CHAPTER 10: THE ARTEFACT ASSEMBLAGES

10.1 THE COARSE POTTERY FROM BALELONE, BALESHARE, HORNISH POINT, SOUTH GLENDALE AND NEWTONFERRY

A MacSween (1992)

(based on contributions from J Barber, E Campbell, G Collins, A Lane & D Lehane)

10.1.1 Introduction

J Barber

When the specialist materials were distributed from these sites, it was decided not to inform the specialists of the phasing, nor indeed the relative chronological position of the several materials. The point of this was simply that of providing an 'objective' test of their conclusions, particularly where those conclusions contained some element of seriation. The test was the simple one of comparing the groups or categories determined by the specialists with the actual site stratification to see whether the defined groups occurred in chronologically coherent blocks of strata.

Attribute analysis was the preferred methodology of lithic analysis at that time and seemed to be achieving much in the way of limiting the operation of preconception in the characterisation and nomenclature of lithic artefacts. It was decided to undertake an attribute analysis of the pottery from the Hebridean sites and Ms D Lehane and Ms L Crone duly carried out this work.

Characterisation of the assemblage was then based on those recorded characteristics which reflect the ceramic technology of the assemblage. This generated groups of sherds, Pottery Types 1 and 8, and the physical distribution of the sherds of these groups throughout the recorded sections were then examined. There was no detectable chronological coherence to their distributions. For example, at Baleshare Type 1 occurs in all but nine of the site's twenty-eight Blocks and is present from the earliest to the latest deposits, a span of some 1300 radiocarbon years. Type 8, in contrast occurs in only four Blocks, dating to a span of over 800 radiocarbon years and widely separated across the site. Furthermore, it is only represented by body sherds in two of the Blocks and only by rim, base and decorated sherds in the other two.

It seemed so improbable, therefore, that these groups represent a categorisation that had any relevance to the occupants of these sites that a further study was commissioned from Dr A Lane, who has considerable experience of Hebridean pottery studies. Only the Balelone material was available at this time and only the rim, base and decorated sherds were studied. Albeit the chronology of the site at Balelone is a very short one, the proposed types of pottery did not reflect the order of their stratigraphic occurrence.

From this it was concluded that ceramic studies of Hebridean material have not yet reached the stage where the pottery taxonomy is of chronological significance. Indeed, one might venture the opinion that we have yet to achieve a meaningful taxonomy of the ceramics of the Hebrides. The possible reasons for this are discussed further below.

The final pottery report, by Dr A MacSween, was prepared with full access to the stratigraphic and dating evidence and, presumably for this reason, appears a more successful categorisation than either of its two progenitors. However, its success does not in any way weaken the conclusion that we still do not have a successful taxonomy of Hebridean late prehistoric pottery.

10.1.2 Balelone: summary of the assemblage

The assemblage from Balelone comprises *circa* 1500 sherds, sixty-eight of which are decorated, and includes ninety-one rim sherds and fifty-four basal sherds. Apart from two sherds which were identified as coming from Beakers, the assemblage can be attributed to the Iron Age. Where method of manufacture can be determined, the pottery is all coil constructed. Several sherds have a smooth surface which contrasts with the heavily-gritted body. This seems to have been produced by wet-wiping and/or burnishing, rather than by slipping, the process having drawn the plates of mica in the clay to the surface.

Morphology

Although it was not possible to reconstruct any vessels from Balelone, it appears that all the vessels were flat-based and that some were large, straight-sided bucket forms. Most of the basal sherds are too fragmentary to give much indication of profile, but where the basal angle could be determined, the vessels were apparently steep-walled.

Rims were plain, simple in 70% of sherds, with everted rims accounting for the remaining 30%. Where diameter could be measured (67 examples), 55.3% were under 180 mm in external diameter and 44.7% were 180 mm or over.

Decoration

The sherds were decorated using a variety of techniques; incised, applied, stabbed, impressed and stamped decoration was represented. Some vessels were decorated with a cordon, either a plain cordon, or one which was decorated with incised oblique or vertical lines, or finger-marking. Applied bosses were also noted. Incised decoration took a variety of forms – random incisions, parallel or single lines, 'ladder decoration', and zig-zagging lines. Stab and stab-and-drag decoration was also used, as well as decoration made by impressing either the finger-tip or a ring. The impressed decoration usually took the form of a row of motifs around the upper part of a vessel.

Often the sherds were too small to determine whether a motif was part of the more complex decoration which usually took the form of a cordon surrounding the shoulder of the vessel, with incised decoration above (Mackie's Balevullin vases [1974b, fig 20]). One vessel (Figure 74a) was decorated with a cordon incised with oblique lines, above which was incised decoration comprising an incised zig-zag line with stabbed dots and ring impressions below. A similarly decorated vessel was recovered from a context in Block 7 (Find 710/21), while in the same Block was a vessel decorated with a finger-marked cordon with zig-zagging incised ladder decoration above. This ladder decoration was combined with ring impressions on another vessel (Figure 74b & Plate 30).

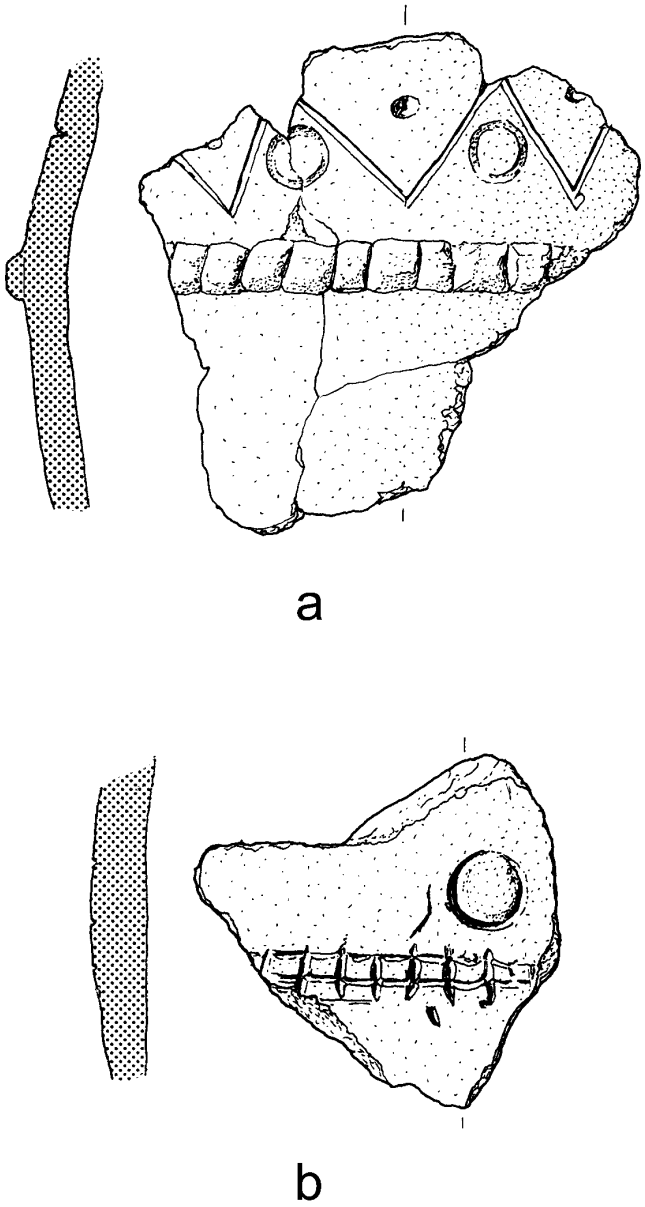

Figure 74. Balelone: pottery. a) Find 329/1, Block 3 (Scale 1:1). b) Finds 21/2, Block 5 (Scale 1:1)

Plate 30. Sherd from Balelone bearing impressed, ring-headed pin decoration

Fabric

Four main fabrics were identified in the Balelone assemblage by examination under a binocular microscope;
Fabric 1: quartz, amphibole & rock fragments
Fabric 2: quartz, amphibole, rock fragments, organics & mica
Fabric 3: quartz, amphibole, rock fragments & mica
Fabric 4: quartz, amphibole, rock fragments & organics
The grits are angular to sub-angular, but show some evidence of chemical weathering. They are poorly sorted with a size range 1 mm to 2 mm and occasionally up to 5 mm. Most of the sherds have a high proportion of inclusions.

