

PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ST. NEOTS TYPE WARE AND LYVEDEN WARE

A thin section examination was undertaken on nine selected sherds of St. Neots type ware from Northampton, Bedford Castle and St. Neots, and two from the suspected kiln site at Lyveden.

The results are as follows:

1. Northampton, St. Peters Street, N20/NHN35. Cooking-pot,
10 th century.

Shell inclusions predominate, together with frequent grains of subangular quartz, average size 0.20-.30mm. Some chert and a few fragments of small sandstone are also present.

2. Northampton, St. Peters Street, N12/NHN29. Bowl, early
10th century.

Shell inclusions predominate. Fragments of bryozoa and limestone are also present together with a scatter of subangular quartz grains, average size 0.10mm.

3. Northampton, St. Peters Street, N33/NHN39. ?bar-lip
vessel 10th-11th century.

Petrology similar to no. 2.

4. Northampton, St. Peters Street, N54. Cooking-pot, 12th
century.

Petrology similar to no. 2.

5. Northampton, St. Peter's Street, N59. Cooking-pot, 12th century.

Petrology similar to no. 2.

6. St. Neots, Cambridge Street, SN13. Jug, 12th century.

Shell predominates together with a few fragments of bryozoa and limestone. There seems to be very little quartz present.

7. St. Neots, Cambridge Street, SN14. Bowl, 12th century.

Shell again predominates together with a few fragments of bryozoa and limestone. There are frequent grains of subangular quartz, average size 0.10-.15mm, and several large grains of quartzite.

8. Bedford Castle, BC3. Cooking-pot, late 12th century-early 13th century.

Shell again predominates together with a few fragments of bryozoa and limestone and a scatter of subangular quartz grains up to 0.40mm across.

9. Bedford Castle, BC5. Cooking-pot, late 12th century-early 13th century.

Petrology similar to no. 10.

10. Lyveden, LY10. Bowl, 13th-14th century .

Shell again predominates together with a few fragments of bryozoa and limestone. A moderate amount of subangular quartz grains are also present, average size 0.10-.20mm.

11. Lyveden, LY9. Cooking-pot, 14th century.

The major inclusion in this sample is ooliths (clearly visible in the fabric of the sherd), and it is possible to see their concentric structure within the limestone body. Also present are a number of large silt grains, a small amount of shell and quartz.

Conclusion

In all the nine samples of St. Neots type ware examined, the predominant inclusion is shell. Much of this is fossiliferous, and all the samples except for the 10th century cooking-pot from Northampton (no.1) also contained scattered fragments of bryozoa (? cheilostomata, which is known to occur in the Jurassic, Majewske, 1969, 35) and limestone. This composition has already been noted in St. Neots type ware and the suggestion put forward that the temper was added in the form of a crushed shelly

limestone, most likely obtained from Cornbrash deposits which occur close to the main find-spots, centred on Oxford, Northampton and St. Neots (Hunter and Warren, 1975). Alternatively, a clay may have been used with a naturally high calcareous content. Bryozoa have been recognized amongst other fossils occurring in Iron Age shell tempered pottery from Chinnor, Oxfordshire, and Davis has suggested that a suitable source for the raw materials would be the local Kimmeridge or Oxford clays (in Richardson and Young, 1951, 148). A similar source may have been utilized for some St. Neots type ware, Bedford and St. Neots for instance are both situated on Oxford clays.

Chronologically a distinction exists between 'classic' St. Neots type ware of the 10th and 11th centuries and the later 'developed' types of the 12th century (Tebbutt, 1966). The evidence from two of the earlier dated vessels from Northampton (nos. 2 and 3) suggests a degree of continuity of fabric between the two phases, for petrologically there seems to be very little difference between these two samples and those from later contexts (nos. 4 and 5). However the 10th century cooking-pot from the

same site although again predominantly shell tempered lacks the inclusions of bryozoa and limestone common in the rest of the St. Neots type ware samples, which may suggest a different source of raw materials.

St. Neots type ware appears to have been made at a number of different centres in the Jurassic ridge area of Eastern England (Hunter and Warren, 1975). Unfortunately, the major range of inclusions found in this type of pottery, shell, bryozoa and limestone, are too common within the supposed area of production to allow any useful suggestions to be made as to likely origins. With the exception of the early cooking-pot from Northampton which lacked bryozoa and limestone, it is difficult to differentiate between the samples from Northampton, Bedford Castle and St. Neots on an examination of these type of inclusions alone. However, there do seem to be significant differences in the size and amount of quartz grains in the pottery of the three sites which may suggest a way of indicating different centres of production, though too few samples were examined for any firm conclusions to be drawn.

It may be worth while noting that one of the samples from

St. Neots contained a number of large grains of quartzite, which agree well with the composition of the local gravels overlying the Oxford clay (Edmonds and Dinham, 1965, 71).

It is interesting to note that the two samples from Lyveden contained quite different inclusions to each other (nos. 10 and 11). The 13th-14th century bowl contains shell, bryozoa and limestone fragments similar to the St. Neots type wares above, which suggests a continuing tradition of shell tempered pottery in the area into the 14th century. In contrast, the slightly later cooking-pot from Lyveden was heavily charged with ooliths, no doubt derived from the Great Oolite Clay deposits situated closeby.

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