also [Trewin 2002](#): 351). Cretaceous deposits are present in the sea surrounding the southernmost Hebridean islands, such as Islay and Mull, but seem to be scarcer further towards the north.

Baked mudstone developed when fine-grained sedimentary rock was altered in connection with volcanic events in the Skye area, transforming the

sedimentary country rock into a much harder metamorphic rock (a meta-sediment). Baked mudstone is particularly common around Staffin Bay (Emeleus & Bell 2005: 35), on the north-eastern coast of Skye, but minor local outcrops are expected to exist (Wickham-Jones & Hardy 2004: 22). As all the site's artefacts in baked mudstone are heavily weathered, it has not been possible to determine whether this resource was quarried or collected from pebble sources. However, it is generally thought that baked mudstone was procured (quarried) from the sill above the Staffin rock-shelter (Saville & Miket 1994), or from similar outcrops in the north-eastern parts of Skye.

In general, baked mudstone has excellent flaking properties (cf Saville 2004: 208), but the fact that it is a meta-sedimentary rock means that it is foliated (not necessarily visibly so). This causes some pieces to flake along natural layers, or along planes of weakness. When it has just been procured from primary sources, Staffin baked mudstone is black, and it may be very faintly banded. However, it is a relatively soft rock, and with time it weathers and becomes grey, light-grey or white. When it weathers, its surfaces disintegrate and turn into fine powder. This may make heavily weathered pieces appear almost 'soapy'.

The two most important points regarding the alteration of baked mudstone are firstly that it is practically black when fresh, and that the characteristic stripes, which have caused the creation of the term 'banded mudstone' only appear after weathering; and secondly that in its weathered state it is practically indistinguishable from weathered mylonite and weathered hornfels.

A number of artefacts are in a dark and relatively hard rock. The rock was very difficult to identify, as it showed similarities with relatively fresh baked mudstone as well as with some tuffs. Dr Brian Bell (Department of Earth Sciences, Glasgow University) studied the samples and felt that they are likely to be welded crystal-lithic tuffs or ignimbrites, similar rocks of which occur around Kilchrist (south of Broadford), and around Fionn Coire (between Sligachan and Glen Brittle), but may well occur elsewhere (B Bell pers comm). In the following text, as well in the report's various tables, it has been chosen to refer to these pieces as tuffs. An important point for lithic specialists attempting to identify rocks from Skye is that these tuffs appear to weather differently to Staffin baked mudstone, as they may become abraded or rounded, but their surfaces do not become powdery or 'soapy'.

The remaining raw materials all form part of the varied geological environment of the wider Skye area. Quartz may be found throughout the area, either in vein or pebble form, as it forms part of igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks (Pellant 1992: 86); quartzite is common on the mainland east of Skye, where it forms part of the so-called 'Basal Quartzite' (Johnstone & Mykura 1989:

36), and it may be collected along the shores of Skye as glacially derived pebbles; Torridonian sandstone is found at the southern end of Skye as well as on Raasay, immediately opposite Portree (Woodland 1979); chalcedony and jasper mostly form in volcanic rocks, such as those associated with Skye's Central Igneous Complex, as well as its surrounding Skye Lava Group (Pellant 1992: 88; Emeleus & Bell 2005: 50); felsite is known from the north-eastern part of the Western Red Hills Centre (the Skye Central Complex) (Emeleus & Bell 2005: 100, 105); and even high quality jet may be found on the island (*ibid*: 27).

Thirty-one pieces of flint (or 42%) are firecrazed. Two of those (CAT 100, 145) have been so severely burnt that they have been characterised as vitrified. 'Vitrification' means that the pieces were exposed to such high temperatures that their surfaces melted in places and turned 'glass-like' (cf Ballin forthcoming a). These pieces are clearly more highly burnt than one would expect from ordinary settlement scenarios, where flints may have fallen into the ashes during knapping by the camp fire. The fact that both pieces were recovered from topsoil suggests that they may be late, and they were probably burnt accidentally in connection with the medieval metal production at Kiltaraglen. This proposition is further supported by the fact that 90% of all burnt flints derive from disturbed upper levels, whereas only three of the site's fifty-eight contexted (undisturbed) flints are burnt.

