
16 Glossary and notes to the lithic catalogue

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The following notes are intended to clarify the author's use of specialist terms and definitions for those reading the text and using the catalogue of the flaked lithic assemblage from Camas Daraich.

Glossary

Backed bladelet: A microlith: a blade that has been truncated by microlithic retouch down one side. Backed bladelets have a rectangular plan and triangular cross-section.

Bipolar core: A flint knapping term: bipolar cores are cores that were worked on an anvil. They were commonly used when flaking poor quality stone or opening small pebble nodules. Bipolar cores tend to be of a characteristic 'scalar' shape.

Bipolar technique: A flint knapping term: a technique for the removal of flakes in which the core, or nodule, is seated on an anvil and struck from above. The force of the blow produces a countershock from the anvil so that flakes are frequently detached from both ends simultaneously. Bipolar flaking does not involve the preparation of platforms and the cores tend to be of a characteristic 'scalar' shape. There is less control over the shape of the flakes but it is a very useful technique, particularly where small pebble nodules form the only raw material.

Blade: A stone tool. Blades are long and fine with sharp edges and parallel sides and they were made using a specific reduction method, known as a blade strategy.

Blanks: Pieces (generally flakes and blades but occasionally cores and chunks) that have been selected for modification.

Bulb of force: A flint knapping term: the raised point on the ventral surface of a flake or blade, just below the platform. The bulb of force indicates the spot to which force was applied in order to make the flake. As a general rule, more pronounced bulbs of force suggest the use of harder stone hammers, while more diffuse bulbs suggest the use of softer hammers.

Calibration: Radiocarbon analysis tends to provide dates that are too recent, but this can be corrected by calibration. Dates are therefore quoted either in radiocarbon years (uncalibrated), or in human years (calibrated), and they are often said to be 'Before Present' (BP), which in fact means before 1950.

Chunk: A flint knapping term: chunks are larger irregular pieces of stone removed as a by-product of making stone tools. Chunks have neither platform nor ventral surface. They are generally the unintentional by-product of knapping. Most chunks were waste, but some may have been used.

Core: A flint knapping term: the core is the central block of material from which blades and flakes are removed. Cores from Camas Daraich are divided into two different types depending on the knapping process; see platform core and bipolar core.

Core trimming flake: A flint knapping term: core trimming flakes are removed from the platform edge of a core in order to get rid of irregular projections or blunted areas and maintain a suitable edge angle for the making of flakes.

Cortex: The outer surface of a stone nodule or pebble. Fresh flint nodules have a white chalky cortex; flint pebbles that have come from a secondary source such as gravels tend to have an abraded and rolled cortex and most of the original chalk may have gone. Other stones do not have chalky cortex: fresh nodules may have no cortex at all while pebble nodules have a rolled and abraded cortex.

Cortication: The matt discolouration, usually white or cream, that may cover the surface of a flint with time.

Crescent: A microlith: a blade that has been blunted by microlithic retouch down one side. The retouched edge is convex in outline so that the piece is crescentic in plan with a triangular cross-section.

Debris: A by-product of knapping: that material which inevitably results from the knapping process but which was not necessarily the goal of that process. Some debris may be suitable for use, with or without modification.

Debitage: A by-product of knapping: debris that was not apparently suitable for any further purpose. Material that would be discarded immediately at the end of the knapping process. Debitage includes much very small material.

Debitage flakes: Irregular flakes.

Decortical material: Primary or secondary removals used to open and shape a nodule.

Edge-retouched piece: A stone tool made from a flake or a blade which has had one (usually long) side modified by the removal of small flakes (retouching).

Fine point: A microlith: a blade with modification by microlithic retouch along one or both sides to form a narrow point at one end.

Flake: A stone tool: the finer pieces of stone that are removed from a core. Flakes tend to be more irregular than blades, but they have useful lengths of edge. Some may have been used unmodified, others were altered by retouching.

Flaking: The process used to break up a nodule or core into useful flakes and blades. Flaking involves either direct percussion, that is, using a hammer of stone, bone or wood; or indirect percussion via a punch.

Hammerstone: Stone used to provide force.

Hammerstones vary in size and hardness and this affects the blows that they will deliver. They were commonly used for flint knapping, but would have been useful in many other ways. Some were modified by pecking before use and many have wear patterns.

Inner material: Artefacts with no surviving cortex surfaces.

Irregular flakes: Removals with no regular edge. They may be large or small and are frequently chunky in aspect. This category includes all flakes of less than 10 mm maximum dimension.

Knapping: The process of making stone tools by breaking up a nodule or core. Good quality stone may be broken (or flaked) in a predictable fashion so that regular flakes and blades may be made.

Lamellar index: The ratio of blades to flakes in an assemblage helps to determine what the flint knappers were primarily aiming to make. When a site specialized in blade making then the ratio of blades to flakes should exceed 20%.

Late Glacial: The period towards the end of the last Ice Age. A time of great change during which barren glacial conditions were interspersed with warmer conditions when plants and animals returned to Scotland.

Mesolithic: A subdivision of prehistory: the 'middle stone age'. In Scotland, the Mesolithic refers to the settlement after the end of the last Ice Age by people who lived by hunting, fishing and gathering plant materials. Mesolithic settlers were generally nomadic.

Microburin: A microlith: microburins are the snapped ends of blades from which the 'useful' part has been removed for further working. They are characterized by a notch produced by microlithic retouch on one side of the blade; this was made in order to generate the snap and the notch is usually truncated by the snap. Microburins may well have been used, but they are generally recognized to be the waste from microlith making. They have been associated with particular types of microlith, but many microliths were made without using microburins.

