

## Cheviot Quarry Lithic Assessment

By: Clive Waddington

### Background

The excavations at Cheviot Quarry produced an assemblage of 82 chipped stone artefacts. All contexts were dry-sieved through a 5mm mesh to maximise finds recovery and their remaining fills passed through a flotation tank and graduated brass sieves. A total of 33 lithics came from stratified contexts, 25 from potentially residual contexts and 24 from unstratified contexts.

### Quantification

The chipped stone artefacts recovered from excavations at Cheviot Quarry can be broken down into their broad types. The table below summarises these artefacts.

Type	No
Core	8
Chip	9
Flake	35
Blade	18
Utilised Flake	1
Utilised Blade	3
Retouched Flake	1
Retouched Blade	2
Scraper	1
Arrowhead	2
Knife	1
Microlith	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>

### Raw Material

The non-flint raw materials can all be obtained locally in the river gravels, screes and boulder clays of the surrounding landscape. However, the flint material is varied in colour and quality suggesting a variety of sources. The occurrence of at least 2 nodular flints is important as this indicates wide-ranging contacts and shifting of bulky and heavy goods over substantial distances from the nearest source in the Yorkshire Wolds. Some of the flint is from secondary sources such as boulder clays, gravels or from the beach.

The assemblage includes pieces made from the following materials:

Flint	43
Agate	28
Chert	9
Quartz	1
Volcanic Glass	1

### **Dating**

Few lithics have been recovered from secure Neolithic contexts in North-East England and so those found at the Cheviot site present an opportunity to enhance the record of lithic form, and possibly function, during the Neolithic period in this region. The Mesolithic material, which is relatively easily accounted for as the small non-flint material and mostly occurs as residual pieces in posthole fills provides no obvious clues to date as there are no particularly diagnostic pieces present, even the microlith being broken and irregular. There are only a few obviously diagnostic Neolithic artefacts in the assemblage such as the arrowheads and retouched blade tools, however, the larger size of the blades appears to be indicative of Neolithic production rather than Mesolithic production in the North East. There is no evidence for any later lithic material on the site. A second round of C14 dating is anticipated which will raise the possibility of obtaining dates on some of this flintwork.

### **Discussion**

The lithic industries represented by the assemblage include a small element of Mesolithic material based around the use of locally available (usually non-flint) materials and their chipping into small, stubby, blade forms. The Neolithic industry on the other hand is based primarily around the working of flint to produce larger blades and blade-based tools together with some flakes.

### **Function**

Given the relatively small assemblage of Neolithic pieces (probably around 30-40 pieces) there is quite wide diversity of forms present, though it is notable that there were no Neolithic cores or scrapers present. This suggests that processing of skins was perhaps not a major activity on the site, and likewise the lack of cores suggests that at least part of the knapping process may have taken place elsewhere from the site. This said, it is also likely that the vast majority of the lithic assemblage originally associated with this site will have lain within the topsoil and that this has been disturbed by earlier ploughing, the airfield buildings and finally by its complete removal by machine during the surface strip. Therefore, the importance of the topsoil for hosting archaeological remains such as flints should not be overlooked. Blade forms and tools made on blades, such as the knife and all the retouched and utilised blades, together with the two arrowheads and waste flakes predominate in the Neolithic assemblage. These blade tools are indicative of general processing activities while the arrowheads may have been manufactured on site for use elsewhere.

### **Further Work**

A full lithic catalogue is required together with a full report that examines in more detail issues such as raw material, flaking techniques and the reduction sequence, types present, dating and function. A discussion section will place the assemblage in its broader regional context and relate it to Neolithic assemblages from elsewhere while additional

information resulting from C14 dates and associated pottery and other artefacts may shed light on the contexts of deposition and the treatment of certain lithics across the site and in different settings. This work is estimated to take CW 3 days. A total of 14 lithics should be drawn for publication.

## **Lithics From Previous Work at Cheviot Quarry**

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### **Background**

There have been three previous phases of evaluations and excavation at Cheviot Quarry including evaluation trenching by the University of Durham (ASUD ), MAP (2000) and Tyne and Wear Museums Service (2003). Together these interventions produced a total assemblage of 23 chipped stone artefacts, all of which were made from flint apart from one agate broken retouched blade. A total of 21 lithics came from stratified contexts, one from a residual context and one from an unstratified context.

### **Quantification**

The chipped stone artefacts recovered from the previous excavations at Cheviot Quarry can be broken down into the following broad types.

<b>Type</b>	<b>No</b>
Flake	14
Blade	4
Edge Trimmed Blade	1
Retouched Blade	2
End Scraper	2
<b>Total</b>	

### **Raw Material**

The agate piece is almost certainly from a local secondary source such as from the river gravels, screens or boulder clays of the surrounding landscape. However, the flint material is varied in colour and quality suggesting a variety of sources. Both nodular flint and that from secondary sources is present based on areas of surviving cortex visible on some of the specimens.

### **Dating**

Few of the lithics are diagnostic, although the two end scrapers are excellent examples of Neolithic artefacts. Few of the other pieces are in anyway diagnostic as they comprise mostly very small waste flakes, however their association with pit fills containing Neolithic pottery of various styles suggests that most of the material derives from Neolithic activity. A second round of C14 dating is anticipated which will raise the possibility of obtaining dates on some of this flintwork.

### **Function**

Given the small size of the assemblage there is quite wide diversity of forms present, and the presence of two scrapers, in contrast to the site with the buildings, has two classic

Neolithic scrapers present suggesting the processing of skins. The other blade tools imply general processing tasks taking place at this site.

**Further Work**

A full lithic catalogue is required together with a report that examines in more detail issues such as raw material, flaking techniques and the reduction sequence, types present, dating and function and relates these assemblages to that obtained from the site with the buildings. Additional information resulting from C14 dates and associated pottery and other artefacts may shed light on the contexts of deposition and the treatment of certain lithics across the site and in different settings. Five of these lithic pieces should be illustrated for publication. This work will take CW 1 day.