

KAREN STEWART: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ARCHAEOBOTANIST

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I was doing some botanising even as I walked to work this morning, when I spotted this on an acorn on my way through Shoreditch park –



As it's a gall I hadn't seen before I brought it into the office to see if I could find out what it is. A swift Google introduced me to *Andricus quercuscalicis*, a gall wasp which induces these 'knopper' galls. Mostly irrelevant to me as an archaeobotanist though, as apparently they only started appearing in Britain in the twentieth century!

My first actual job of the day is some charcoal analysis from a Bronze Age ring ditch site in Hampshire. The first sample I looked at was all oak, which can be quite boring, as it's the easiest of all the woods to identify. On the other hand, that means I can absolutely tear through it and save some time for the samples that are more challenging.

My second sample of the day has been entirely oakless, and is thus taking much longer to work through. It doesn't help that all of the fragments are pretty small –



At the very end of my day of archaeology 2015 I had a quick look at a wall hook from a Saxon grave chamber, which has some mineralised wood attached to it. It's part of an ongoing project that I've been working on since I started with [MOLA](#) in 2009, and is almost ready for publication. Of course, that means that there are a million things to check at the last minute. Having provided an answer (sort of!) to the finds specialist and editor, that's me done for the day! See you in the pub next year!