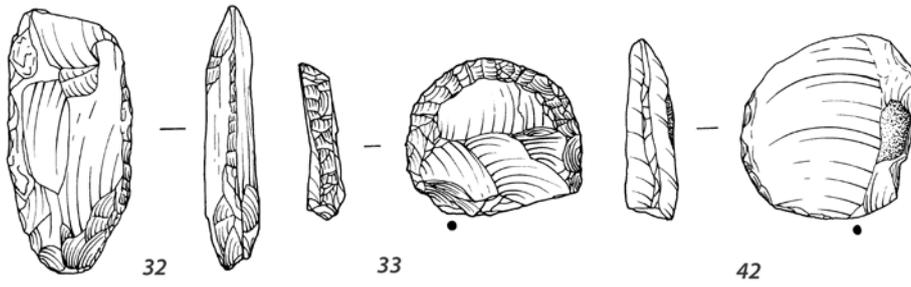
#### 5.2.4 The circular enclosure and nearby features

The assemblage from the enclosure and nearby features embraces 32 lithic artefacts, most of which are either flint (12 pieces) or baked mudstone (17 pieces), supplemented by small numbers of tuff, quartz, quartzite and jasper (Table 7). The majority of the artefacts (26 pieces or 81%) are debitage, and 6 pieces are tools.

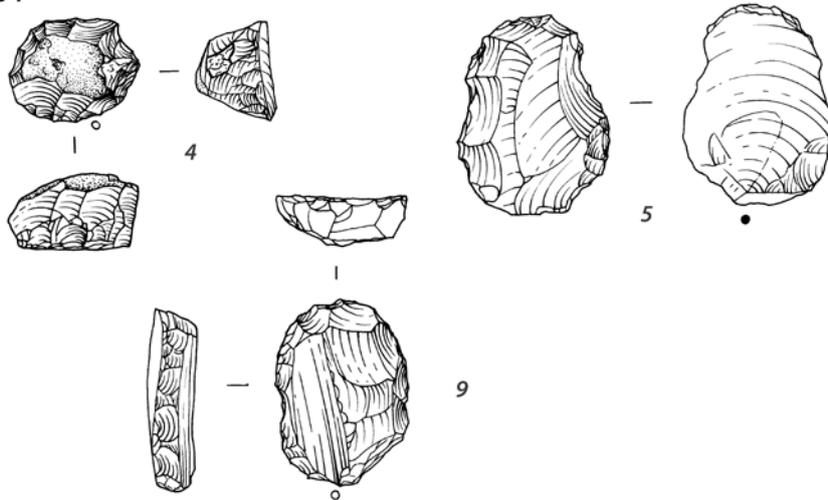
The debitage includes 1 chip, 18 flakes and 7 indeterminate pieces. The baked mudstone flakes were apparently produced entirely by hard percussion, and the flint flakes by a combination of hard and bipolar techniques. The quartz flake is a bipolar blank, and the quartzite flake is a hard-hammer blank.

The six tools include three scrapers, two scale-flaked knives and one piece with edge-retouch; with the exception of the latter, which is in flint, all tools are in baked mudstone. Most definable tools are on hard-hammer flakes – only the edge-retouched flint flake was produced by the application of bipolar technique. The two short end-scrapers (CAT 33, 42, *illus* 29) are of approximately equal size, with a curved, relatively acute working edge at the distal end (CAT 33) or the left lateral side. The scraper edges are exceptionally regular. The side-/end-scraper (CAT 38) is a smaller scraper, which broke through the lateral working edge. The implement's distal working edge is intact. The two scraper edges

