

Groundwell Ridge Villa Analysis Project.
Pr 3641

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The structural elements of any villa mainly fall into three main categories, stone, brick and plaster. Analysing the structure by the remains of these is an important job. Working from the foundations of the villa up, the internal structure is normally made up as follows. First there are pilae (columns) for holding the floor above the hypocaust, these were mostly made of bricks. Above this is the floor, much of which, at Groundwell, was lost during the robbing phase and only a few small tesserae and fragments of mortar were recovered, the tesserae appeared to have been made from clipped brick fragments. The walls appeared to be mostly made from stone, but some evidence for wattle and daub walls was also found. The roofs appeared to be a mix of standard Roman roofing tiles, (Tegulae and Imbrices) and diamond shaped stone flags. Even though the majority of the better material would have been robbed away after the abandonment of the villa, enough remained to give us a good idea of the appearance of the building.



Tegulae, Bessales and a stone tile *in-situ* in Room 4

The first job was to assess the type and quantity of the ceramic building materials and then to look for any defining maker's marks which can indicate such things as the date and place of production and even the manufacturers names. Unfortunately nothing so helpful has been found, so fragments are being studied to see if the place of production can be ascertained from the type of clay and pieces of stone within it and whether the date can be judged from the style of the tiles.

Much wall plaster has also been found from the building which is made up of at least seven different colours. Not many of the fragments are of any real size, and most are

plain white or white and red, but some possible patterns of flowers in yellow and green and geometrical shapes, which may be the borders of panels of colour, have been discerned on some. It is hoped that by plotting the prevalence of the different coloured fragments of plaster by where they were found some idea may be gained of the internal colour schemes of the villa.



Two images showing part of the range of colours of wall plaster found on the Groundwell Ridge site.

Work is also being undertaken on analysing the stonework from the roof and the walls. The idea behind this is to see how far the materials have travelled and thereby

gain an idea of the affluence of the villa's inhabitants, as it would have cost more money to transport stone from a distance than it would to have it quarried locally. It is also hoped that here may be a chance to gain an idea if there was any patterning in the wall or the roof's construction once again by plotting where the artefacts were found. This type of Spatial Distribution plot was undertaken recently with great success by plotting the location of window glass from the villa. This showed with great clarity that there appeared to be a large window in the western apse of Room 2c that was the hot plunge bath.