The rock fragments identified are of a coarse-grained, quartz-amphibole rock, sometimes including mica. The organic remains are short lengths (10–20 mm) of plain-sectioned stems of diameter 0.3 mm, identified as moorland grasses such as *festuca* sp. It is possible that sheep dung was used to temper the pottery. Occasional rounded grains of shell sand are found in all fabrics. The mineralogy is consistent with a local provenance in North Uist, though similar minerals can be found throughout the Outer Hebrides. The local rocks are quartz-amphibole gneisses, in places migmatised and with granitic intrusions (Dearnley 1962). The presence of shell sand argues for production in the machair of the western coasts of the islands. The angularity of the fragments indicates little transport of material subsequent to the breakdown of the rock structure, and suggests a locally-derived glacial or colluvial deposit rather than deliberately crushed rock. This type of deposit would vary in composition over a short distance, making it impossible to be sure if the variation in fabric is due to natural variation or deliberate selection of particular clays.

Certain forms and decoration were seen to relate more to Fabric 1 than to Fabric 2 (there were too few sherds of Fabrics 3 and 4 to make useful comment). The sherds made from Fabric 1 included undecorated bucket-shaped pots, smaller undecorated jar forms and Balevullin vases. The Fabric 1 pottery has the majority of slashed-cordon-decorated sherds in the assemblage, and only six finger-marked cordons. The remainder of the decoration is simple with only a few complex patterns comprising more than one motif.

Fabric 2 has straight-sided vessels, but in this case decorated with fingertip marks on the rim top. The bodysherds are predominantly decorated with fingermarked cordons rather than slashed cordons, and some bases have fingermarking in the interior.

Certain forms of decoration are common to both fabrics. The complex decoration of the fabric 1 Balevullin jar (Figure 74a) with its zigzag incised line, is very similar to the fabric 2 vessel (Figure 74b).

10.1.3 Baleshare: summary of the assemblage

The assemblage from Baleshare comprises *circa* 5760 sherds made, where technique of manufacture could be determined, by the coil-construction method. The pottery, much of which was badly fragmented and abraded, was sorted according to fabric, thickness, decoration and surface finish to determine whether any broad differences could be seen between pottery from the various phases of the site (only presence/absence was recorded). Over 1000 sherds from the assemblage were sub-

a) thickness

Phase	thin	medium	thick	very thick
1		*	*	
2		*	*	*
3	*	*	*	*

b) surface finish

Phase	slip	smoothed	grass-wiped	burnished
1	*			
2	*	*	*	
3	*	*	*	*

c) decoration

Phase	incised	finger imp	nail imp	bosses	cordon	finger imp bases
1	*					
2	*	*	*		*	
3	*	*	*	*	*	*

d) fabric

Phase	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	*	*		*	*	
2	*	*		*	*	
3	*	*		*	*	*

Table 5. Baleshare. Pottery attributes

jected to analysis of colour, thickness and firing but no meaningful groups could be identified (Lehane, archive report).

The pottery was categorised as thin (< 5 mm), medium (6–10 mm), thick (11–15 mm) or very thick (>16 mm); the results are presented in Table 5a.

Morphology

All the vessels seem to have been flat-based, either bucket-shaped or shouldered with more of a barrel-shaped lower portion. A range of rim types is represented; plain, flat, interior bevelled and splayed in Phase 1, with the addition of rolled, necked and inverted in Phase 2, and everted and tapered in Phase 3. Thirty-two rim sherds have diameters which can be measured. The majority was under 180 mm in external diameter with the largest proportion measuring 100 mm.

Surface finish and decoration

The use of a thin slip was noted on sherds from each phase. Smoothing and grass-wiping was present on sherds from Phases 2 and 3, whereas burnishing was restricted to sherds from Phase 3 (Table 5b).

A variety of decorative techniques was recorded (Table 5c). The only decoration on a Phase 1 sherd was a possible incised line. In Phase 2 contexts incised lines, finger tip and finger nail impressions were noted. There was only one example of a cordon in Phase 2, in one of the upper blocks. These techniques were recorded on pottery from Phase 3 contexts with the additional techniques of applied bosses and finger-impressed bases.

These decorative elements were combined in a number of ways (Figure 75). Find 30/3 (Figure 75a) has an applied cordon decorated with incised zig-zags above which are incised lines forming a chevron, or basket effect. Find 40/43 (Figure 75b) has applied bosses with double incised chevron decoration above. Find 32/96 (Figure 75c) has a slashed cordon with incised decoration above, again possibly forming a woven or basket effect. Find 81/98 (Figure 75d & Plate 15) is a shouldered vessel with a zig-zag cordon around the vessel at the level of the shoulder.

Fabric

The fabrics were categorised as follows – sandy clay (1); coarse sandy clay (2); fine clay (3); sandy clay with rock temper (4); coarse, sandy clay with rock temper (5); and fine clay with rock temper (6) (Table 5d). The presence of organics was noted in examples of each fabric present.

Macroscopic examination of forty-five sherds indicated local production. All contain rock fragments which can be matched with outcrops within 2 km of the site on North Uist. The majority of the sherds contain fragments, ranging in size from 2 mm to 12 mm in diameter, of quartz, granite-gneiss, granite and amphibolite. These fragments are usually rounded, indicating that they derive from a coarse sand, but some are angular, indicating the addition of crushed rock. The smaller grains (0.5 mm to 2 mm) usually consist of quartz, hornblende, mica (usually biotite) and, rarely, feldspar. Some 20% of the 45 sherds examined exhibited elongated cavities from the burning-out of grass or other vegetation. Usually these cavities were infrequent in a sherd, perhaps indicative of vegetation within the clay rather than deliberate addition, but in some cases the cavities are so frequent that deliberate addition is indicated.

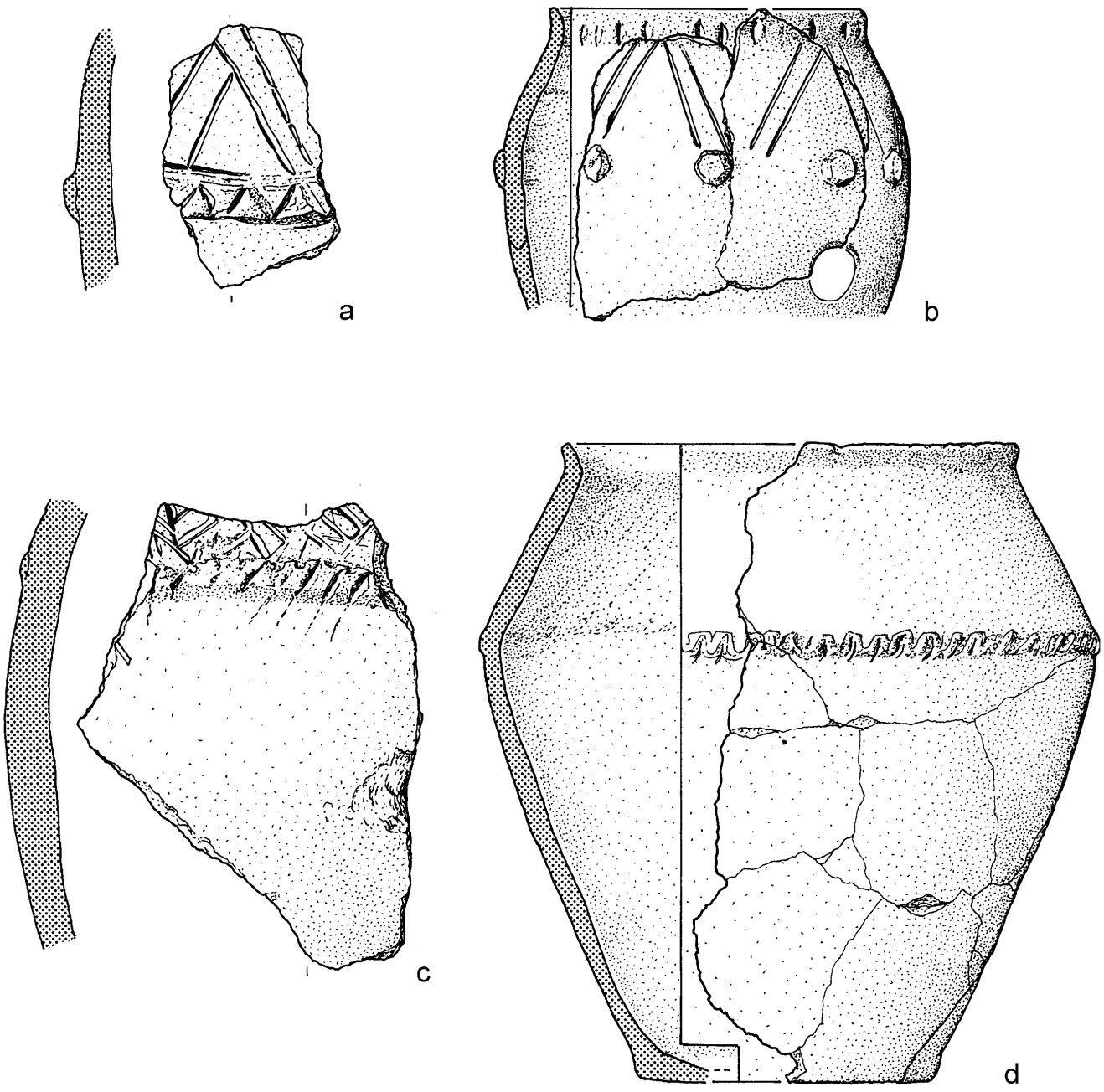

Figure 75. Baleshare: pottery. a) Find 30/3 (Scale 1:1). b) Find 40/43 (Scale 1:2). c) Find 32/96 (Scale 1:1). d) Find 81/98 (Scale 1:2)