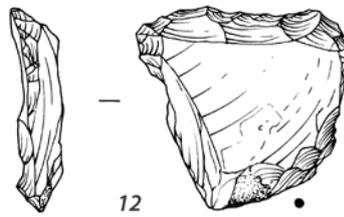
**Beaker**



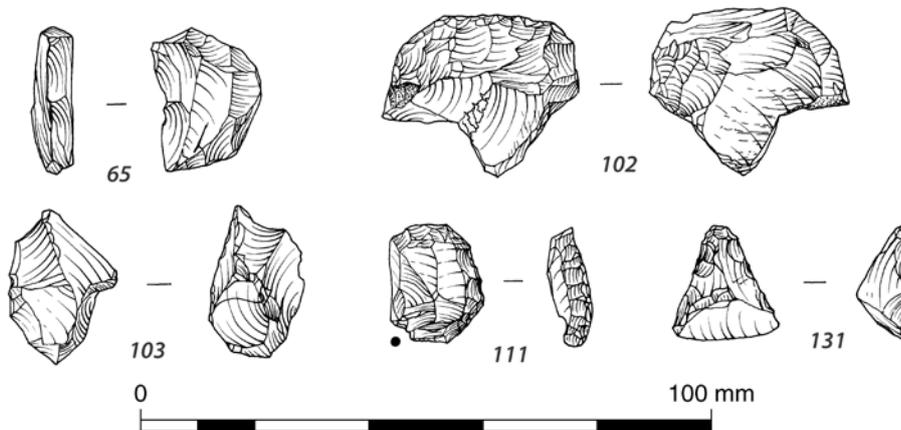
**Roundhouse 1**



**Roundhouse 2**



**Unstratified Material**



*Illus 29 Lithics*

**Table 7 Lithic artefacts from the enclosure and nearby features including F168**

	Flint	Tuff	Mudstone	Quartz	Quartzite	Jasper	Total
Chips	1						1
Flakes	9		6	1	1	1	18
Indeterminate pieces	1	4	2				7
Short end-scrapers			2				2
Side-/end-scrapers			1				1
Scale-flaked knives			2				2
Pieces with edge-retouch	1						1
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>32</b>

of this piece are convex and steep, and they were made by the application of ordinary edge-retouch.

One scale-flaked knife (CAT 32, [illus 29](#)) is intact. It is based on a regular stout blade, with regular steep blunting along the entire left lateral side, and a more acute scale-flaked cutting edge along the entire right lateral side. CAT 43 is a small side-fragment of a quite thin scale-flaked knife. The surviving edge-fragment represents a small central section of the scale-flaked cutting edge of the implement.

Seventeen pieces were recovered from F168, and are dominated by baked mudstone (76%). The group can be dated approximately by the typo-technological attributes of its more sophisticated implements: acute, pressure-flaked scraper edges (CAT 38, 42) are generally a feature of the Early Bronze Age period (eg [Saville 2005](#): 110, 124); scale-flaked knives on robust hard-hammer blades are mostly seen in the Late Neolithic period (eg [Manby 1974](#)); and invasive retouch/scale-flaking is generally not seen later than the transition between the Early and Late Bronze Age periods ([Clark 1936](#): 47). Basically, the precise dating of this material hinges on whether the blade blank of CAT 32 is an intentional blade or simply an elongated flake which incidentally turned out longer than intended. If the blade is an intentional piece, CAT 32 is Late Neolithic, and if it is an unintentional blade it is most likely of an Early Bronze Age date, as the specialised production of blades was phased out during the previous period ([Pitts & Jacobi 1979](#); [Ballin forthcoming b](#)). As F168 contained a high number of Beaker sherds, the blade is probably an unintentional blade, and the entire lithic assemblage most likely dates to the Early Bronze Age, as supported by the radiocarbon dates.

Fifteen pieces from other features were dominated by flint (60%), and many of these pieces are small and poorly executed artefacts. This sub-assemblage only includes one expedient tool (CAT 51). The remaining artefacts from the enclosure ditch (F171), from pits immediately inside (F216) and outside (F167, F208) the ditch, and from the possible miniature souterrains (F163, F181), appear to be simple production waste and may not necessarily be contemporary. Eight lithics from the enclosure ditch may post-date its construction, whereas the artefacts in the

remaining features may be residual pieces, pre-dating their parent features.

### 5.2.5 Roundhouse 1

Only eight lithic artefacts ([Table 8](#)) were recovered from Roundhouse 1, from features 2–4m south-west of the main circle of post-holes constituting this structure (F4, F5, F7), two of which are part of the entrance foundations. The assemblage embraces four pieces of debitage, one core, and three tools, with five objects being in flint and three in tuff or mudstone.

The debitage includes three hard-hammer flakes and one blade (CAT 6). The solitary core (CAT 3) is an irregular specimen, reduced from a number of different directions. It is relatively flat, but this is probably more a result of the raw material's flaking properties (eg planes of weakness) than a reflection of the knapper's intentions. The three tools include one discoidal scraper (CAT 4, [illus 29](#)) and two side-/end-scrapers on stout hard-hammer flakes (CAT 5, 9, [illus 29](#)). Although CAT 4 fits the metric definitions for thumbnail-scrapers suggested by the analyst ([Ballin 2002b](#)), it is too thick to be defined as a typical EBA specimen, and its scraper edge is too steep and crude. CAT 5 and CAT 9 are robust, well-executed scrapers of roughly equal size, with a convex, steep scraper edge at the distal end. CAT 5 has full, straight to slightly convex retouch along both lateral sides. This modification could possibly represent blunting, but the fact that both sides have the same form of use-wear (overhanging areas) as the main distal working edge, suggests that they

