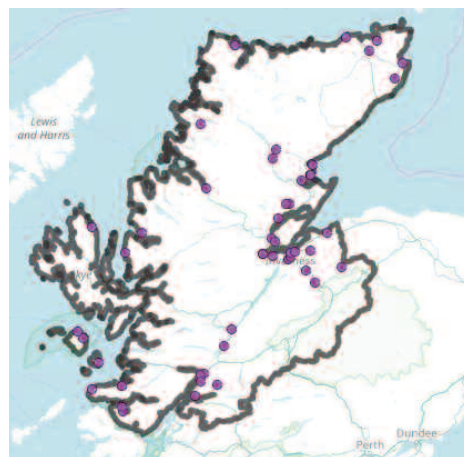


Barbed and Tanged Arrowheads

Period:	Bronze Age (c. 2500 – c. 800 BC)
Material:	stone (flint, but other stone types also used)
Composite item:	other materials include wooden shaft, resin glue, binding twine or sinew, feather fletching

These arrowheads are made by knapping – a process of striking a stone with another piece of stone or antler to knock off flakes until you have the pieces of the size and shape you desire. An arrowhead like the examples here could be produced within a couple of hours, but did require skill and practice to make. They were usually struck from flint, chert or quartz. Stone arrowheads with barbs and tangs usually date to the Bronze Age.



© National Museums of Scotland

In the early Bronze Age wealthy men were buried with archery equipment. This burial from Culduthel in Inverness had a set of arrowheads and also a stone wristguard with gold-plated rivets. The objects are in the NMS, Edinburgh



Barbed and tanged arrowheads on display in the West Highland Museum

used bows and arrows regularly to protect livestock and crops.

What animals may have posed a threat to crops and livestock?

How does this style of arrowhead compare to the Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead?

The three protrusions at the bottom of the arrowhead are the barbs and tang. The central tang is where the arrowhead was bound to the wooden shaft, and the barbs on either side helped the arrow to lodge inside the target, causing increased damage and bleeding. Stone arrowheads come in various sizes – these examples represent the larger end of the scale. The smallest arrowheads are half this size.

Sharp arrowheads like these would be set into a wooden arrow-shaft and used with a wooden bow, but no examples of these organic parts have survived in Scotland. They could be used as weapons against people or to hunt wild animals such as birds and predators. During the Bronze Age people were eating domesticated animals, but they might still have



© Susan Kruse

Arrowhead from Vattan on Skye, now in the Skye & Lochalsh Archive. Note the retouching on the edges to make them sharp



© Eric Grant

Barbed and tanged arrowhead found at Tarradale on the Black Isle during fieldwalking

See also:

CT Flint Knapping
When? Bronze Age

The Experimental Archaeology: Learning about Craft and Technology in the Past project was funded by Historic Environment Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund (now National Lottery Heritage Fund).

© Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

v1