The pottery was similar in fabric throughout the assemblage, although there were no thin sherds in Phases 1 and 2. Most of the fabrics were sandy clay or coarse sandy clay, sometimes tempered with rock fragments. Fine clay was only used in Phase 3, although this too was tempered with rock fragments.

Summary of chronology

Certain differences within the assemblage can perhaps be explained chronologically. The pottery from Phases 1 and 2 does not have any fine sherds and a fine clay was not used. The Phase 1 pottery was undecorated apart from one sherd with possible incised decoration, whereas in Phase 2 incised and impressed decoration predominated, with only one example of a cordon, and in Phase 3 applied decoration was used in addition to the continued use of incised and impressed decoration. The use of burnishing as a surface finish was only noted in Phase 3. Everted and tapered rims were only noted in Phase 3.

10.1.4 Hornish Point: summary of the assemblage

The assemblage of coarse pottery from Hornish Point comprises 699 sherds (581 undecorated body sherds, forty-four rim sherds, twenty-eight basal sherds and forty-six decorated sherds). The vessels were hand-built by the coil-construction method. Over 80% of the sherds were

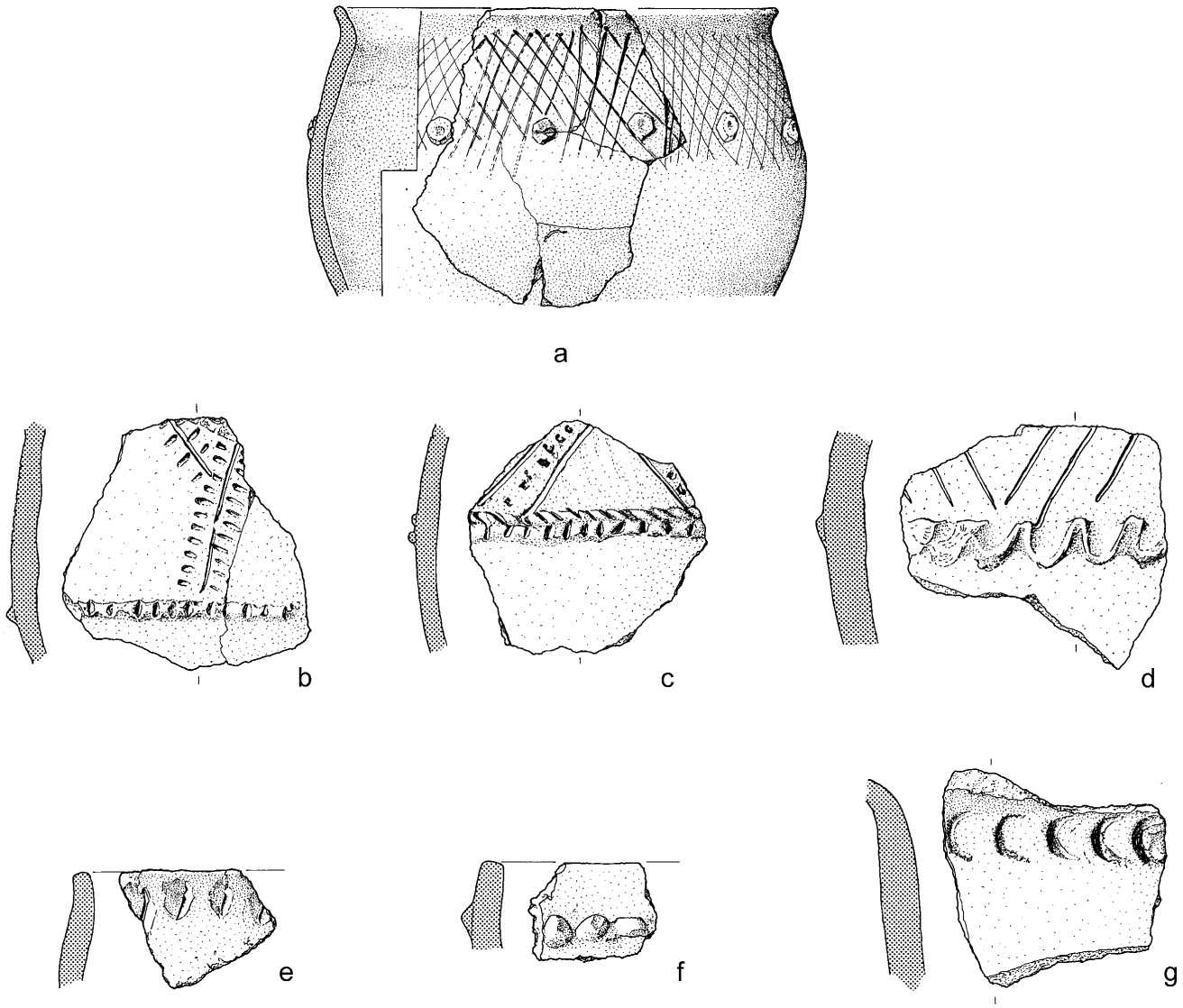

Figure 76. Hornish Point: pottery. a) Find 123/18 (Scale 1:2). b) Find 123/20 (Scale 1:1). c) Find 366/1 (Scale 1:1). d) Find 261/1 (Scale 1:1). e) Find 204/7 (Scale 1:1). f) Find 130/14 (Scale 1:1). g) Find 123/25 (Scale 1:1)

incompletely oxidised. Scraping and smoothing of the surface was sometimes noted, and four of the sherds are grass-marked. When the pottery was subjected to attribute analysis (colour, thickness and firing), eight types were identified (see Lehane, archive report), but none of these were found to have any stratigraphic significance.

Morphology

The following rim types were noted; everted (29), inverted (1), plain (11) and flat (3). The dominance of the everted rim is consistent with what was noted in the Baleshare assemblage. Only in five cases could rim diameter be measured, and a similar size range to the Baleshare assemblage was indicated. The only basal type recorded was a flat base with angled walls.

Decoration

Forty-six decorated sherds were recovered with the following methods of decoration represented; incised (35%), applied (32.6%), gouged (26%), stabbed (4.3%) and stamped (2.1%). The range of methods and the motifs is very similar to those noted in the Balelone assemblage.

In general the sherds were too small to obtain a clear impression of the layout of the decoration, but, as at Balelone, a combination of applied and incised motifs appears to have been common (Figure 76). Find 123/18 (Figure 76a) has an incised lattice decoration combined with applied bosses. Find 123/20 (Figure 76b) has an applied cordon with incised slashes with incised 'fringed' chevron decoration above. Find 366/1 (Figure 76c) has an applied cordon decorated with incised chevrons combined with an incised, double chevron, with additional dot decoration above. Find 261/1 (Figure 76d) has an applied wavy cordon with incised, chevron decoration above. In other cases the decoration is confined to a single motif, repeated around the vessel, usually around the neck, eg lentoid decoration on Find 204/7 (Figure 76e), a row of applied bosses on Find 130/14 (Figure 76f), and a row of finger-tip impressions at the point of inflection of the everted rim of Find 123/25 (Figure 76g).