**Table 8 Lithic artefacts from Roundhouse 1**

	Flint	Tuff	Mudstone	Total
Flakes	1	1	1	3
Blades	1			1
Irregular cores		1		1
Discoidal scrapers	1			1
Side-/end-scrapers	2			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>

are ancillary scraper edges. CAT 9 has an ancillary convex, steep scraper edge along the right lateral side and relatively plain blunting along the left lateral side. This piece has also been used.

The present assemblage includes no strictly diagnostic pieces, but the dimensions and execution of the blade fragment (CAT 6) suggests a date in the middle of the Early Neolithic period. Blades from the earliest part of this period are usually as narrow as Late Mesolithic blades, and the fact that CAT 6 was detached by soft percussion suggests a date before the onset of the Late Neolithic period. Late Neolithic blades tend to have been detached by more robust techniques (cf Butler 2005, 157).

### 5.2.6 Roundhouse 2

Most lithic finds, 16 of 18 pieces, were retrieved from F55, a sub-circular feature to the south of the structures. The other two lithics (CAT 28, 29) were found in a post-hole (F83) and in the ring-ditch (F100).

The assemblage (Table 9) embraces fifteen pieces of debitage, one preparation flake (a platform rejuvenation flake), one core fragment, and one tool (CAT 12, a small backed knife on a hard-hammer flake, *illus 29*). All artefacts are in baked mudstone. The debitage includes eight hard-hammer flakes, one indeterminate blade, and six indeterminate pieces. The assemblage includes no diagnostic elements.

### 5.2.7 Unstratified material

**Table 9 Lithic artefacts recovered from Roundhouse 2 and the ring-ditch**

	Tuff	Felsite	Total
Flakes	8		8
Blades		1	1
Indeterminate pieces	6		6
Platform rejuvenation flakes	1		1
Core fragments	1		1
Backed knives	1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>

The unstratified material was largely collected from the banded topsoil around the edge of the site. It includes 57 pieces of flint (59%), 22 pieces of mudstone (30%), 7 pieces of tuff (7%) and small numbers of artefacts in quartz, quartzite, sandstone, chalcedony and jet. It is dominated by debitage (82 pieces or 85%), supplemented by 3 cores (3%), and 12 tools (12%).

The debitage includes 1 chip, 47 flakes, 2 blades, 3 microblades and 29 indeterminate pieces.

The tools embrace six formal tools (three scrapers and three piercers), and six plain edge-retouched

pieces (three flakes, two blades and one indeterminate piece with indeterminate lateral retouch; all of unknown function). The technologically definable tools are partly on hard-hammer flakes, and partly on bipolar flakes. One side-end-scraper (CAT 111, *illus 29*) is a small, fairly well-executed piece. It has two slightly convex, steep working edges, one at the distal end and one along the right lateral side. The two remaining scrapers are both side-scrapers, and both are clearly expedient pieces. CAT 65 (*illus 29*) is a small, fragmented mudstone flake which has a straight, steep scraper edge along one lateral side and additional, possibly blunting, retouch along an adjoining edge. The three piercers are all equally expedient pieces, based on small flake fragments. In all cases, a simple piercer tip was formed by retouching two merging sides of a corner. This corner included either one original lateral side and one break facet or, in the case of CAT 131 (*illus 29*), two adjacent break facets.

The three cores, which are in flint, all appear to be fairly expedient pieces, resulting from various forms of unschematic knapping. CAT 102 (*illus 29*) is a small and relatively flat 'other core', one face of which was reduced by detaching small flakes along one half of its circumference, whereas the opposite face was reduced by detaching small flakes along approximately one third of its circumference, more or less from the opposite flaking direction of the former face. The piece could possibly be labelled an irregular discoidal core, but as the chosen approach is not likely to represent any well-defined operational schema, it was chosen to classify CAT 102 as an expedient 'other core'. The second illustrated core (CAT 103) is small and irregular. It was reduced by flaking from three different directions.

