



THE DATUM POINT

Newsletter of the
**NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA**

[Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org](http://www.nvcasv.org)

December 2008

FROM THE PRESIDENT – ANN WOOD

Congratulations to Aimee Wells, who has been hired – at least temporarily – to fill the county archaeology staff position vacated when Bob Wharton retired. This important position includes working with our many volunteers, and managing more than 3 million artifacts. Those of us who have worked with Aimee in other capacities know she will do a fine job.

Unfortunately, this position is still flagged for elimination in the Fairfax County budget for fiscal year 2010, which takes effect in July of 2009.

Aimee holds a BA in anthropology magna cum laude from George Mason University and is working on her Master's Degree from the University of Leicester. Prior to accepting this position, Aimee was serving as a limited term employee. She has been working with the archaeological collections and with our volunteers and interns since she joined us in 2006. Aimee's research interests include contact period sites, the colonial Chesapeake, and the history of anthropology in America.

Unexpectedly cold and windy weather delayed Mike Johnson's plans for emergency survey and possible excavation at the Cardinal Glen Site on Pohick Creek near Burke. A portion of the site, which appears to be a prehistoric encampment, has been threatened with destruction. Keep an eye on Mike's advisories for further scheduling.

At our last meeting, the Chapter voted to honor the memory of Howard MacCord, dean of Virginia archaeologists who died Nov. 3 at the age of 93, with a donation of \$100 to the Virginia Archaeological Resource Center (VARC). His lifelong interest in archaeology began on several

prehistoric sites in the Washington D.C. area in the 1930's.

Your present chapter officers have agreed, and have been nominated, to run for election for another year. That's Ann Wood, president; Pat Fuller, vice president; C. K. Gailey, treasurer; Felicia Glapion, recording secretary; Maggie Johnson, corresponding secretary; and Patrick O'Neill, Datum Point editor.

Bring a potluck dish and join us at a relaxed Christmas party on Wednesday, Dec. 10, from 6:30 p.m. on. We'll take a couple of minutes to vote on a revised total of \$130 as our chapter funding for the picnic we held on October 25 as part of our 30-year celebration. And we'll elect our officers for 2009.

DECEMBER 10, 2008

No Lecture This Month!

Just Another Party!!!!

Pot Luck Christmas Party
From 6:30 pm until 9pm!

FRIENDS OF ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY (FOAA)

Volunteers are needed to assist with the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology (FOAA) sponsored annual ornament decorating workshop to be held at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum on Saturday, December 6 from 1 to 4 p.m. (after the Scottish Walk Parade.) The event is free and open to the public.

For more information contact:
Ruth Reeder, Museum Educator
Alexandria Archaeology Museum
105 N. Union St., #327
Alexandria, VA 22314
ruth.reeder@alexandriava.gov
703/838-4399

GAULT, TEXAS 2008 FIELD SCHOOL

By Mike Johnson

A crew of 11 Virginia archeologists spent the first week of November, doing a five-day field session at the Gault Paleoamerican site near Florence, Texas. November turned out to be the best time for everyone. The weather in Central Texas is unbelievably hot in the summer, when most field schools are held. The Virginia crew's timing avoided the heat and provided the Gault program with a much needed boost during a time when they get few field school crews.

The site is at the edge of the Edwards Plateau in a small valley that empties out onto the Gulf coastal Plain of Central Texas. The area of the Gault site our crew worked consisted of a four-foot thick, Middle to Late Archaic, burnt rock midden (camas processing), over Early Archaic, Paleoamerican and pre-Clovis stratified deposits. Gault is famous for its large prismatic blades made of exquisite Edwards chert.

The site also contains a stratified Clovis deposit in which the bones of prey species suggest changes from mammoth and horse to bison through the period. The excavation block the Virginia crew was in was only a few hundred feet from a rock, floor-like platform that was excavated in 2001-2. The Datum Point

platform, which is in the Clovis stratum, is nearly unique although there is a Clovis stone pavement at Kincaid Rockshelter, TX.. Comparable features are found in the Perigord Region of France, where they are dated to the Magdalenian period, which is contemporary with Clovis.

Anyone who wants to read about the site should visit the Texas Archeological Research Lab's (TARL) web site that can be reached through the Texas Beyond History web page (www.texasbeyondhistory.net/gault/index.html).