Fabric
The fabrics of the vessels are very similar throughout; sandy clay or coarse, sandy clay, with rock tempering only occasionally, and thickness in the range 5 mm to 15 mm. Thirty-two sherds from the site were examined macroscopically. The larger rock fragments within the sherds were found to be either granite or quartz or a combination. Finer grains (up to 1 mm diameter) consistently included quartz, hornblende and biotite and, rarely, feldspar. Grass-tempering seems to have been common, noted in around 60% of the sherds examined.

10.1.5 Newtonferry: summary of the assemblage

During the excavations at Newtonferry, *circa* 350 sherds of pottery were recovered. The majority of sherds were uncontexted but five sherds were retrieved from Block 5 and Block 3. Examples of inverted, necked, plain and everted rims are included in the assemblage. All are uncontexted apart from an inverted rim from (38). There are no basal sherds in the assemblage. Only one sherd from (41) has decoration which consisted of two small incised lines. Most of the pottery is between 5–10 mm thick. The pottery is morphologically undiagnostic. The fabrics are similar throughout the assemblage, ie sandy clay, occasionally with the addition of organics.

The fabrics of a sample of sherds were analysed in more detail. The results are as follows:
Fabrics 1 and 5: Granite and quartz, mainly up to 2 mm in diameter, mostly rounded or sub-rounded. Finer black minerals (? hornblende) and biotite, set in a dark grey clay matrix. Many elongated cavities aligned with the walls of the sherd probably from grass tempering. There are occasional grass impressions on both surfaces of the sherds.
Fabrics 2, 3 & 4: Many angular quartz grits up to 2 mm in diameter, with smaller quartz and hornblende fragments, less than 1 mm in diameter. Occasional irregular cavities, some with impressions of vegetation.
Fabric 6: Coarse granite fragments up to 6 mm in diameter, with finer quartz, feldspar, hornblende and biotite set in a grey clay matrix. Grass impressions on both surfaces.

10.1.6 South Glendale: summary of the assemblage

An assemblage of fifty-five contexted sherds and *circa* 120 uncontexted sherds were recovered during the excavations at South Glendale. In addition, a brown-glazed sherd of post-Medieval date and a possible beaker sherd were recovered during a pre-excavation survey, and Shepherd & Maclean (1978, 35) recovered cord-decorated beaker sherds during earlier fieldwork.

All the contexted pottery apart from one sherd was recovered from the upper Block of midden deposits and pit-digging activity. The pottery is all hand-thrown, by the coil construction method, and the majority of sherds are rock-tempered. From its colour, most was fired in an oxidising atmosphere. Only three sherds are decorated; Find 3/3 which has incised decoration into a slip, Find 4/32 which has an incised line, and Find 103/1 which also has incised decoration. In none of these instances does enough of the decoration survive to indicate a date.

Six rim sherds were noted; an everted rim, a flat rim and an inverted rim with an internal bevel from unstratified deposits and, from Block 1 contexts, a rim with an internal bevel, three flat rims and one from a necked vessel. None of the rim diameters could be measured, but in seventeen cases where the curvature of body sherds could be measured, it appeared that the seven were over 0.36 m in diameter.

10.1.7 Discussion

As the assemblages from Newtonferry and South Glendale are small and undiagnostic, the discussion will focus on the *circa* 8000 sherds from the other three sites. The ^{14}C dates indicate that the assemblages studied from Baleshare, Balelone and Hornish Point span the period from *circa* 1350 cal BC to 100 cal BC. The earliest dates were from the Phase 1 assemblage at Baleshare, an undecorated assemblage with medium to thick-walled vessels, often bucket-shaped. The Phase 2 assemblage from Baleshare, dating to *circa* 1000 cal BC, included rolled and necked vessels. A row of impressed decoration below the rim was most common. The assemblages from Balelone and Hornish Point span similar periods, 550–300 cal BC in the former case and 550–220 cal BC in the latter. Both have incised and applied decoration and a range of rim forms including everted. The assemblage from Phase 3 at Baleshare is later, *circa* 200–100 cal BC, but has a similar range of rim forms and decoration.

The largest published assemblage of Iron Age pottery from Uist consists of 19,000 sherds from Dun Vulan (Parker-Pearson & Sharples 1999). Unfortunately, this report was published too recently for its results to be assimilated or discussed here. Much smaller assemblages were recovered from the wheelhouse sites of A'Cheardach Mhor (Young & Richardson 1960) and A'Cheardach Beag (Fairhurst 1971) in South Uist, and Sollas in North Uist. Around 1000 sherds were recovered from the wheelhouse at A'Cheardach Beag (ibid). The assemblage had two main components, decorated 'wheelhouse wares' and undecorated 'coarse wares'. In the report it was noted that most of the pottery should be considered as unstratified (*ibid,* 91), so it is not possible to establish whether the two types of pottery were contemporaneous, perhaps reflecting a functional difference, or whether they represent a chronological division. The 'wheelhouse pottery' has a variety of decorative methods; fingertip decoration, linear and curvilinear incised motifs, stabbing or stab and drag, and wavy or finger-impressed cordons. Fairhurst noted the absence of channelled decoration (also known as 'Clettraval Ware'), ring-headed pin impressions, raised bosses and applied cordon under the rim, which led him to believe, from comparison with other assemblages, that the assemblage was later rather than earlier in the sequence. All of the forms of pottery noted at A'Cheardach Beag were identified in the assemblages from Balelone, Baleshare and Hornish Point.

The pottery from A'Cheardach Mhor was stratified into an earlier and a later group within the wheelhouse (Young & Richardson 1960). The pottery that Young defines as the earlier group has inverted rims and incised decoration, and came from below the living levels of the bays of the wheelhouse (*ibid,* 143). Applied cordons and raised bosses were also noted. Everted rims were a distinctive feature of the later stage of Phase 1, along with various forms of applied decoration. The

later assemblage, from above the level of the wheelhouse floor, was characterised by vessels with a short neck and was often undecorated. The pottery from the early phase was dated to the second century AD by association with yellow vitreous beads, while a date within the fifth to seventh centuries AD was suggested for the later assemblage, through comparison with the Dun Cuier, Barra, assemblage (*ibid,* 154).

The Sollas wheelhouse, which dates to the first century AD, produced an assemblage of around 3000 sherds (Campbell 1991, 148). Shouldered vessels are more common, although bucket shapes were also found. Decoration includes linear incisions forming lattices, chevrons, lozenges, stamped rings, channelled curvilinear designs, cordons on the shoulder and stabs or impressions around the neck. These decorative elements are found in various combinations. While the presence of a cordon and incised decoration did not seem to be chronologically sensitive within the period represented at Sollas, Campbell felt that channelled decoration (shallow grooves forming either arches or asymmetric waves), used by Mackie (1974a, 81) to define 'Clettraval Ware', was late in the sequence, being confined, apart from one example, to period B2, the final phase on the site, and that the appearance of everted rim pottery was also sudden, coinciding with the building of the wheelhouse. The lack of channelled decoration in the assemblages at Balelone, Baleshare and Hornish Point would support its later date. However, the presence of everted rims in these assemblages does not support Campbell's theory that they were introduced at the same time as channelled decoration.

From these assemblages from the Uists, and from the assemblages from Balelone, Baleshare and Hornish Point, various observations can be made as to the identification of chronologically sensitive decorative traits. The Baleshare Phase II assemblage indicates that the use of rows of impressed decoration in the early Iron Age in this region is a continuation of a later Bronze Age tradition. Impressed decoration continued to be used solely, or in combination with incised decoration, applied cordons and bosses in the early part of the Iron Age. In the later assemblages, as evidenced at Sollas, channelled decoration is added to the repertoire. The sequence for the area from *circa* 1000 cal BC to the first few centuries cal AD appears to involve the addition of new decorative elements rather than the discontinuation of earlier styles as new ones are developed.

In considering how far these observations tie in with other assemblages from the West Coast islands, the discussion will be restricted to published material.

The largest published assemblage is that from Dun Mor Vaul, Tiree. The assemblage was associated with the building, use and abandonment of the broch. Mackie (1974a) was able to identify six phases of pottery beginning with Vaul Ware (vases and barrel-shaped urns sometimes ornamented with geometric incised decoration) which characterised his Phase 1A assemblage (795–255 cal BC [GaK 1098] and 795–180 cal BC [GaK 1092]). The use of this type of pottery continued through the sequence. Clettraval Ware was added in the Phase 2 assemblage (100 cal BC–340 cal AD [GaK 1097]), which represents the construction of the broch, and its use continued throughout the later part of the sequence, the conversion of the broch to a dwelling, *circa* 160 cal AD.