The less exclusive choice of raw materials, the apparent lack of a schematic operational schema and the generally expedient character of the tools suggest that most of these artefacts from the site's upper, disturbed layers may be Later Prehistoric, they probably date either to the later Bronze Age (most probable) or to the early Iron Age (Young & Humphrey 1999; Ballin 2002a). Only two artefacts seem to be of earlier dates, namely microblade CAT 148 and side-/end-scraper CAT 111. As CAT 148 was detached by the application of soft percussion, it most likely dates to the Late Mesolithic period or to the Early Neolithic period (Butler 2005: 84, 121). As CAT 111 has not got the acute, pressure-flaked working edges so characteristic of the Early Bronze Age it is not necessarily contemporary with the typical Early Bronze Age scrapers from the pit outside the circular enclosure (see above), but the high quality of its execution indicates that it is older than this collection's later Bronze Age finds.

### 5.2.8 Conclusion

The full assemblage embraces 128 pieces of debitage, 5 cores and 22 tools, but the typological composi-

tion, as well as the raw material composition, varies considerably between the collection's different sub-assemblages

The eight objects from Roundhouse 1 are dominated by five pieces of flint, supplemented by two pieces of tuff and one piece of baked mudstone. It includes four pieces of debitage, one of which is a regular blade, one irregular core and three tools. All the tools are well-executed scrapers. The eighteen artefacts from Roundhouse 2 are almost entirely in tuff, supplemented by one piece in felsite. It is an assemblage of fairly crude and chunky artefacts, and includes sixteen pieces of debitage, one core fragment and one backed knife. The 32 pieces from the circular enclosure and nearby features are mostly in flint or baked mudstone. Twenty-six pieces are debitage, whereas the remaining six pieces are well-executed tool forms (all in baked mudstone), such as scrapers and scale-flaked knives. The 97 unstratified artefacts are mostly in flint and baked mudstone. Eighty-two pieces are debitage, three are cores and twelve are tools, and, in general, this assemblage is dominated by expedient and poorly executed specimens.

It is uncertain whether the lithic assemblages from the various features and their surroundings are actually contemporary with those buildings and monuments, but it is thought that the high-quality baked mudstone implements deposited in Pit F168 immediately outside the enclosure may be contemporary with this monument. Based on a combination of raw material preferences and typotechnological attributes, it was suggested above that the finds from Roundhouse 1 may largely date to the central part of the Early Neolithic period; it was not possible to date the tuff assemblage from Roundhouse 2; the artefacts from the enclosure (or at least those from F168) are thought to date to the Early Bronze Age period; and most of the unstratified (largely topsoil) finds are probably of later prehistoric date.

Although the present assemblage from Kiltaraglen is exceedingly mixed in most respects, it does offer new insights. In the general perspective, it provides information on the geology of the Skye area and, within this area, raw material procurement through prehistory. Also it increases our understanding of Staffin baked mudstone, and allows us to form new research strategies, which may allow us to finally solve the old problem as to whether the banded meta-sedimentary rock forms from settlements in the Western Isles are baked mudstone or mylonite. The latter point is probably the most important one, as this has implications for the understanding of raw material exchange in general in the wider Western Isles/Southern Hebrides area.

### 5.3 Coarse stone, by Adam Jackson

Fifteen worked finds were recovered, largely comprising cobble tools (discussed below), with the

exception of a grinding platform from 216/2. The raw materials used were all locally available.

The cobble tools are generally natural cobbles with evidence of hammering, pounding, and/or grinding damage to one or more surface. The cobble from 171/181 is particularly worthy of mention because its natural form and the heavy wear to both poles is consistent with use as a pestle. With this possible exception, the cobble tools were all expedient tools and it is quite probable that some were simply used once and discarded. The wear to the cobble tools is consistent with use in a variety of functions (eg in preparation of food stuffs, grinding of pigments etc).

Cobble tools were widely distributed, being recovered from the fills of ring-ditch F100 (2) and features F55 (1) and F88 (1), which were associated with Roundhouse 2. They were also in the fills of the enclosure ditch F171 (6, including 1 possible) and in the features cut into its surface F227 (1), and F230 (1). Two, and a sandstone grinding platform/quern, were recovered from F216 within the enclosure.