Our own Bob Norton's reaction to the web site was, "Just read the site info. "Damm! What a site."

The grand leader of the Gault project is Dr. Michael Collins of TARL, which is at the University of Texas at Austin. The crew worked closely with TARL staff members, Clark Wernecke (Project Director, Chief Cook and Bottle Washer), Cinda Timperley (volunteer coordinator, paleontologist, curator, database manager etc.), and Nancy Littlefield (volunteer Field Supervisor in training).

The crew consisted of Ann Wood, C.D. Cox, C.D.'s Granddaughter, Petra Cox, her Father, Steve Cox (who came out mid-week), Nancy Anthony, John Kelsey, George and Vicki Monken, Chris Ramey, Cynthia Hansen (Nansmond Chapter) and Mike Johnson. Part of the crew drove out and the rest flew. Five stayed in the "bunk house," while the rest stayed at nearby motels. Those crew members who are members of the NVC/ASV will be getting equal shares from a \$1,000 scholarship from the Chapter's Scholarship fund.

The school part began with an orientation at the bunk house on Sunday evening that included a new video on Gault and pre-Clovis. The first morning also was taken up with orientation on the site's cultural, geological, climatological and biological context, paperwork, site procedures and excavation methods. Work got started in the afternoon.

The Virginia crew made an immediate impression, when at the end of the first day, Dr. Collins was overheard commenting to one of his staff that this would be easy, because our crew knew what it was

doing. That statement alone was the best tribute to Virginia's Certification and Training Program and the experience of the Fairfax County Archeology volunteers. As the week went on, the crew appears not to have changed that perception.

C.D. Cox, George Monken and later Steve Cox caught the project up on a huge backlog of unscreened level matrix (soil). The methods at Gault involved water screening the entire site through 1/4 and 1/8-inch mesh. Fortunately, the water screening area was state of the art, which made things a lot more efficient and cleaner than on most sites located in the "boondocks." In a day and a half the crew cleaned up a 50+ bucket backlog of soil.

George Monken and Chris Ramey located a small hearth feature associated with a broken knife-like tool and biface. The fire cracked rocks in the feature were recovered for archeomagnetic dating. Everyone was intrigued by the process. George and Chris also identified the first Andice point channel flake found on the site, since excavations began in 1999. They were excavating in Late to Middle Archaic strata.

Nancy Anthony identified a rare and significant collection of charcoal fragments from her square in the Lower Middle Archaic level. It was the second feature identified by our crew. She, Petra Cox and Ann Wood recovered more than 10 pieces of charcoal. Gault soil has been heavily reprocessed through the digestive tracts of worms that charcoal is almost never found.

Cynthia Hansen and John Kelsey located a greasy stain, which extended into an adjoining excavated square. However, it was not recorded as a feature. They also mapped several pieces of bone. Their square also was at the boundary between the Middle and Early Archaic.

Vicki Monken and Mike Johnson handled the paperwork. One of the many impressive aspects of the site involved the redundancy of labeling and note keeping. With that amount of backup it would be difficult to mix things up, even in an excavation as complex as Gault.

Most if not all of the crew is eager to go back and help next fall. The Gault staff admiringly dubbed our crew "the Virginians" in reference to the reputation of volunteerism, vigor and readiness going back to Colonial times.



Our Virginia crew digs at the Gault.



The boss, Dr. Michael Collins, gives a lesson.



Mike Johnson talks with certification candidates and Nancy Littlefield of the Gault staff.



Contemporary knapping Texas style.



...And lots of paperwork.



Enjoying the lab tour.



Chris and George had lots of artifacts.



CD Cox mans the water screening.



Gault artifact.



Dr. Clark Wernecke demonstrates a technique.



Cactus Hill sign, engraved by Clark, joins the post.



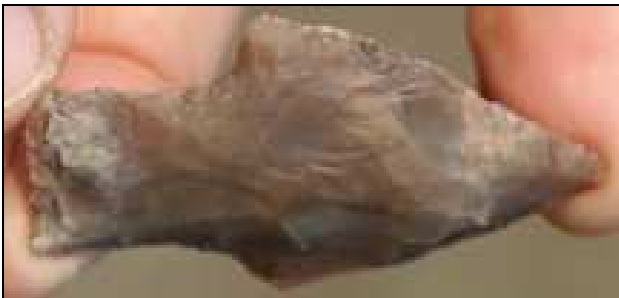
Dr. Mike Collins gives us a show-and-tell in the lab.



Our group and hosts: Dr. Mike Collins, Dr. Clark Wernecke, Nancy Littlefield and Cinda Timperly



Dr. Collins



Stemmed Point



Mike Johnson and Dr. Mike Collins

DIG UNEARTHS STONE AGE SCULPTURES

By Jason Palmer

Science and technology reporter, BBC News

The site at Zaraysk, 150km south-east of Moscow, has yielded figurines and carvings on mammoth tusks. The finds also included a cone-shaped object whose function, the authors report in the journal *Antiquity*, "remains a puzzle". Such artistic artifacts have been found in the nearby regions of Kostenki and Avdeevo, but this is the first such discovery at Zaraysk. The Upper Palaeolithic is the latter part of the Stone Age, during which humans made the transition from functional tool-making to art and adornment.



The carving has a feminine form, reminiscent of "Venus" figurines found from Siberia to the Pyrenees



This bison carved from mammoth ivory was found at Zaraysk in 2002

The new artifacts, discovered by Hizri Amirkhanov and Sergey Lev of the Russian Academy of Sciences, include a mammoth rib inscribed with what appear to be three mammoths, a small bone engraved with a cross-hatch pattern, and two human figurines presumed to be female.

"The finds enrich the inventory of Upper Palaeolithic [portable] art and broaden the known distribution of specific types of art objects in the East European Upper Palaeolithic," Dr Lev told BBC News. "In terms of the splendour and variety of its art pieces, Zaraysk is on a par with such famous sites as Kostenki and Avdeevo."

The figurines are a type of "Venus" statuette, examples of which have been found in locations ranging from the mountains of Spain as far east as Siberia. However, their cultural significance remains a point of debate among anthropologists.

At Zaraysk, the two figurines were found carefully buried in storage pits. Underneath each was a round deposit of fine sand toward the south; toward the north, there was a deposit of red ochre - an iron-based pigment.

Each of the figurines had been covered with the shoulder-blade of a mammoth. One is presumed to be finished and stands at a height of nearly 17cm (6.7in); the other is clearly unfinished and about half as big.

However, both resemble examples of such statuettes found at the Avdevo site to the south-west, suggesting cultural links between the two. "This collection of artefacts is spectacular in a number of ways, not only for the range of representations of both humanistic and animal but also for the range of materials that is used," says Jeffrey Brantingham, an anthropologist at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

"These finds are really incredibly rare, and they offer a unique picture into human Upper Palaeolithic life." Also among the finds was an object carved from mammoth ivory, shaped like a cone with its top removed. The cone is densely ornamented and has a hole running through its centre.

The authors note that the object is unique among Palaeolithic artefacts. "The function of this decorated object remains a puzzle," they say.

HISTORY IN THE BACK YARD

Boys' Discovery Helps Archaeologists Form Better Picture of Area's Past

Washington Post - Tuesday, December 2, 2008; C12

By Ann Cameron Siegal

Reading about history is nice, but finding ties to long-ago historical events in your own back yard is really exciting.

In their heavily populated Fairfax County subdivision, neighbors Adam Giles, 13, and Derek Hann, 12, uncovered pieces of glass that looked quite different from what's used today. "After digging about two feet down, I stumbled upon an interesting bottle," Derek said. The bottle had a "pontil scar" on the bottom, an indication that it was hand-blown rather than machine made. It also had the name "Fraser" on one side.

Adam found remnants of a green bottle and some very thick brown glass -- again, far different from today's glassware.

After doing research on the computer, the boys contacted Aimee Wells of the county's Cultural

Resources office. She showed them a computer program that digitally puts old maps over modern satellite photographs.

Bingo! Their back yards were once part of a military encampment used by Ohio soldiers on their way to fight in the Spanish-American War in 1898. In fact, thousands of soldiers from many states occupied a huge, temporary tent camp called Camp Alger -- sprawling over 14,000 acres in the Vienna-Falls Church area.

The war lasted four months but effectively ended Spain's empire while establishing the United States as a world power. Cuba became an independent country, and Guam and Puerto Rico became U.S. territories.



Adam Giles, 13, left, and Derek Hann, 12, uncovered glass in their back yards, once part of a military camp 110 years ago!

So how do a few bottles get connected to a brief war that was more than a century ago? "We get there by good judgment," Wells said. "We know the time period of the bottles and what happened in that area."

Anyone can dig a hole, but archaeologists (those who study relics and artifacts relating to long-ago human activity) seek a deeper understanding. How do objects found relate to things around them?

When Derek and Adam realized that a soldier might have held that Fraser bottle 110 years ago, they wondered what he might have been thinking. What did he see as he looked around him? How did he pass the time waiting to go into battle?

Historical records show that while waiting for orders, the soldiers in and around Camp Alger played baseball, played harmonicas and walked seven miles to the Potomac River once a week (!) for baths. An epidemic of typhoid fever forced the closing of the camp, and there are no buildings to study. "What's left is only what's in the ground," Wells said.

Derek's and Adam's back yards have joined the 3,400 places listed on the county's register of archaeological sites. The boys were given tips on how to dig effectively and safely, and on how to document the location of items found.

The official record of their finds serves as another piece of the puzzle for historians seeking to form a more complete story of what happened.

"Not everybody is going to have historical objects in their own yard," Wells said. "That's okay. Make your own time capsule and bury it. What would you want people to know about your life years from now?"

PULASKI TRAIN DEPOT GUTTED BY FIRE

From Mike Barber, State Archaeologist

As you may be aware, the Pulaski train depot (which housed the historical society museum) burned down a week or so ago. Caitlin O'Grady (new DHR Conservator) went down and helped them out but will go back to help with conservation on **Thurs December 11, 2008**. Dee DeRoche will accompany her and I will show up as well.

The Museum needs all the help they can get. Notify the ASV Chapters as to the opportunity to provide aid to historic preservation? Although Caitlin can be reached for details at **Caitlin.O'Grady@dhr.virginia.gov**, I would suggest a beginning time of 9:00 am at the Museum in Pulaski.



Pulaski Train Station

CARDINAL GLEN SITE (44FX3379)

By Mike Johnson

Due to a mix-up in the County Archeology development review process, in November the County Archeology program faced the daunting prospect of either the destruction of a newly discovered prehistoric site near Burke or an emergency excavation in the Winter. With the November weather already indicating a cold Winter the latter prospect was not looked upon with glee. The site was being threatened by construction of a storm water management pond (SWMP).

The site, which is on the south bank of Pohick Creek at its confluence with an un-named tributary, consisted of a light scatter of quartz artifacts on a dry second terrace. The SWMP was designed to stem run-off from the surrounding streets into the tributary. The site's north aspect indicated that the site was probably occupied during a warm season. Living on a north aspect site in the winter would have been only marginally better than having to excavate such a site in the Winter.

Since the site had already been identified, it warranted a Phase II significance assessment. The initial grid placed on the site involved a 20-foot grid. Using one-foot square shovel test pits (STP), the preliminary sample amounted to 1/400, which is good enough to define the site's boundaries by not good for much else.

The plan called for infilling with a five-foot grid within the defined site boundary. The five-foot grid with one-foot STP would provide a 1/25

sample that, hopefully, would be rigorous enough to identify features and artifact concentrations.

Following the first two days, the results from the 1/400 sample indicated that much of the site was previously disturbed, probably in connection with a waterline that cut through the site along its southern boundary. However, the western 40-60 feet of the site was relatively undisturbed, especially above the 250-foot topographic contour interval. That area is along the edge of the tributary.

A light to moderate amount of quartz debitage and unidentified tool-like artifacts were recovered from the upper soil levels. However, in the western-most STP a possible feature edge appeared at the top of the sub-soil. It consisted of a darker soil stain in association with two quartz fire cracked rocks. The feature was within three feet of the edge of a cut-bank on the edge of the tributary, which is another threat.

Fortunately, the SWMP construction is not planned to go above the 250-foot topographic contour interval in that area of the site. The only site threat from the SWMP is to disturbed parts and to a small segment of a mill race.

The Winter plan for the site is to complete the 20-foot grid to define site boundaries; recover approximately five feet of the site that is along the edge of the cut bank, and to do a "grab-bag" collection of artifacts that might be turned up during construction of the SWMP, which will take place in 6-9 weeks.

**INCREASING DATA AND EXPANDING
POSSIBILITIES:
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS BASED ON
RUBIS FUND SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES AT
THE CLARK'S BRANCH SITE (44FX3226)**

by Paul Y. Inashima

Recent support provided by the Rubis Fund was used to pay for ethnobotanical analysis and to facilitate procurement of ASM (accelerator mass spectrometer) dating. A single carbonized twig recovered from a depth of approximately 10.5 feet

below the surface was the subject of both procedures. This floral sample was recovered from Trench 3, the upper proposed bridge abutment location on the upriver side of Clark's Branch.

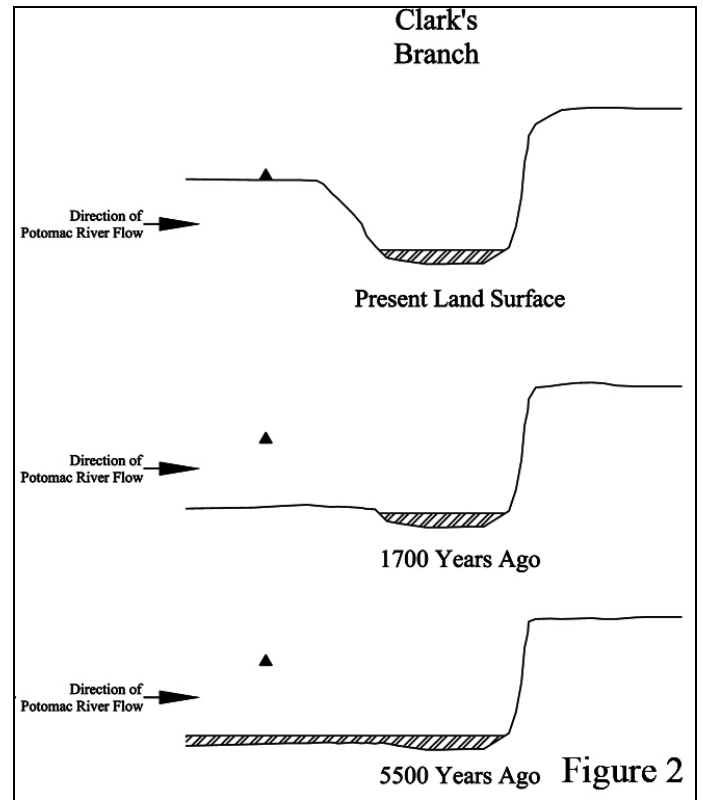
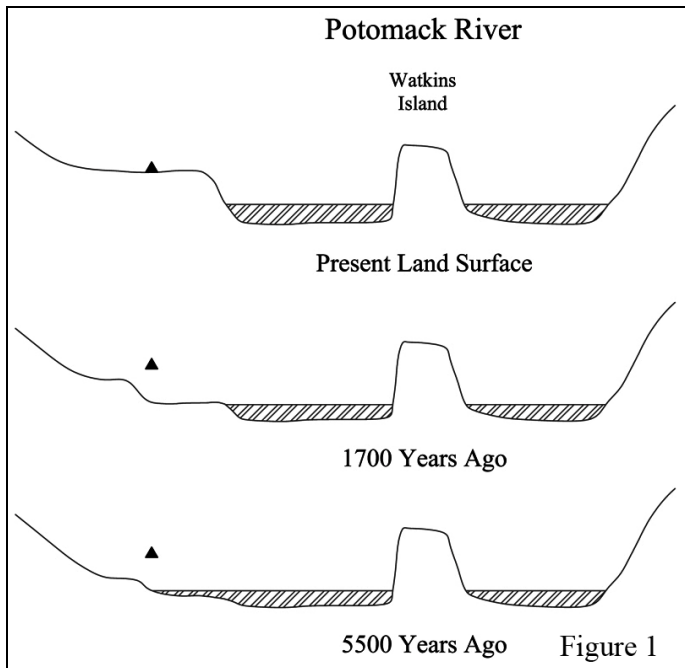
Earlier analysis by the author of the artifacts and geomorphological study by Daniel Hayes had indicated that the deposits at this location were relatively young. How young, however, was not known. This chronology was in marked contrast to the interpretation of the ages of the soils adjoining and immediately upstream of Trench 3, as well as to the soils on the opposite down river bank. Both those loci were significantly older according to the geomorphology of the soils, the artifacts contained, and the associated radiocarbon dates.

Examination of the twig by ethnobotanist, Justine McKnight, indicated that the sample had come from a deciduous species. Subsequent determination of the 13C/12C ratio of the sample at -26.5 ‰ supported this identification. Radiocarbon dating analysis by Beta Analytic, Inc. provided a calibrated age between 1810 and 1570 years ago.

Neither by itself nor in concert with the other data from the larger investigation is the information sufficient to unequivocally determine the landscape history of the terrain at the mouth of Clark's Branch. Nevertheless, at least a few possible scenarios of the dynamic evolutionary relationship between the Potomac River, Clark's Branch, and the adjoining lands can be considered.

In one scenario (Figure 1), 1700 years ago the Virginia side closest to the river may have been as much as 11 feet lower than it is today and may have been a periodically inundated wetland.

A distinct first terrace would have existed upstream of this low ground. At 5500 years ago, much of the present floodplain would have been part of the river's channel, and the elevation of the first terrace would have been considerably lower yet still fairly high above the river. At both these times, the first terrace would have been a favorable location for occupation being situated at the junction of Clark's Branch and the Potomac River.



According to the first scenario looking along Clark's Branch towards the Potomac River at 1700 years ago (Figure 2), the contrast in elevations between the upriver and down river sides of Clark's Branch would have been accentuated. The down river bank would have been as much a 13 feet higher. The deep cut of the branch would have been established by this date. At 5500 years ago, the mouth of the branch would have been situated further upstream than at present.

Of course with the limited data available, it cannot be determined how many times the floodplain on the upriver side may have been built up and subsequently cut down. It, further, cannot be stated whether the Potomac River was always bisected around Watkins Island or whether at any time in the past a single channel on one side or the other of the island existed.

It, also, cannot be stipulated whether the first terrace might at one time have been more extensive nor what sequences of accretion and erosional loss it may have experienced prior to 5500 years ago. Nevertheless, the preliminary ruminations on the Clark's Branch data clearly indicate that common assumptions about the uniformity of small floodplain settings require major revision. In consequence, the need for significant modifications to investigatory protocols and approaches are indicated.

CLIFTON FARM, CULPEPER COUNTY

Janet Martin, from the NVC, is recording archaeology sites at the Clifton farm in Fauquier County near Rixeyville for site survey hours. Clifton is a 1840s antebellum plantation with exterior kitchen and outbuildings still intact with a potential slave cemetery and cabin site owned by the same family since it was built in 1844!





Dedication of the Cultural and Natural Resources Interpretive Sign at Mill Creek

Monday, December 15, 2008

9:30 AM

Army Reserve Center, U.S. Route 17,
Caroline County, Virginia

Guest Speaker – Chief Anne Richardson, Rappahannock Tribe

RSVP to John Mullin, Cultural Resource Manager - email john.j.mullin@us.army.mil or phone (804)633-8761

FORT A.P. HILL DEDICATION CEREMONY

A dedication ceremony will be held on Monday, December 15th to install a cultural and natural resources interpretive sign at Mill Creek and U.S. Route 17, Fort A.P. Hill, Caroline County, Virginia. The sign includes information relative to the Virginia Indians who previously lived in this area along the Rappahannock River and about some of the natural resources found here. The event will begin indoors at 9:30 AM at the Army Reserve Center on U.S. Route 17 (just south of Port Royal). The indoor portion of the event will include a welcome from the Commander, brief address by guest speaker Chief Anne Richardson, and the display of the new sign. The event will then move to the Mill Creek site where the sign will be installed. Returning to the Army Reserve Center, there will be a "farewell" with hot beverages (coffee, tea, etc.), and possibly light refreshments, to give people a chance to talk and warm up before departing.

John Mullin
Cultural Resource Manager
Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia
Phone: 804/633-8761 (DSN: 578-8761)
Fax: 804/633-8443

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Alexandria Museum	Pam Cressey	pamela.cressey@alexandriava.gov 703-838-4399 (information)
Pr. William Co. Archaeologist	Justin Patton	jspatton@pwcgov.org 703-792-5729

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Return to:

NVC/Archeological Society of Virginia
2855 Annandale Rd.
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!!!!

THE DATUM POINT

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Archeological Society of Virginia
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