Other assemblages from the West Coast islands lack dates and have been relatively dated by comparison with Dun Mor Vaul. An assemblage from Dun Cul Buirg in Iona (Ritchie & Lane 1980) which included channelled decoration and cordons was interpreted by the excavators as representing one main period of occupation. The occurrence of channelled decoration would indicate a date late in the sequence if compared with Dun Mor Vaul.

A date in the first half of the first century AD was also suggested for the pottery from Tabraham's excavations at Dun Carloway (Tabraham 1977, 156). The most common form of vessel is a necked vessel with a flat or plain rim, or, less often, an everted rim, and the only form of decoration is an applied cordon often giving a wavy effect. The absence of channelled and incised decoration, and the fact that the assemblage appeared to be associated with the secondary use of a broch, led Close-Brooks to suggest that it was perhaps of a similar date to the Phase III middens at A'Cheardach Mhor, South Uist (Young & Richardson 1960, 154–6, figs 10, 13) and to the assemblage from the fortified house at Dun Cuier, Isle of Barra (Young 1956, figs 7–12). However, Close-Brooks pointed out that the Dun Cuier assemblage could have a longer time span because it included concave rims and bucket shapes not found at Carloway and a small stone mould for the terminal of a penannular brooch, which she felt could extend the date range into the 8th century AD.

There is again little dating evidence for the assemblages from the published Skye sites. The pottery from the brochs Dun Beag (Callander 1921) and Dun Iardhard (MacLeod 1915), is decorated with applied cordons and incised decoration. A date of 172 cal BC–cal AD 130 (GU-1662) was obtained for the building of Dun Flodigarry broch, which has a similar assemblage (Martlew 1985). Recent work on establishing a pottery sequence for the Iron Age of the West Coast islands of Scotland has allowed the usefulness of various traits to be evaluated (Lane 1990). Fabric has been discounted as a useful chronological indicator. Where fabrics have been analysed, the conclusion of the analysis is in general that they could have been produced locally to the site. Variations within an assemblage are often in texture rather than materials, and are perhaps a consequence of the size or envisaged function of a vessel. Grass tempering, while appearing to be locally distinctive in certain cases, for example at Sollas, where it was virtually confined to Period A, cannot be used as an chronological indicator over the region, having been noted to occur from Bronze Age to Viking contexts.

The lack of chronologically distinctive fabric types has focused discussion of a sequence on decoration and morphology, of which the appearance of channelled decoration and the introduction of everted rim pottery have had most attention. While Campbell (1991) would see everted rims as a late introduction, Mackie suggested that the presence of an everted rim sherd with a double cordon in his Phase 1 assemblage (795–255 cal BC) at Dun Mor Vaul could argue for earlier origins. Young (1966, 52) was also in favour of a late date for the introduction of everted rims with the replacement of incised decoration with channelled decoration at the same time. Campbell (1991, 154) disputed the replacement of incised decoration by channelled decoration on the grounds that the four variations of decoration found on everted rim pottery (plain, cordoned, incised and channelled) are all found in the same first/second century AD deposits at Sollas.

Context	Block	tech	p/s/i	reg	l	b	th	Notes
Quartz								
S476	3	sf	p	i	43	22	11	
S476	3	sf	i	i	25	18	11	
275	22	sf	i	i	35	17	10	
275	22	sf	i	i	18	15	7	
275	22	sf	s	i	22	16	7	
139	26	sf	p	i	32	29	12	
139	26	sf	s	i	38	26	17	
139	26	speb			66	43	32	
272	23	sf	s	i	36	25	13	
276	22	f	s	i	45	46	16	vein quartz
276	22	sf	s	i	43	25	16	
276	22	sf	i	i	23	17	6	
276	22	ch	i	i	32	39	18	
279	22	f	i	i	35	20	10	bedrock
Flint								
61		f	i	i	11	9	2	
211	16	f	s	i	15	17	6	
279	22	f	s	i	24	13	6	bipolar
279	22	f	s	i	20	14	7	retouched scraper frag
u/s		f	p	i	23	18	5	
105	8	f	s	r	15	13	5	bipolar

Table 6. Baleshare. Catalogue of lithic finds (measurements in mm). All pieces are in a fresh condition and unretouched other than where specified. Key: tech = technology; p/s/I = primary/secondary/inner; b = blade; f = flake; r = regular; I = irregular; speb = split pebble; sf = splintered flake (no conchoidal fracture)

The lack of channelled decoration in the assemblages from the Balelone, Baleshare and Hornish Point add weight to the observation at Dun Mor Vaul and Sollas that channelled decoration is late in the sequence. For the earlier part of the sequence, analysis of the assemblage from Baleshare has led to the suggestion that impressed bands of decoration around the shoulder of the vessel were in use before cordoned/incised decorated pottery. In addition, the information from Balelone and Hornish Point supports Mackie's theory of an early date for everted rims rather than their introduction in the first/second century AD.

10.1.8 Conclusions

In spite of the number of West Coast island sites which have been excavated, our ability to define a pottery sequence for the West Coast islands has been hindered by the lack of sites with well-recorded, well-dated stratigraphy. The information obtained from Baleshare, Balelone and Hornish Point has added detail to the earlier part of the sequence for Uist, but many more well-dated assemblages are needed if we are to advance the pottery sequence for the West Coast islands on a local and regional level.

10.2 LITHIC ASSEMBLAGES

N Finlay (1992)

10.2.1 Introduction

Flint and quartz are the main materials represented with a single piece of green chert found at South Glendale. Boulders of chalk flint in drift have been reported on Vatersey and Skiport (Wickham-Jones & Collins 1978, 11–12) but the flint exploited at the sites would appear to be beach pebble in origin. There is a possibility that this material was collected from other islands. The nearest source for the fossil found at Balelone is on the east coast of Skye and is also a flint source (Collins *infra*). Both vein and pebble quartz was exploited and the use of this poor quality raw material on the islands has been recorded at a number of sites including Valtos, Lewis (Lacaille 1936). The small size of the assemblages recovered and the types of contexts, cultivation deposits and conflation deposits, precludes any detailed discussion of the material.

10.2.2 Baleshare (Table 6)

A total of five pieces of flaked flint and fourteen pieces of quartz was recovered from Baleshare. The bipolar technique is represented and the only retouched piece, a secondary flake from Block 22, is a scraper fragment. The quartz from Blocks 23 and 26 has a smooth, waterworn cortex, while that from the other blocks is vein in origin. Some pieces retain part of parent bedrock material. True conchoidal fracture is

Material	tech	p/s/i	reg	l	b	th	Notes
flint	f	s	r	33	20	8	hard hammer
quartz	sf	i	i	29	24	13	
quartz	sf	i	i	23	19	12	
quartz	sf	s	i	28	22	11	
Top surface							
flint	b	s	r	31	13	6	

Table 7. Hornish Point. Flint from [127], Block 30 (measurements in mm). All pieces are in a fresh condition and unretouched other than where specified. For key see caption to Table 6

rare in this material, however the pieces are most likely to be the product of a worked assemblage.

10.2.3 Hornish Point (Table 7)

A total of five pieces of flint and quartz was recovered, these comprised an unprovenanced surface find of a flint blade, a secondary flint flake and three quartz flakes from Block 30, [127].

10.2.4 South Glendale (Table 8)

An assemblage of twenty-four pieces of flint, one chert chunk and *circa* 100 quartz pieces were recovered from this site. Unfortunately the majority of the material was unprovenanced or from conflation horizons. No pebble quartz was recovered and it would appear that vein quartz was exploited. No retouched pieces were found and the character of the flint assemblage suggests that more than one phase of activity is represented by this material.

10.3 STONE AND PUMICE SAMPLES

G Collins (1986)

10.3.1 Balelone

Of the fifty-five samples examined, the majority were composed of grey-gneiss and hornblende-gneiss of local origin. In addition amphibolite and granite, both probably derived from South Harris, were noted. Some twenty-one of the samples contained burnt stone and two samples from [21/17] and [39] were also rich in ash. An unstratified belemnite, a calcareous fossil, was also found. The nearest *in situ* occurrence of these fossils is in the Mesozoic outcrops on the east coast of Skye. There may be an association between the fossil and the unworked flint pebble recovered from [515], for flint is also commonly found there.