Three of the four finds from F100 are fire blackened and/or heat damaged. Their depositional history is likely to have been complex as it is quite probable that they were first used as cobble tools, discarded and then reused at the hearth or in the

**Table 10 Range of vitrified material present**

Description	Weight (g)
<i>Diagnostic</i>	
Plano-convex hearth bottom (PCHB) & fragments	1076.8
Possible PCHB fragments	454.1
PCHB fragment (?post-med)	474
Magnetic residue	53.8
Unclassified iron slag	1346.7
<i>Undiagnostic</i>	
Non-magnetic residue	89.6
Vitrified ceramic & unclassified slag	102.7

**Table 11 Quantity of vitrified material by context**

Feature No.	Feature description	Weight (g)
F54	Field drain	474.0
F100	Ring-ditch	9.5
F116	Pit	1472.0
F163	Miniature souterrain	35.5
F168	Beaker pit	2.1
F169	Pit	5.5
F177	Pit	3.1
F195	Pit	192.6
F213	Pit	22.7
Unstratified	Spoil heap	1382.8

**Table 12 Contexts with magnetic residues**

Context	HS	Flake	Sphere	Amount	Weight (g)
169	Y	Y	Y	High	2.4
169/2	Y	Y	Y	High	3.1
195	Y	Y	N	Low	18.3
195/2	Y	Y	Y	High	30

(HS – presence of hammerscale; flake – presence of flake hammerscale; sphere – presence of slag spheres; amount – visual estimation of quantity of hammerscale; weight – actual quantity of material in grams)

cooking process and then finally discarded. Finds from the fills of F171 and associated features are more numerous but broadly comparable, except for the pestle/pounder mentioned above. Their form and, particularly, their context of recovery (in later fills) are consistent with ceramic evidence of mid-second millennium to later first millennium BC activity at the site. However, cobble tools occur in large number across Scotland on sites of prehistoric and much later date; consequently they provide no useful indication as to the chronology of the contexts in which they were recovered.

#### 5.4 Slag and vitrified material, by Dawn McLaren

A small assemblage of vitrified material (3698g) was recovered. Visual examination has shown that the assemblage is dominated by ironworking debris (Table 10) including fragmentary hearth bottoms, unclassified iron slag and magnetic residues, probably waste from blacksmithing activities. No evidence of iron smelting was identified.

In addition to the diagnostic ironworking residues, small fragments of vitrified ceramics and glassy slags are present. The slag has been categorised following common classifications (eg McDonnell 1994; Spearman 1997; Starley 2000). A full catalogue of the material is given in the archive report.

A significant quantity of material (1386.4g) was recovered from unstratified contexts and cannot be related to any structure on site. Only small amounts of material came from stratified contexts, and these are widely distributed across the site (Table 11). Stratified contexts include pit fills (F116, F168, F169, F177, F195, F213), the fill of a ring-ditch (F100), a souterrain related feature (F163) and a field drain (F54).

The upper fill of Pit F116, dated to the medieval period, contained charcoal-rich silty soil and a suite of ironworking remains including four fragmentary hearth bottoms, unclassified ironworking slag and small fragments of burnt/vitrified ceramic likely to be hearth or furnace lining. A small quantity (539.3g) of heat-affected stones were also present. Although all of the hearth bottoms from this context are fragmentary, the diameters of two can be estimated as 70 mm and 91.5 mm respectively. Their small size, weight and lack of sizeable charcoal inclusions suggest that these are likely to be the product

of smithing (McDonnell 1994, 230), rather than smelting activities. The lack of any micro-debris from this context, such as hammerscale or slag spheres, suggests that this deposit was a secondary dump of waste material rather than an in situ metal working pit.

A further suite of ironworking waste was recovered from an undated pit (F195) located immediately west of the enclosure ditch (F171). This shallow pit contained only one fill (F195/2), from which a fragment of possible hearth bottom, unclassified slag and small quantities of magnetic and non-magnetic residues were recovered. Significantly, the magnetic residues comprised a high level of hammerscale in the form of magnetic flakes and slag spheres (Table 12) diagnostic of bloom or blacksmithing activities.

A small quantity of magnetic residues including high levels of hammerscale was also recovered from Pit F169, which is located immediately east of Pit F195. No structural elements were noted to indicate the presence of a hearth or furnace associated with either of these features, nor do these pits appear to have been the focus for intense burning. These factors and the small quantity of magnetic residues involved suggest that these are small dumps of smithing waste rather than in situ metalworking evidence. Yet the presence of such diagnostic micro-debris does suggest that smithing activities were taking place in the close vicinity of these features at an unspecified date.

