

Microlith

Period:	Mesolithic (c. 8500 - c. 4000 BC)
Material:	stone (flint, but other stone types also used)
Composite item:	other materials could include wooden shaft, resin glue

Microliths are carefully worked small stone flakes that were used for a variety of purposes. They were 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. Microliths could be struck from flint, chert or quartz. Flint does not outcrop in the Scottish Highlands but people here were still able to



Mesolithic flints found at Castle Street, Inverness, now in Inverness Museum

source it and were skilled in working it. This example is a narrow-blade crescent type and has been carefully worked to create the curved side.

Single pieces may have been used as arrowheads, borers, and scrapers. Many pieces may also have been set into a piece of wood, bone or antler using resin and cord to create longer cutting blades, but only the flints survive to be recovered by archaeologists. Analysis under a microscope can reveal tiny scratches which give us clues as to how individual tools were used.

How many uses can you think of for this microlith?

See also:

CT Flint Knapping
When? Mesolithic



Microliths embedded in arrow shaft, on display at Inverness Museum

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