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Early Prehistoric Petrology: A Case Study from Leicestershire.

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on the petrographic analysis of prehistoric ceramics within the East Midlands. Prior assessments have been intermittent and not drawn together by a research-based agenda, with a few notable exceptions. This research uses petrographic analysis to shed light on early prehistoric society within Leicestershire, a county overlooked in comparison to other regions. The aim of this research was to investigate the procurement of raw materials and the subsequent production of Neolithic and early Bronze Age ceramics in Leicestershire, placing the county in its regional context. Petrographic slides from several early prehistoric sites were produced and analysed to determine the presence of any non-local material within the fabric of the ceramics. Existing petrographic data from other sites in the East Midlands were used as a comparative data set to test whether the ceramics from Leicestershire were typical or atypical of the wider production and procurement pattern. The results of the petrographic analysis on the Leicestershire sites indicated that the clay and inclusions were most likely of local origin, with no

definitive evidence for non-local inclusions. However, the results from the comparative petrographic data obtained from sites within the wider East Midlands does support the movement of raw materials and/or finished ceramic products within the region. Preferential sources appear to have been continually exploited, both chronologically and geographically. The prime target of the exploitation was the Charnwood Forest area of Leicestershire, with groups from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire utilising this resource in addition to more local groups within Leicestershire.

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