A further hearth bottom fragment came from the fill of a modern field drainage ditch (F54). It was associated with various modern finds and is likely to be relatively modern in date.

Very small fragmentary pieces of unclassified iron slag were recovered from the fills of a pit (F213) and a miniature souterrain (F163), the latter in association with prehistoric pottery. These are almost certainly residual and although diagnostic of ironworking, cannot be related to a particular process. Two features, Pit F177, located near to the enclosure ditch, and the fill of ring-ditch F100 contained small quantities of non-magnetic residues such as fuel ash slag. Such vitreous material is formed when sand, earth, clay, stones and ash fuse together when subjected to high temperatures, for example in a hearth. This produces vesicular glassy or porous vitrified material which is typically not magnetic. These slags can be produced during any high-temperature pyrotechnic process and are

not necessarily indicative of deliberate industrial activity.

Despite the clear evidence of ironworking, particularly smithing, at Kiltaraglen, dating this activity remains a problem as vitrified material is rarely chronologically diagnostic. One isolated fragment, from F163, was associated with prehistoric and later finds. However Pit F116, which contains a possible dump of ironworking debris, has a firm medieval date and it is likely that much of the slag assemblage is of a similar date.

At present, very few sites on Skye are known to have produced any evidence of metalworking. This is due, in part, to the relative lack of excavation but also to the number of sites that remain unpublished. A search of the available records reveals four later prehistoric and early historic sites with evidence of ironworking. Iron slag and a smelting furnace were found within early Iron Age deposits inside Rudh' an Dunain cave (Scott 1934: 201, 207–8). Iron slag fragments were recovered from the interior of Dun Ardtreck (MacKie 2000: 345). Although most likely derived from activities outside the dun itself, the presence of vitrified material in phase 1, 3 and 4 deposits indicates that ironworking was taking place nearby in the later prehistoric period. Fragments of 'frothy iron slag' are also recorded at the broch at Dun Beag (Callander 1921: 125), but this material cannot be closely dated. The reuse of the structure in the early medieval period confuses the situation, and this ironworking residue could be later prehistoric or medieval in date. More recently, small quantities of vitrified material, including debris from ironworking, have been recovered from the later prehistoric site at High Pasture Cave (S Birch pers comm).

Despite the lack of firm dating evidence for the majority of associated features, the presence of medieval ironworking debris, and smithing residues in particular, make Kiltarglen a valuable addition to the growing corpus of sites producing metalworking evidence in Skye and north-west Scotland.

### 5.5 Late medieval coin, by Nick McQ. Holmes

A coin was recovered from topsoil. It is a David II silver half-groat of Aberdeen, 2nd coinage (1358–

67), type A. Dimensions: 23.5mm × 23.0mm; Weight: 2.19g; die axis: 240°. Condition: partly corroded, but apparently only slightly worn.

Obv.: +D̄AVID+D̄DEI+GR̄A+ΘREX+SCOTORVM

Rev.: D̄DNSΘ D̄PRΘOT ECTOR M̄DEVSΘ  
VILL A+Λ BER DON

Aberdeen mint half-groats of this issue are not common, this being the 19th specimen which the author has been able to trace. It is from the same die pairing as the coin illustrated by Stewart (1971, Plate XVII, 28a).

### 5.6 Post-medieval finds, by Sue Anderson

Post-medieval finds from the site comprised fourteen sherds of modern pottery (factory-made whitewares and stonewares), a piece of ceramic floor tile, seven fragments of blue-grey roofing slate, twenty-two fragments of bottle and vessel glass, four clay tobacco pipe fragments, two other pipeclay objects and nine metal objects. A full catalogue is available in the archive. None of these finds is likely to predate the late 18th century, although there is a possibility that a teardrop-shaped melt fragment of green glass found in ring-ditch fill 100/02 could be of Roman date if not intrusive.

Most features containing modern finds were located to the south of the enclosure (F171), including F250, F259, F261, F263, F267 and F268, and to the south of the site (F38). F163 contained an iron nail and a fragmentary narrow oval object which may be a belt slide from a horse harness or possibly a chain link; these items are likely to be post-medieval but are intrinsically undateable. The pebbled surface F55 to the south of Roundhouse 2 contained a fragment of green bottle glass, but this could be intrusive.

The distribution of these artefacts is likely to be related to agricultural and manuring activity, although the slight concentration in the area to the south-east of the enclosure may suggest that there was occupation in the vicinity in the 19th/20th centuries.