

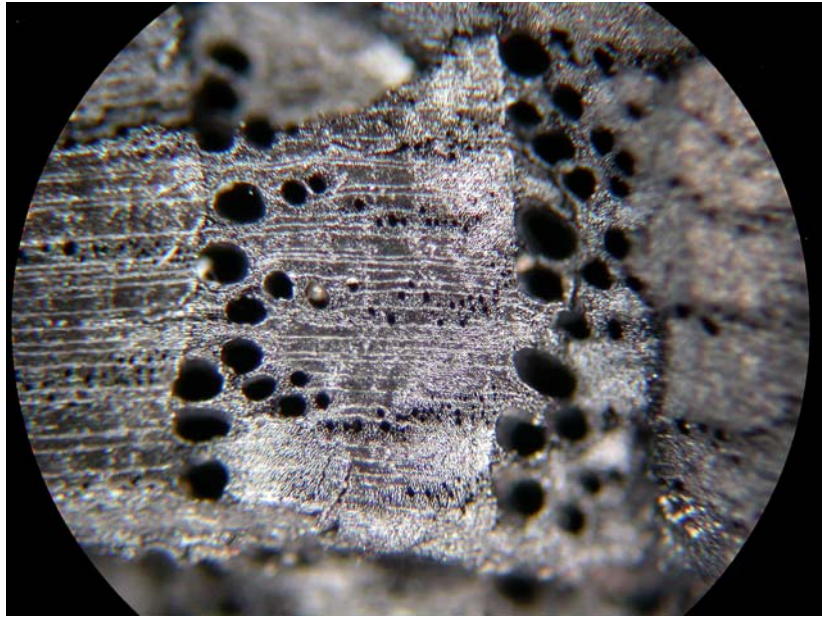
Groundwell Ridge Villa Analysis Project, Pr 364I Update 3, August 2007

The diverse strands of this project are fully represented by the various types of specialists who were mentioned in the previous update. Their work is still progressing and over the next few updates it is hoped that the normally unseen work of a few of these specialists will be highlighted here. The primary work being undertaken at the moment is analysis of the finds and of the residues from the environmental processing. These residues are divided into several different sizes, all smaller than 1 cm which were wet sieved, and a further type of residue which is the material that floated off during processing. This is possibly the most important part of the residues as it contains the charred and carbonised organic matter.



Analysing wood charcoal fragments from the southern hypocaust furnace and sorting them according to species where possible.

After analysis and sorting of this organic material, which is most common from the areas of the two hypocaust furnaces, it was divided into wood and other organics. The other material contains plant remains and seeds including wheat, which give a view of the surrounding environment, both natural and agricultural, at the time of the Villa and also an insight into their diet. The wood charcoal remains here show what types of wood were used for firing the hypocaust. The results so far are pointing towards it being primarily *Quercus* [oak] with remains from the Willow family, *Populus* [poplar] and/or *Salix* [willow] and *Prunus* species such as plum and cherry making up the remainder. All of these insights provide us with a more rounded view of the Villa and its inhabitants in the mid-Roman period.



A magnified cross-section through a small fragment of carbonised oak.

These particular remains come from the southern hypocaust furnace which is part of quite a late phase of rebuilding of the Villa. These findings will also serve well as a comparison to the contents of the earlier eastern furnace when these are analysed, which dates, on present reckoning, from around a century earlier.

The text for the main report is also being worked on at present, nothing is being finalised though as it will be bound to change as the final reports from all the specialists become available and the results are integrated.

Late news: For results from other environmental work carried out by EH staff, see work from the Silbury Hill Project at: http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/Silbury_Hill_web_update_23_and_24.pdf where organic material from inside the hill has been recovered.