



The Datum Point

NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

February 2005

From the President – Patrick O’Neill

At the last chapter meeting, Stephen Potter gave a glorious talk on identification of Civil War ammunition; we were all astounded by how much we did not know and how much we learned! At this month’s meeting we will need to find someone in-house to quickly audit our bookkeeping, please volunteer! Come to the meetings and enjoy the presentations and camaraderie! The business meeting portion will always be short, I promise!

**The next meeting is at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday February 9, 2005**

February Talk - By Brandon Bies Camp Hooker at the Monocacy Battlefield



Brandon Bies, Cultural Resource Specialist with the George Washington Memorial Parkway, National Park Service, will give a talk on archaeology at the Monocacy Battlefield. Mr. Bies received his MA in Applied Anthropology from the University of Maryland and his excavations at the Monocacy Battlefield contributed to his thesis work as well as the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form.

Announcements

The Fairfax County Park Authority and the George Mason University History Department will sponsor a symposium entitled “Drink Up! Beverages in Early America, 1750-1850” on April 1, 2005 at GMU. Presentations will be given on the social, technological and economic history associated with beverages; home and commercial production; and the material culture of tablewares in which beverages were prepared, stored and consumed. Cost is \$65; pre-registration is required by March 21. Contact Historic Collections at (703) 631-1429 or susan.clark@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Patrick O’Neill will give a presentation to the Library of Congress on February 10, 2005. The talk will be mainly about his book “Images of America: Mount Vernon”, but will also discuss many of his archaeology and historical projects across the United States and how he utilizes the Library’s records in ways few other researchers can. The talk will be at the Pickford Theater, 3rd floor, Madison Building, 101 Independence Avenue, SE, Washington, D.C. Call Emily Howie for further details at 202-707-5771.

Other News

Volunteer Opportunity - Brandon Bies, Cultural Resource Specialist with the George Washington Memorial Parkway, National Park Service, needs volunteers to help excavate shovel tests at Fort Hunt, north of Mount Vernon, in the coming weeks (after it warms up!). For further information, call Patrick O’Neill at 703-244-6275 or Brandon Bies at 703-289-2534.

Historic Glass Bottle Identification website: the purpose of this Bureau of Land Management website

(www.blm.gov/historic_bottles/index.htm) is to help field archeologists, bottle collectors, and the general public determine the approximate age & function of a bottle based on its physical characteristics. It is an excellent resource for help in identifying and dating most utilitarian bottles and jars produced in the U.S. between the early 1800's and 1950.

ASV Board Meeting – Patrick O'Neill

This was my first ASV Board meeting, and I will keep the notes brief.

The ASV is going to print three volumes of Quarterly Bulletin articles, wide ranging in their topics and authors, for the 500th anniversary of Jamestown. They were going to use the scanned images from the printed articles, and I volunteered to find as many original copies of the photos as I could between now and the time they need them, which has not yet been decided. I want this to be a NVC effort, and anyone wanting to help, contact me. If the NVC can locate and copy these photos, the publication will be a great success and it will be thanks to us!

I also was nominated to the Awards Committee and later made chairman. So, anyone wanting to nominate anyone for an award, contact me. Categories are for an out-of-state person, a deceased person, living person, student, and a few others that escape me right now.

Lastly, I became part of a new committee with Harry Jaeger to try and reach out to groups and people across the state that need to be educated in what not to do to archaeological sites. This is not the Education Committee, but rather trying to contact relic hunters and land owners to see what can be done to educate them not to destroy sites and be good stewards of the resources.

County Happenings in Archaeology Mike Johnson

3,000 Site Milestone - Fairfax County has surpassed 3,000 archeological sites registered with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR). The next closest county in Virginia is Prince William with less than 1,600 sites. Only three others out of the total 100 counties have more than 1,000. The Cultural Resources Section's total site inventory is more than 4,000 which includes archeological, architectural, historic, and sites not accepted by the VDHR because they do not have the needed three artifacts to qualify as a site.

C.K. Gailey is the GIS guru who manages the County's inventory. It is a big job. C.K. has digitized the polygons (shapes) of all of our sites on a computerized map overlay called a shape file in Arcview. Each of the shapes is labeled with the state number (44FX****), county number (geographically based on the county map sections), and site name. These labels are cross-referenced to two data files in Arcinfo.

We have an historic database called HSITEDAT and a prehistoric database called PSITEDAT. The Meadowood survey data has pushed the prehistoric site total to more than 2,000 records. This does not mean that there are only 1,000 historic sites because many sites have both historic and prehistoric components.

We use these data to provide context for planning studies and reviewing development proposals. We also use the data as a basis for interpreting the history and prehistory of the county and region.