10.3.2 Baleshare

165 samples were examined comprising mostly grey gneiss and granitic or hornblendic gneiss, obtained from the nearby beach and shallow cliffs. Few of the specimens are water rounded. There is a preponderance of heated hornblende-porphyry pebbles from a range of contexts, for example [247], [194] and [233]. Of the 165 samples 102 were found to contain heated rock fragments. It is clear that hornblende was preferentially selected for fire stones over the local grey-gneiss which is prone to disintegration.

Context	tech	p/s/i	reg	l	w	t	Notes
4	f	i	i	13	10	3	
4	f	p	i	28	17	7	
4	ch	i		12	16	7	
4	f	i	i	15	12	4	prox fragment
4	f	i	i	17	10	4	fragment
5	f	i	i				chip, knapping spall
3	f	i	r	15	13	2	
13	f	s	i	13	12	3	burnt, heat spalls
48	f	s	i	18	15	4	burnt, heat spalls
59	ch	s		13	12	8	
59	f	s	r	17	12	3	
101	ch	s		42	23	17	
104	f	p	i	34	30	9	
104	b	s	i	27	9	8	
124	f	p	i	23	15	5	
207	f	s	i	18	10	5	
222	f	s	i	22	16	4	burnt
224	f	s	i	20	28	6	hard hammer
u/s	f	i	r	27	25	4	flat plat, hinge
u/s	f	s	i	18	23	5	bipolar
u/s	f	i	r	21	15	4	bipolar
u/s	f	i	i	10	11	3	prox fl frag
u/s	b	i	r	22	6	2	
u/s	f	i	i	20	12	5	patinated fl
green chert							
4	ch	i		20	11	9	worked chunk

Table 8. South Glendale. Catalogue of stratified and unstratified lithic finds (measurements in mm). All pieces are in a fresh condition and unretouched other than where specified. For key see caption to Table 6

Forty-three pieces of pumice were recovered from Baleshare (Table 9), of which three were modified. Only Find 150 is an identifiable object, a perforated pumice float, 55 mm long (Figure 77a). Find 73 is an oval piece, 64 mm long, worn flat on one side with indentations on the reverse (Figure 77b) while Find 232 is an amorphous piece, 47 mm long, with wide grooves worn into it (Figure 77c).

10.3.3 Hornish Point

170 samples were examined. Hornblende-gneiss and granite-gneiss were represented with rare inclusions of amphibolite and hornblende-porphyry pebbles. Some seventy-six of the samples show signs of burning.

Hornish Point produced a single, unmodified piece of pumice, Find 26, which weighed 0.64 g.

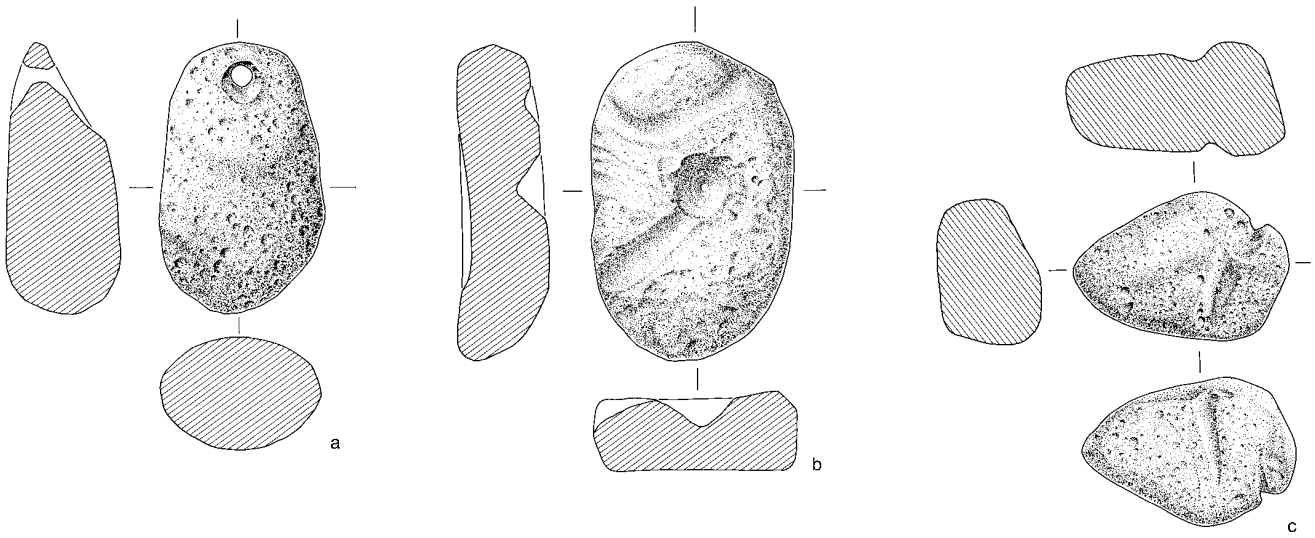

Figure 77. Baleshare: pumice artefacts (Scale 2:1). a) Find 150. b) Find 73. c) Find 232

10.3.4 Newtonferry

The majority of the lithic samples recovered from this site are of hornblendic-gneiss and granite. Burnt stone was present in five out of the thirty-seven samples. The lithics are angular with very few rounded surfaces. Lime/shell mortar was also present.

10.3.5 South Glendale

Few local gneiss were encountered and the character of the material differs from the other sites in relation to the presence of worked flint and quartz.

Context	Block	No. frags	Weight	Date (bc) ± 50
5	3	2	9.57	(370–205)
119*	12	2	20.26	(290–95)
65	2	1	2.18	290
62	2	2	0.96	290
176	15	1	2.4	425
216	15	1	2.87	425
177*	15	2	13.46	425
219*	16	4	43.11	(865–425)
247	16	4	25.75	(865–425)
149	16	2	10.25	(865–425)
240	16	2	5.09	(865–425)
142	16	1	5.08	(865–425)
140	25	1	10.34	(865–425)
148	26	4	17.61	865
139*	26	3	19.91	865
233	18	2	11.7	790
231	27	1	10.6	960
270*	23	3	18.73	1080
278*	22	2	12.83	1335

*Table 9. Baleshare. Unmodified pumice finds. * indicates those contexts from which pumice pieces have been geochemically analysed*

South Glendale produced three unmodified pieces of pumice from [108], [4] and [19], weighing, in total, 24.4g.

10.4 ANALYSIS OF THE PUMICE FROM BALESHARE

A J Newton & A J Dugmore (1995)

10.4.1 Introduction and background

Pumice can be generally defined as 'highly vesicular silicic to mafic glass foam, which commonly floats on water'. The vesicles in the rock are produced by degassing of magma when it reaches the surface. This ability to float means that pumice can be widely distributed by ocean currents if it enters the sea. Pumice can enter the sea either by falling directly into it or being transported by pyroclastic flows or rivers. The geochemical composition of pumice can vary from basic (basaltic) to acidic (rhyolitic).

The archaeological excavations at Ceardach Ruadh, Baleshare produced forty-three pieces of brown and black pumice weighing a total of nearly 300 grams, from blocks throughout the stratigraphic sequence. This pumice is another addition to pumice deposits that are found on raised beaches and archaeological sites throughout the North Atlantic region. A total of nine bulk x-ray fluorescence (XRF) and fifty-one electron probe microanalyses (EPMA) have been carried out on nine pieces of pumice.

The geographical distribution of pumice found throughout the North Atlantic is wide, stretching from Arctic Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Svalbard, Ireland, Scotland to Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Virtually all of the pumice found in the British Isles and Scandanavia is dacitic, that is it has an SiO_2 total of about 65%, and can be either brown or black. The archaeological sites on which this pumice has been found date from the Mesolithic (Jura) to the Late Iron Age (Shetland). This age range reflects the temporal distribution of pumice on the well-developed raised beaches in Norway (Mangerud pers comm; Newton, unpubl). White pumice has also been found in more recent beach deposits

and sand dunes on Shetland, as well as at an archaeological site on Papa Stour (Newton forthcoming).

The white pumice from Shetland is from the 1362 AD eruption of Oraefajokull, in southern Iceland (Newton forthcoming). The late-glacial white pumice may be associated with the 10,400 BP Vedde tephra which is found in western Norway and the North Atlantic. The Vedde tephra layer was produced form the Grimsvotn Volcanic System in Iceland.

The brown and black dacitic pumice has been correlated with tephra layers from the Katla Volcanic System in southern Iceland. These layers have been dated to between about 6500 BP and 11000 BP. The age of this deposit is not as yet known. This work is currently the subject of further research, the aim of which is to date and discover exactly which eruption or eruptions were responsible for the pumice.

