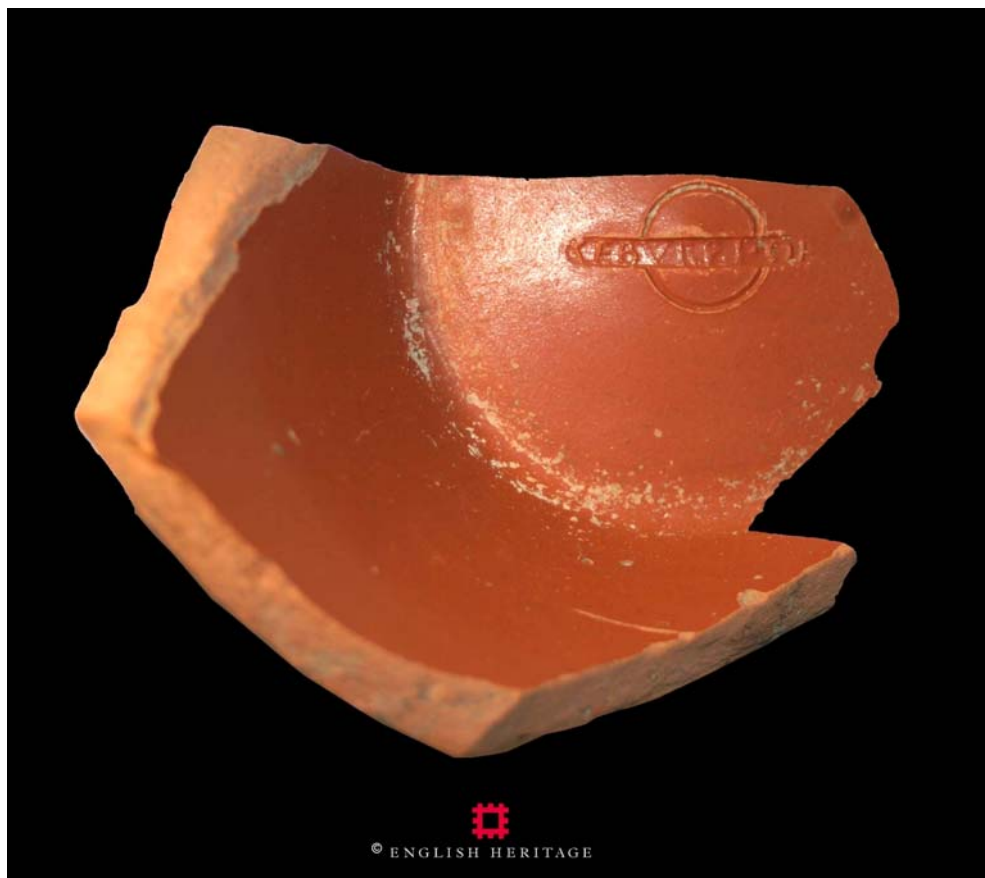


Groundwell Ridge Villa Analysis Project.
Pr 3641

April 2008 (Update 7)

One of the most fundamental elements for the understanding of any archaeological site must be the pottery finds, and Groundwell Ridge was no exception. As a result of the site's heavy disturbance by early stone robbers and the later attempted road construction, pottery was one of the first ways that we could 'spot-date' some of the elements of the building. Once we had a basic chronology for the site, educated guesses could be made about the phasing of the structure.



A stamp on the base of a Samian vessel from the potter 'Reburrus' who worked in the Central Gaulish potteries around 145 -175 AD

A large variety of pottery was recovered from the site of all types and of all dates within the Roman Period. The pottery can be initially divided into two basic types which are, Finewares and Coarsewares. Finewares include the well known red hued Samian Ware which was the 'best' pottery for use for serving and on the table. The second category is the Coarsewares which were the everyday pottery of the non-villa owning populace, or in the context of a villa, probably the pottery that would have been used for food preparation, cooking, or storage.

The individual styles of decoration found on the fineware have very limited life spans, much like some of today's designs and from these we can not only tell the date it was made, but also where in the Empire it came from, and if you are very lucky, sometimes a fragment is found that has the name of the potter on it. Coarsewares do not generally have designs on them and so it is more difficult to date these as the only way this can be done is by the style of the pot, but once a good shape was found for a pot this usually changed very little over the years.



The pieced together remains of a decorated samian ware bowl

The specialists working on the pottery have so far found that the Coarsewares come from right across southern England, from Devon to Surrey and Cambridgeshire to Bedfordshire. The majority of the pottery, however, comes from local Wiltshire industries, such as Minety and some from possibly as close as the kiln sites around Purton and West Swindon. Some of the pottery has been imported from farther-flung parts of the Empire, usually for their contents. Some of the finewares have come from Cologne in Germany, and the Samian has come from the Central, South and East Gaulish Potteries, but those that have travelled the furthest to their final resting place in Swindon are the Amphoræ which have come from Baetica and Cadiz in Southern Spain and from Southern Gaul. Those from Baetica are likely to have been brought over containing Olive Oil, those from Cadiz probably carried garum, a type of fish sauce, whilst those from Southern Gaul are likely to have contained wine.

From this pottery assemblage we have gained further insights into the status of the occupants and the wide trade links to far-reaching parts of the Roman Empire of a Roman villa in Wiltshire.