

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

REPORT

2718

SERIES/No

CONTRACTOR

AUTHOR

Dr D F Williams January 1979

TITLE

Petrology of Neolithic Pottery
from Dumburgh Airport, Shetland

PETROLOGY OF NEOLITHIC POTTERY FROM SUMBURGH AIRPORT.

SHETLAND

D.F. Williams, Ph.D.,

(DOE Ceramic Petrology Project)

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

Samples from the three vessels were examined in thin section under the petrological microscope.

The two sherds SD 57 and SD 59 both contain fragments of sandstone, numerous discrete grains of subangular quartz and some mica. Sumburgh Airport lies on Old Red Sandstone deposits, and so a local source for the pottery would be in keeping with the petrology.

The sherd SD 58 appears to be different from the other two, containing frequent fragments of micaceous schist and phyllite, large grains of mica and plagioclase feldspar, some fragments of sandstone and numerous discrete grains of subangular quartz. The likely source of this material is difficult to predict. Large areas of metamorphic rocks cover much of the Shetlands, the nearest deposits to the find-site occur on the western side of the Bay of Quendale. However, the variety of inclusions present might suggest instead the use of Boulder Clay, deposits of which lie about a mile north of the Airport.

DOE CERAMIC PETROLOGY PROJECT
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Application for petrological analysis

NAME John W. Hedges

INSTITUTION North of Scotland Archaeological Services, Binscarth House,
Finstown, Orkney.

* DESCRIPTION OF POTTERY AND STRATIFICATION DETAILS

Sherds - SD 57, 59 and 58 representing the remains of three pots found together with the remains of 18 individuals in a JCB trench on Sumburgh Airport, Shetland. Parts of each of these pots were stratified and their shape together with a C14 date point to the deposit being Neolithic

* AIM OF ANALYSIS

In order to establish whether the pots are of local manufacture and whether the clay source could be very localised.

* COMPARATIVE MATERIAL AVAILABLE (i. e. scope of intended programme, will other, associated, material be collected and submitted for comparison ?)

This is the first definitely Neolithic pottery of any size and shape to be found.

Related work has been done on Neolithic samples from Orkney.

NUMBER OF ANALYSES ANTICIPATED

Three, as detailed above.

* Please submit further sheets if necessary