

9. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER WORK

9.1 Introduction

This research investigated the procurement of raw materials for the production of Neolithic and early Bronze Age pottery within Leicestershire using petrographic analysis. Comparative sites and assemblages from surrounding counties within the East Midlands have been considered alongside the results of this research to place them into a regional context. The primary sites within this research were the A607 Rearsby Bypass, land off Melton Road in Syston and land to the south of the former power station in Castle Donington. Comparative material was gathered from Lismore Fields in Derbyshire, Great Briggs in Nottinghamshire, Skendleby in Lincolnshire, Briar Hill in Northamptonshire, Willington in Derbyshire, and Cossington, Eye Kettleby, Lockington and Ashby Folville in Leicestershire. The context of the research was the earlier prehistoric periods, the Neolithic and early Bronze Age, within the East Midlands focusing primarily on Leicestershire.

The overall aim of this research was to:

- Investigate the procurement of raw materials and production of Neolithic and early Bronze Age ceramics in Leicestershire and place it within a regional context

The results of the research have indicated that movement of ceramic products, either as raw materials or finished goods, occurred within the East Midlands and 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. It is speculated that as this area was the source for the Group XX axes, there could be some form of connection between the use of minerals as ceramic inclusions and the production of the axes themselves. The potential contribution of waterways in facilitating this apparent network of contact, trade and exchange should not be underestimated.

The research has also demonstrated the variability of available evidence, both in terms of ceramic assemblages and subsequent petrographic assessments, on which to base regional models and syntheses. However, it should be noted that the basic requirement for any work is a ceramic assemblage of the relevant period and it is obvious that Leicestershire does not have sufficient quality assemblages to fulfil this at present. Recent discoveries have added to the baseline information in Leicestershire, particularly within the Soar Valley near Rothley, and have the potential to contribute greatly to earlier prehistoric ceramic studies within the county.

9.2 Further Work

There are a number of avenues for further research which could progress from this study. These include:

- The expansion of the sample base to improve the accuracy and representativeness of the model of provenance studies within the East Midlands

- Connections between places of axe production and sources of ceramic inclusions – Is there any demonstrable link between the two?
- The presence of non-local ceramics at causewayed enclosures – Can we begin to build a picture of the extent of those utilising these monuments from the ceramic evidence?
- The role of waterways in the networks of procurement, production and consumption
- Further scientific analyses on the Leicestershire samples to aid in the provenance of ceramics, for example, diatom analysis and ICP-AES analysis

The key requirement to allow these research topics to be addressed is the creation of a suitable data set for petrographic analysis including standardised recording formats and terminology to allow the wider understanding and utilisation of this technique.