Microfractures: Small removals from the used edge of an artefact. Microfractures are divided into three types: snap, step and flake, and they may be used to help to identify the type of use to which a tool has been put.

Microlith: A small stone artefact: microliths were made by blunting the edges of tiny blades. They were often made according to specific patterns: crescents, backed bladelets, fine points, obliquely blunted and so on. They were then hafted in groups to make knives, arrowheads and other tools. They are common on many Mesolithic sites and do not seem to have been used in later periods.

Microwear: Damage sustained by artefacts as a result of use or general wear. Microwear comprises traces of polishes, microfractures and striations upon the edges and surfaces of a tool. Most microwear is only visible under the microscope and it can be studied as part of an examination of the uses to which different tools were put. Some microwear may

be caused by other pressures on a tool such as soil movement but this is easily distinguished from use-related wear.

Modified pieces: Artefacts that have been deliberately modified after primary reduction by the use of secondary knapping.

Obliquely blunted: A microlith: a snapped blade with microlithic retouch across the snap, which runs obliquely across the piece.

Orientation: During examination, artefacts are always held with the dorsal face uppermost and the proximal end towards the observer, and the illustrations follow this convention, with proximal ends pointing to the bottom of the page.

Pebble nodule: A nodule of stone that has come out of its original matrix and been transported elsewhere before deposition in a new site, such as in river or beach gravels. Pebble nodules are generally well worn and abraded on the outside.

Platform: A flint knapping term: the platform is the surface of a core or nodule that is struck during knapping. While any suitable surface will do, successful knappers will usually make a flat platform surface and spend some time maintaining a particular angle at its edge. Specific knapping techniques use different types of platform, and one core may well be worked from more than one platform.

Platform core: A flint knapping term: platform cores are cores that incorporate a flat, platform area, which is struck in order to remove flakes and blades from the side of the core. Platform cores were particularly used in blade making and they may well have several platforms.

Platform technique: A reduction technique used in primary technology whereby percussion is applied to the platform of a core.

Polish: Alteration on the surface of an artefact that is most commonly the result of use. Polish is only visible microscopically. It is the result of abrasion which causes flattening, smoothing and shining of the edge during use.

Pressure flaking: A flint knapping term: the application of pressure using a hard tool such as an antler tine, to the edge of a flake or blade. In this way, small flakes are removed and so the piece may be shaped into a more complex tool.

Primary technology: The first part of the systematic process of stone tool production: nodules of raw material are prepared into cores and then used for the manufacture of flakes and blades. Many blades and flakes may be used as functional tools in their unaltered form.

Primary material: Artefacts with cortex platforms and cortex over the dorsal surface. These are some of the first removals to be made from a nodule.

Radiocarbon dating: A method of dating archaeological material by calculating the amount of radioactive carbon (carbon 14) left in organic objects. The calculation tends to work out dates that are too recent, but this can be corrected by calibration.

Raised beach: A geomorphological term: a beach deposit laid down when the sea was at a higher level

than it is today and subsequently left in a position above the current shoreline as the sea dropped to its present level.

Raw material: The different types of stone that were selected for knapping into tools.

Reduction technique: The specific way in which force is applied to the raw material during tool manufacture. There are several different reduction techniques and knapping may involve a combination of several.

Reduction method: The overall process by which knapping is achieved. This may involve the application of several different reduction techniques.

Regular flakes: Removals with a minimum of 10 mm of regular acute edge. Regular flakes tend to be wider than blades, and their sides are not parallel. They do not require the use of a blade strategy.

Retouching: A flint knapping term: the removal of small flakes from a blade or flake in order to shape it. Retouching may also be used to create specific edges, for example the blunt edges of scrapers. Retouching is generally carried out by pressure flaking.

Scraper: A flaked stone tool: scrapers have a steep, blunt working edge. They may have been used for processing hides, but they would also be useful in many other ways.

Secondary material: Artefacts with flake platforms but some cortex on the dorsal surface.

Secondary technology: The second part of the tool production process: selected blades and flakes are modified into specific tool types. Modification usually comprises further flaking using either light percussion work or pressure flaking.

Size: Dimensions are given in millimeters in the order: length; width; thickness.

- **Length** is the measurement taken along a line at 90° to the platform of the piece;
- **Width** is the measurement taken across the widest part of the piece at 90° to the length and in the same plane;
- **Thickness** is the measurement taken from the ventral surface to the highest point of the dorsal surface along a line perpendicular to both length and width.

Tool: A subjective term reserved for pieces (whether modified or not) considered to be potentially of use as manipulated artefacts. This includes both retouched and unretouched pieces as well as cores.

Usewear: Damage to the edges or surfaces of a tool, see microwear.

Organization of the catalogue

The catalogue of flaked lithic material from Camas Daraich is organized by context within the individual sites.

Entry	Description
Lithic ref	Individual reference number for that catalogue entry
Bag no	Number of the bag in which material was placed on site
Quantity	Number of pieces in that entry. Like pieces from the same context were catalogued together
Material	Type of raw material
Type	Main type or 'group', for example flake; blade; core
Sub-type	Individual characteristics eg primary; secondary; inner.
Classification	Specific characteristics, for example regular flakes, debitage flakes, scrapers
Bipolar	Presence of bipolar traits (NB: their absence is not necessarily an indication of platform knapping)
Condition	Surface condition of the piece or pieces
Broken	Whether or not the piece is broken (recorded for individual entries only)
Size	In millimetres in the order length: width: thickness. Size is only recorded for whole flakes or blades, cores and retouched pieces
Notes	Free text