The brown pumice, although physically different from the black pumice, which appears to be more glassy, shows no significant geochemical difference to the black pumice. This homogeneity is present in the major and the trace element composition of the pumice and future research will investigate this.

10.4.2 Pumice finds

Colour and morphology

The forty-three pumice pieces were recovered from eleven blocks as shown in Table 9. Only one Block contained black pumice alone, two blocks produced black and brown pumice and the remainder brown only. Whilst 'black' is a fair description of the black pumice, 'brown' pumice may also have a greyish-brown colour. This colour differentiation is noted in other pumice finds in Iceland, Scotland, Ireland and Norway, where mid-Holocene deposits seem to consist of brown and black pumice. Morphological differences between the black and brown pumice are mainly shown by the vesicles which appear far more glassy in the black pumice than the brown. Vesicles in the black pumice also appear to be better developed.

Age of pumice

Table 9 also gives dates for the blocks containing pumice. These dates are given in uncalibrated radiocarbon years and relative ages are shown in parentheses. Brown pumice is found throughout the chronological range, whilst black pumice is found in only the older samples, primarily Blocks 18, 22, 23, and 26.

10.4.3 Geochemical analysis

Only major element results are presented here, despite trace element results being obtained from the XRF method. Further work on this trace element data is being carried out, including comparisons of the results with recent XRF analyses of other pumice deposits.

X-ray fluorescence analysis

The pumice was prepared for major element XRF analysis by cleaning in an ultrasound bath. This was done to remove any loose sand or dirt from within the vesicles. The pumice was then crushed to a fine powder in a tungsten carbide rock crusher. Finally, the powder was then melted to form glass disks and these were then analysed.

These analyses represent an average composition for each piece of pumice. These results will be discussed with the EPMA results below, but it is worth noting that there is no significant difference between the black pumice of Block 22 and Block 23 and the brown pumice.

Electron probe microanalyses

EPMA were carried out on the same pieces of pumice as were used for the XRF analyses. The pumice from Blocks 25 and 27 was crushed in the XRF preparation and could not be used for EPMA work. The duplication of the analyses was used to test the reproducibility of the different methods.

The pumice was analysed on a Cambridge Instruments Microscan V electron microprobe. Thin sections of pumice fragments were made so that smooth glass faces could be analysed. The fragments were incorporated in resin on a glass slide, which was ground and polished to a thickness of 75 microns and then carbon coated. WDS (Wavelength Dispersive Spectrometer) analyses were carried out using an accelerating voltage of 20 kV and a beam current of 15 nA. An andradite standard was analysed regularly during the analyses to provide a clear indication of instrument stability. Only analyses with element totals above 95% were used for comparative purposes.

Between five and eleven analyses were undertaken on each piece of pumice, enabling the natural geochemical variation of the glass to be studied.

10.4.4 Discussion

The mean values for the EPMA analyses do not vary significantly from those obtained by the XRF technique, but differences do occur. For example, the total iron content of Find 247 (Block 16), is greater in the XRF analyses than the EPMA analyses. This is probably due to the presence of a higher concentration of iron bearing minerals such as magnetite. Only glass is analysed in EPMA analyses. As with the XRF analyses there are no significant geochemical variations between the black and brown pumices. This result confirms other analyses carried out on pumice from Iceland to Norway.

Despite the apparent similarity of the XRF and EPMA analyses it is still preferable to use the EPMA results. Although most of the pumice consists of glass, it still contains small phenocrysts. If the piece of pumice analysed has an unusually large number of these, the result will be biased, with over-representation of the elements present in the minerals. During EPMA each point analysed is selected so that only fresh glass is analysed. This leads to better reproducibility between samples. So, only the EPMA results have been used for comparative purposes.

The pumice from Baleshare can be geochemically correlated with dacitic pumice found in Iceland, Ireland, Scotland and Norway. There is a wide range of iron values, often of more than 1%, within a single piece of pumice. This feature would not be shown by XRF analyses where a mean value would have been given. Although there are no major differences between the geochemical composition of the black and brown pumices Find 247 from Block 21 does have slightly

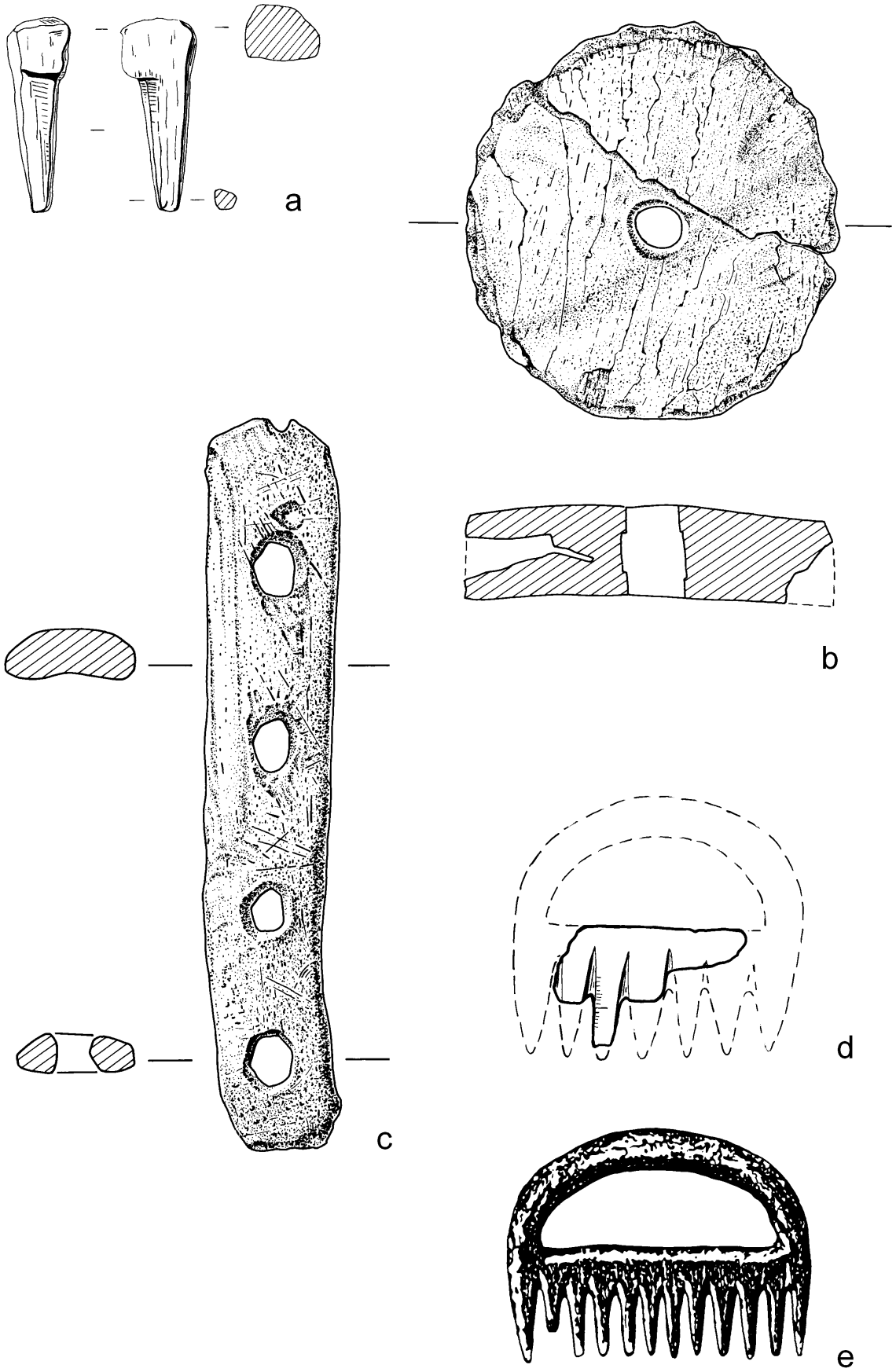

Figure 78. Worked bone and antler artefacts. a) BL3. b) B18. c) H12. d) H13. e) Comb from Bowermadde n, Caithness (after Anderson 1883)

higher K_2O than the rest, except for some analyses from Find 139 from Block 26.

10.4.5 Conclusion

The pumice would have been collected either from contemporary or raised beach deposit. The Western Isles and Baleshare in particular are excellent sites for the accumulation of flotsam and jetsam. The pumice would have provided an excellent abrasive for all sorts of uses, probably including rubbing of hides and skins and sharpening bone and wooden weapons and tools. Due to its low density fishing floats may have been from the pumice.

The pumice found at Baleshare can be correlated to other dacitic pumice deposits found both in archaeological and natural contexts throughout the eastern North Atlantic region. There are no significant geochemical differences between the black and brown pumice, but the black is only found in the older blocks. XRF and EPMA analyses of pumice both seem to provide similar major element abundances, but it is not possible for XRF analyses to show the natural geochemical variation within a single piece of pumice.

The dating of the pumice is not yet possible. New results from Iceland suggest that there were several eruptions during the mid-Holocene which could have produced the pumice, most probably from the Katla volcanic system. One interesting property of the tephra layers associated with these eruptions is that they are geochemically very similar, a feature shared with pumice deposits. Pumice deposits found at Ben Tangaval, Barra, have similar properties (Newton & Dugmore 1995).

Future research will investigate the trace element data from the Baleshare pumice and compare this to results from other sites. The recently discovered tephra layers in Iceland provide the best hope of differentiating separate eruptions and of dating the deposits.

10.5 WORKED BONE AND ANTLER

A-M Gibson (1988)

Detailed descriptions of each object can be found in the archive catalogue. The numbers prefixed BL (Balelone), B (Baleshare) and H (Hornish Point) in the text below refer to the catalogue entries.

10.5.1 Balelone

Only three objects of worked bone were retrieved from Balelone. BL1 (Block 6, [309]) is a smoother/polisher, 144 mm long, cut from a split cattle metatarsal with rounded end. Polish exists half way along the shaft, where it has been shaped to facilitate hafting. BL2 (Block 7, [18]) is a needle/point fragment, 31 mm long, with broken hourglass perforation at one end. BL3 is a small peg with a roughly square head (Figure 78a). It may have been a gaming piece.

10.5.2 Baleshare

The Baleshare assemblage comprised twenty-one pieces of bone and antler which can be categorised as follows: three complete artefacts (B14, 17, 18); four broken artefacts (B1, B4, B5, B6); two broken points (B3, B12); six off-cuts (B7, B8, B9, B10, B13, B19); one utilised piece (B2) and five fragments (B11, B15, B16, B20, B21).

None of the pieces are sufficiently diagnostic to be useful as chronological indicators. The assemblage consists of the types commonly found in later prehistoric collections; examples of finer, well crafted objects which usually accompany these pieces in other assemblages are notably absent.

All the antler in the collection is red deer antler with the exception of one piece (B5) which was possibly made of roe deer antler. However, there is no way of telling from the collection whether the antler used at Baleshare was derived from a local standing population of red deer or was imported. Scarcity of antler cannot be inferred from the small amount recovered from the site as only three pieces of utilised bone were recovered from contexts which produced large amounts of unworked bone. However, two pieces of antler recovered from the site show signs of re-use which suggests that antler was sufficiently scarce to warrant recycling. The strip of antler (B10) has a worn and bevelled outer edge. The piece had been carefully detached, using a groove and splinter technique, from a larger artefact possibly a handle. The strip probably formed part of a small collection of rough outs gleaned from one broken larger piece. The small antler ring (B17) shows excessive and uncharacteristic wear and polish on its outer compact surface. It seems likely that this wear dates from a time when the piece was part of a larger artefact.

Metal awls, drills, saws and choppers were used in the manufacture of the Baleshare assemblage. Iron staining on the inner channel of the Roe deer handle (B5) indicates that this was part of a hafted iron implement. The sharp diamond shaped slits on one side of antler coronet (B8) are the result of hammering a sharp metal awl into the antler. This would have happened during skin and leather working processes, it is also a technique used in fine metal working. The broken needle (B4) and the disc shaped weight (B18; Figure 78b) have both been perforated by the use of a bow drill with a metal bit. Both perforations are too fine and regular to have been produced by a hand drill or awl.

10.5.3 Hornish Point

A total assemblage of twenty-three pieces of worked bone and antler was recovered during excavation. These can be categorised as follows: three complete artefacts (H7, H12, H23); five broken artefacts (H10, H11, H13, H14, H15); six broken points and awls (H1–H4, H6, H8); three off-cuts and roughouts (H9, H19, H22); four fragments (H16, H17, H18, H20) and two utilised pieces (H5, H21). Only one of the fifteen antler artefacts is made from Roe deer antler (H22), all the rest are made from Red deer antler. One piece (H9), a thin strip of antler exhibits signs of having been cut from a larger artefact. This is similar to the Baleshare example (B10) and again this indicates that broken antler artefacts were re-cycled.

As at Baleshare, a study of tool marks left on the bone and antler pieces demonstrates the use of a tool kit which does not survive in the archaeological record. There are indications for the use of metal awls or punches, saws, knives and hand drills.

The sharp diamond shaped slits on one side of the whale bone slab (H21) indicates the use of a metal awl or punch during leather or metal working. The other side of the slab displays striations which indicate that the slab had been used to sharpen bone or metal points. Two different saws have been used in the production of the antler comb (H13, Figure 78d) and the off-cut (H19). The interdental notches on the comb were produced by a thin fine saw whereas the saw which detached the off-cut was a thick heavy saw. The perforations on artefacts H12 (Figure 78c) and H14 have been produced by hand drilling; the perforations are irregular and counter sunk, hand drilling being a less efficient method than bow drilling. The absence of advanced working techniques only indicates selection of appropriate techniques rather than the full range of techniques available. A separate report has been prepared on the comb (see below).

10.5.4 The comb fragment from Hornish Point

A N Smith (1995)

Description

This fragment has been derived from a small one-piece, single-sided comb (Figure 77d). The carefully shaped and smoothed back, and the slight curve visible at one end indicate that this comb had probably had an open D-shaped back, and would have looked very much like the complete comb from a broch site at Bowermadden, Caithness (Anderson 1883, 232–3 fig 205; Figure 77e).

The fragment is too small to make a positive identification of the material, but the pattern of cancellous and solid material on the reverse of the piece is more like antler than bone. Unusually for a comb, the teeth are aligned at right angles to the grain of the material, which may have been necessitated by the size and shape of the piece of raw material used in its manufacture. The fragment indicates that a minimum of six teeth were present, with deep V-sectioned cuts continuing towards the upper edge of the comb, a feature also to be seen on the Bowermadden comb. The teeth are markedly tapered, and the longest displays transverse wear grooves on the front surface. One end is blackened and slightly burnt; this is the end which curves up slightly, but the curve is certainly deliberate and there are no signs of heat distortion.

Discussion

A variety of small, single-sided single-piece combs are known to have been in use in Scotland before the introduction of the composite comb in the fifth century AD. These can be divided into two main groups; combs with rounded backs and incised curvilinear decoration, such as that from Ghegan Rock, East Lothian (NMAS HD78), and Langbank Crannog (NMAS HC105); and small rectangular combs with rectilinear decoration, such as that recently found at Howe (Ballin Smith 1994, 177; illus 90a, 100 SF4907). The Howe comb was found among redeposited midden material infilling the ditch; this infill took place during Phase 7 which is dated from the first to the fourth century AD. Examples of this type have also been found at the broch of Kettleburn, Caithness (NMAS GI37), and from St Boniface, Papa Westray (Wilson 1998, 140). As there is no independent dating for the round-backed examples, it is not yet clear whether this grouping has a chronological or regional basis. Both types are generally provided with suspension holes, and were probably worn round the neck or suspended from a belt.

The openwork back of the Hornish Point and the Bowermadden comb is unusual, and a form which is without parallel in Scotland. On the continent, however, a variety of small one-piece, single-sided combs with pierced and openwork backs have been found (MacGregor 1985, 77; Thomas 1960). Thomas (*ibid,* 66–71) notes that this type (Type C) has a distribution concentrated predominantly in the Elbe region. The origin and precise dating of these combs is disputed, but it has been suggested that they may be derived from Bronze Age metal prototypes. Thomas (ibid) argues for an early Roman date for the more elaborate examples illustrated, on the grounds of associations with certain fibula types. The comb from Hornish Point is the first of its type from a context which can be independently dated. A date in the early to middle Iron Age for these combs in Scotland would not be at variance with a derivation of the type from Continental Bronze Age metal ancestors.

These combs show clear signs of having been used for combing hair, in the form of transverse wear marks across the teeth, although their small size, all less than 60 mm long, and relatively short teeth, would seem to make them rather impractical. It is possible, as MacGregor suggested (1985, 78) that they were used for combing beards and moustaches.