

## **What plant remains have been found inside Silbury Hill?**

In the centre of the mound remains of plants and insects are preserved both at the top of the old ground surface and within the turves used to construct the core of Silbury I. These remains survive because very little oxygen has reached these deposits meaning that the normal processes of decay by fungi and bacteria have not taken place, although the exact mechanism of preservation is difficult to determine and forms part of the current research

Previous investigations of this material published in Whittle (1997) showed that a number of habitats were present including grazed chalk grassland represented by remains of plants such as small scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*) and salad burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*). Mosses were frequent in the turf stack and have also been recovered from cores taken in March 2003 during the Seismic survey. The species present are also those found in mature chalk grassland.

One of the questions we want to answer as part of the current investigations is whether turves representing different types of vegetation are present, in other words whether the turves were taken from a very small area or from a number of different localities. We also want to compare the plant remains from the old ground surface with those from the turves as the earlier work hints at consideration variation.

So far we only have a few samples and the work has only just begun.