However, one should put this into perspective. Because they consider Historic Alexandria City to be one large site, our neighbor, Alexandria Archeology, has very few sites in the VDHR inventory. Their method makes perfect sense because it would be pointless to give each address in the city a separate 44AX** number.

When looking at big numbers, like the 3,000 sites, we should grasp what they mean. Yes, it is great that Fairfax County has almost twice as many sites as anywhere else in Virginia. However, to manage resources like heritage resources one must know something about both their quantity and quality. More often than not, bad data are worse than no data at all.

Fairfax County's 3,000 sites answer the quantity part of the management equation. More importantly, as long as the data behind those sites are of good quality, the database enables us to develop useful site distribution models for the cultural periods in our prehistory and history. The quality of the data is critical in planning, development review, land acquisition and interpretation.

Both Alexandria Archeology and Fairfax County Archeology have been equally successful at doing all of these things.

Meadowood Farm survey - Paul and Nancy have been working with volunteers on a new prehistoric site by the Visitor Center on Tuesdays, weather permitting. The site is very promising. The Saturday crew did not go out in January due to weather. With everything frozen Paul and Nancy have been doing archival research on the land records and data management on what is already known. They have recorded more than 120 new sites.

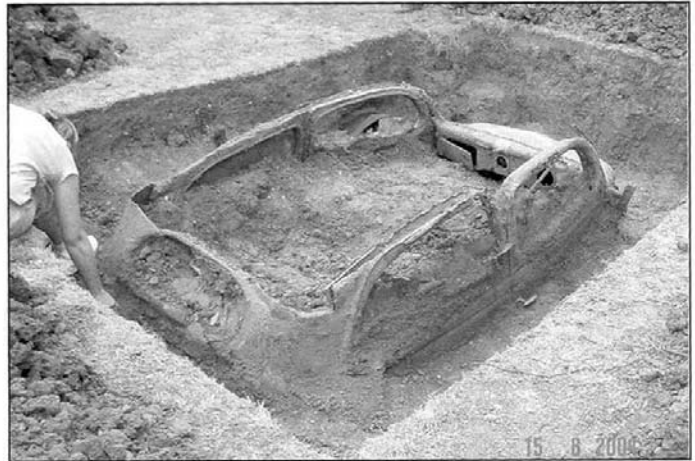
Land Bay A - The lab crew continues to work on the consultant's artifact collection and the plotted fire cracked rocks from feature 12. During the processing we have discovered that many of the FCR have smoke clouding. We intend to have one of our interns this year try to find a way to extract the carbon from the minute surface cracking on the rocks. Theoretically, if this can be done it means that we will be able to directly date the hearths. Charcoal dating is often questionable, because of either context or contamination questions. If this works it could revolutionize the importance of FCR in archeological sites.

Berno - We got the firm news about Berno. He and Ruth are going back to The Datum Point

Netherlands on Saturday. We wish them the very best of everything and thank them for adding to our lives and archeology program. Hopefully you will find a way to come back. Good luck.

From the V8 TIMES, Volume 41, Number 6, Nov/Dec 2004, courtesy of Pat O'Neill. Excavated anything like this from your backyard recently?

they're still out there!



SIX FEET UNDER, THE CAR LEFT TO RUST IN PEACE

By Andrew Levy
THE DAILY MAIL

As classic cars go, it is not in the best of condition. The Ford V-8 Pilot's roof has gone. It is heavily rusted and the windows have caved in. But that is perhaps not surprising since it has spent the last 60-odd years under the lawn in Muriel Davies's front lawn. Mrs. Davies, a divorcee in her 60s, had no idea it was there until she struck a piece of metal while mowing at her home of six years on Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. She called in the local archaeological society to carry out a proper excavation and it found that the car had been used as a World War II air-raid shelter, with railway sleepers and sheets of corrugated steel used to reinforce it.



Very discernable Ford dash in the dirt.

Experts confirmed it was a 1936 model, probably built at Ford's plant in Dagenham, Essex.

About 300,000 of the two-door V-8 Saloons were sold around the world, of which only ten survive in the UK. The three-gear vehicle cost £450 new and would be worth £15,000 if restored. Its side-valve 3,622cc engine made it one of the swiftest production cars of its era and popular with police forces.

However, it was considerably less suited to conversion into a shelter against Hitler's bombers.

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NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____
Phone (H): _____
(W): _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Individual (\$15) _____
Student (\$5) _____
Family (\$17) _____

New _____
Renewal _____

Return to:
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Falls Church, VA 22042

Chapter members are encouraged to join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia.

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at the James Lee Center at the above address.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED