

THE DATUM POINT

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org

November 2010

FROM THE PRESIDENT – JOHN KELSEY

October was a busy month for the Chapter. In addition to the work at Westbrook and elsewhere, twenty-three members of the Chapter took part in the Hunter Mill Road tour. Reviews were very favorable; thanks are due to our very engaging and knowledgeable host and guide, **Jim Lewis**, from the Hunter Mill Defense League.

Some other points to note:

- Please join me in welcoming **Isabella** and **Gary Pease**, new members of the Chapter.
- Put December 8th at 6:30 PM on your calendars for the Chapter's Christmas party. This will be a pot luck event as it's been in the past. There will be more information in the December Datum Point.
- We will not be having a Chapter meeting in November.

We will be voting on Chapter officers for 2011 at the Chapter Christmas party on December 8th, and our by-laws require that the slate of officer candidates be published in the preceding month's Datum Point. Your officers for 2010 have agreed to continue to serve next year in their current capacities but do not wish to discourage others from getting involved. If you would like to run for one of the officers' positions or nominate someone else, please let me know this month. Failing that, we will be voting in December on the following slate:

President – **John Kelsey**
Vice-President – **Will Nelson**
Recording Secretary – **Felicia Glapion**
Corresponding Secretary – **Maggie Johnson**
Treasurer – **CK Gailey**
Editor – **Patrick O'Neill**

CK has served admirably as Treasurer for a number of years, but he has mentioned that it's probably a good idea for someone new to take the job in the not-too-distant future. I am looking for someone who is willing to replace CK as Treasurer for 2012. If you'd like to do that, please let me know.

NO NOVEMBER MEETING BECAUSE OF THE GAULT TRIP!

ASV ANNUAL MEETING

By John Kelsey

The 70th ASV Annual Meeting in Williamsburg 28 – 31 October. The meeting, jointly held with the Eastern States Archaeological Federation, was a great success, thanks in large measure to **Patrick O'Neill**, ASV President, and his staff with a significant assist from members of the Nansemond Chapter. The meeting kicked off Thursday with an insider's tour of historic Jamestown by Dr. Bill Kelso and his archaeological team. Dr. Kelso described what led him to find the fort seventeen years ago and discussed the recent discovery of the site of the first permanent church in the fort.



Dr. Kelso giving tour



Tour of the James Fort with John Smith Statue

On Friday, many of us took the ferry across the James to Chippokes Plantation. The annual Christmas craft bazaar was going on; fortunately, I was able to escape with relatively minor damage to my bank account. The quality of the presentations at the meeting was excellent. Dr. Doug Owsley, forensic anthropologist at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, gave a fascinating after-dinner talk at the banquet. After looking at pictures of some very old and very bad dental work, we all went back to our rooms afterwards and brushed our teeth several times.



Dr. Owsley giving presentation

You should all know that the Chapter was well represented at the conference. Patrick O'Neill confirmed that we are the largest Chapter in the state. The Chapter accounted for six of the eight newly certified archaeological technicians: **Becky Garber**, **Ginger McGovern**, **Susie Grealy**, **Leigh Watlington**, **Maggie Johnson**, and **Wil Santamaria**. Unfortunately, Maggie could not attend the ceremony. **Ann Wood**, our certification liaison, was recognized with a newly created ASV

award for Mentor of the Year, which she richly deserves.

Special recognition goes to **Becky Garber**, who not only received her certification but also the Virginia Sherman Award, which is given to an individual outside of the professional archaeological community who has made significant contributions to archaeological site preservation or historic preservation within the Commonwealth. It is noteworthy that Becky was recommended jointly by Fairfax County, Mount Vernon, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, which reflects the breadth of her work and the depth of her commitment. Way to go, Becky!



Back l-r: Janice Bilber, Leigh Watlington, Beckie Garber, Ann Wood, Susie Grealy, Ginger McGovern, and Laura Wedin, front l-r: John Kelsey and Wilther Santamaria

During the ASV business meeting, officers for 2011 were elected. **Dan Kegley**, current President-Elect and President of the Wolf Hills Chapter, was confirmed as the ASV President. The other officers will be **Elizabeth Moore**, President-Elect; **Carole Nash**, Vice President; **Carl Fischer**, Treasurer; and **Stephanie Jacobe**, Secretary. Three amendments to the ASV by-laws were passed. These (1) eliminate the position of President-Elect in 2012; (2) elevate the Kittiewan Committee to the status of a Standing Committee; and (3) increase ASV annual dues to \$35 for adult members and \$25 for senior members. The increases were required because the ASV has recently been operating in the

red. As many of us know only too well, CDs have been paying very little interest recently, and this has affected the ASV.

The ASV is also looking for a new newsletter editor. As Patrick put it, if you can produce a family Christmas newsletter, you've got the technical ability for the job. If you're interested, please let me or Patrick know. It's a good way to give back to your Society.

WESTBROOK (44FX2660)

By Mike Johnson

We have completed more than 500 shovel tests (50,000+ square feet) in our attempt to define the site's boundaries and are still not out of it. Most recently we encountered what appears to be a single sandstone tempered, Culpeper netmarked pot break at the (grid) north end of our transects. That is 30 feet outside the sites boundaries as indicated in the phase I results. It appears that Thunderbird merely ceased testing at the 25-foot interval in that direction, possibly because they had already identified the site's core.

This pottery type was first identified by Larry Moore at the Neha site near Tyson's Corner. Until now, it has not been identified since then. Bill Johnson (PhD), from Pennsylvania and an expert on regional ceramics advised me that he had seen evidence of a single similar pot from further up the Potomac.

Artifact quantities are dropping off indicating that we are nearing the site's edge.

With most of the crew heading for a two-week field session at the Gault Paleoamerican site in Texas, John Kelsey and Chris Ramey will be taking over work at Westbrook until November 24. So they do not get bored or fall asleep while excavating, we have set up a 10x10-foot block excavation for them to work on. It is in the area of highest quartz artifact concentration: the corner STPs produced more than 60; more than 50; more than 40, and more than 30 quartz artifacts. The 10x10 will be excavated in 99, 1x1-foot STP samples, excavated down to approximately 1-inch into the "B" sub-soil.

Although this is not the highest priority testing area it is one that we would examine. It will enable us to smooth out the method; train the crew, and give us a feel for what we can expect from other blocks. Today we excavated the first 24 STPs, which along with the N170E250 STP, excavated as part of the 10-foot grid pattern, means that we are 1/4 through the block.

We recovered large amounts of quartz artifacts including two points, three point tips, four bifaces, and numerous probable tools. We also recovered two soapstone vessel fragments from a relatively thin walled bowl. Photos will follow later, because my office computer with Photoshop is down.

Schedule - Due to a change in Chris Ramey's work schedule, Chris and John plan to be out at the site from about 9 am to 3 pm on Tuesdays. If you have questions or wish to coordinate with them they can be reached by email at jkelsey@cox.net or pramey2007@yahoo.com.

We also will be back to the Wednesday/Saturday schedule on Nov. 24.

DAVID SITE DEDICATION

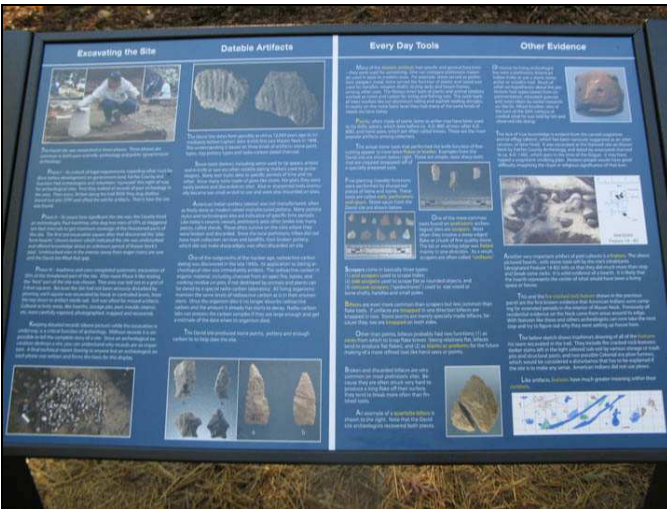
By John Kelsey

A number of Chapter members attended the acceptance ceremony at Mason Neck State Park on October 17th for the interpretive signs at the David Site. Kudos to **Sallie Lyons**, Chapter member and President of the Friends of Fairfax County Archaeology, which co-sponsored the ceremony. **Jerry Lyons** designed the signs based on input from **Mike Johnson**.

Mike and **Paul Inashima** made presentations about the prehistoric context and the site excavation. If you haven't had a chance to see the signs, they are located just off Gunston Road to the right at the intersection with High Point Road, which leads to Mason Neck State Park. There are informal turn-outs that you can use for parking on both Gunston and High Point roads.



NVC members in attendance



David Site Sign



Paul Inashima giving presentation

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer opportunities at Colchester are beginning on November 4th. See the separate item for more information.

A program entitled "Lost and Found Stories: African-Americans in Northern Virginia" will be presented by the African and African-American Studies Program at George Mason University on Saturday, November 13th from 10 AM to 3 PM in the Meese Room, Mason Hall, George Mason University. For more information, call 703-993-4080 or 4085.

A new television program, "Secrets of Stonehenge," sheds light on "the most misunderstood monument of the ancient world." It premieres on NOVA (PBS) on November 16th. See website at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/secrets-stonehenge.html>.

NAGPRA at 20. A NAGPRA 20th Anniversary Celebration on the evening of November 16th, 2010 will be held at the Stewart Lee Udall Interior Building from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. This is a Department of the Interior event, and all are welcome. See website at <http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/>.

There is a new National Park Service website at <http://www.nps.gov/history/ugrr/> for the Underground Railroad. Sheri Jackson, the Park Service regional manager, is interested in incorporating relevant sites and programs into the NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. One significant benefit of the program is that member institutions/programs can apply for funds to preserve significant structures associated with the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom or to develop or implement programs.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT COLCHESTER

Excavations at Colchester have begun, and the team would like to invite volunteers to take part. Currently, excavations are being conducted within the former town area, and volunteers are invited to work with the professional team in the field Thursdays through Saturdays, between 9 AM – 3 PM. Knowing that some members may not be able to make a 9 AM start time with rush hour traffic, you are welcome to join the work in progress when you can get there.

Conditions at the site can be rustic and moderately overgrown, but we will be working initially in close proximity to the lab and office facility, which is located at 10709 Old Colchester Road, one of the last houses before the ferry site over the Occoquan. Limited parking is available in the driveway of the house and along Old Colchester Road. If you have your own gloves and trowel, please bring them.

At least at the beginning, it will help a lot to know how many volunteers to expect. Please let John Kelsey know by email (jkelsey@cox.net) or phone (703-922-8107) when you plan to come out and which day or days (Thursday, Friday, or Saturday) you will most likely work. We hope to see you on site to help recover more of Fairfax County's rich past!

ARCHAEOLOGISTS INSPECT UNION'S 'CAMP MISERY'

Originally from Fredericksburg.com by Jeff Branscome, Published in the *Plowzone*

Archaeologists and historians hope to learn more about a Stafford County site dubbed "Camp Misery" during the Civil War. And time is running out. The Stafford school system is scheduled to open a high school in 2017 on the land off Leeland Road in southern Stafford. The state Department of Historic Resources is funding the latest venture, which continues through Sunday. The property is considered threatened. "This may be our last shot at it," said David Hazzard, an archaeologist with the

DHR. The state agency has been conducting annual excavations on the land since 2008. Some Union soldiers called the area "Camp Misery" because of its harsh living conditions in the winter of 1862. Many shared huts--smaller than many walk-in closets--with four people for weeks or months, according to the state historians.

Yesterday, officials with the DHR, James Madison University and the Archaeological Society of Virginia worked to identify features of those huts. Some slowly removed dirt with trowels, and others searched for artifacts using screens. "A great deal of attention is paid to the sacrifice of troops on the field of battle, but those same troops are rarely considered with respect to the unpleasant and deadly circumstances they faced in mass winter camps such as the one we are studying," JMU anthropology professor Clarence Geier said in an e-mail.

One volunteer found what he thought was a piece of a Civil War-era button. Artifacts will be taken to JMU's Harrisonburg campus to be identified and interpreted. "That's one of the great things archaeologists are able to do--show you things you can't necessarily read about," said Alie Wood, a research assistant at JMU. Today and tomorrow, Stafford students--mostly elementary-schoolers--will help with the work, said Eric Powell, the division's social studies coordinator. "It's hands-on experience of what they're expected to know, as well as giving them a broader insight into what historians do and how we know what we know about history," he said.

Hazzard said they're adding details to the pages of history. "You're putting your finger on history here," he said.

ORIGIN OF SKILLFUL STONE-TOOL- SHARPENING METHOD PUSHED BACK MORE THAN 50,000 YEARS

This story is reprinted (with editorial adaptations by *ScienceDaily* staff) from materials provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

ScienceDaily (Oct. 29, 2010) — A highly skillful and delicate method of sharpening and retouching stone artifacts by prehistoric people appears to have been developed at least 75,000 years ago, more than 50,000 years earlier than previously thought, according to a new study led by the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The new findings show that the technique, known as pressure flaking, took place at Blombos Cave in South Africa during the Middle Stone Age by anatomically modern humans and involved the heating of silcrete -- quartz grains cemented by silica -- used to make tools. Pressure flaking takes place when implements previously shaped by hard stone hammer strikes followed by softer strikes with wood or bone hammers are carefully trimmed on the edges by directly pressing the point of a tool made of bone on the stone artifact.



The technique provides a better means of controlling the sharpness, thickness and overall shape of bifacial tools like spearheads and stone knives, said Paola Villa, a curator at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History and a study co-author. Prior to the Blombos Cave discovery, the earliest evidence of pressure flaking was from the Upper Paleolithic Solutrean culture in France and Spain roughly 20,000 years ago.

"This finding is important because it shows that modern humans in South Africa had a sophisticated repertoire of tool-making techniques at a very early time," said Villa. "This innovation is a clear

example of a tendency to develop new functional ideas and techniques widely viewed as symptomatic of advanced, or modern, behavior."

A paper on the subject was published in the Oct. 29 issue of *Science*. Other study co-authors included Vincent Mourre of the French National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research in France and Christopher Henshilwood of the University of Bergen in Norway and director of the Blombos Cave excavation. The research was funded by the Wenner Gren Foundation of New York.

"Using the pressure flaking technique required strong hands and allowed toolmakers to exert a high degree of control on the final shape and thinness that cannot be achieved by percussion," Villa said. "This control helped to produce narrower and sharper tool tips." The bifacial points, known as Still Bay points, likely were spearheads, she said.

The authors speculated that the pressure flaking technique may have been invented in Africa and used sporadically before its later, widespread adoption in Europe, Australia and North America. North American archaeologists have shown that Paleoindians used the pressure flaking technique to fashion stone points likely used to hunt a menagerie of now-extinct mammals like mammoths, mastodons and ancient horses.

With the exception of obsidian, jasper and some high-quality flint, few stone materials can be pressure flaked without first heating them, Villa said. While there is evidence of silcrete heating some 164,000 years ago at the Pinnacle Point site in South Africa, the Blombos Cave artifacts are the first clear evidence of the skillful pressure flaking technique being used to carefully shape, refine and retouch tools, said Villa.

There are several ways to confirm whether silcrete has been heat-treated, Villa said. Archaeologists at Pinnacle Point used two common methods called thermoluminescence and archaeomagnetism that require the destruction of stone tool samples, as well as a non-destructive technique known as maximum gloss analysis.

Villa, Mourre and Henshilwood used a visual method for the Blombos Cave artifact analysis based on the contrast between heated and unheated tool surfaces observed microscopically at low magnification. While the removal of flakes from unheated silcrete produces scar surfaces with a rough, dull texture, heat-treated silcrete scar surfaces have a smooth, glossy appearance.


The researchers analyzed 159 silcrete points and fragments, 179 other retouched pieces and more than 700 flakes from a layer in Blombos Cave linked to the so-called Still Bay industry, a Middle Stone Age tool manufacturing style that started roughly 76,000 years ago and which may have lasted until 72,000 years ago. The researchers concluded at least half of the finished points at Blombos Cave were retouched by pressure flaking.

In addition to the microscopic analysis of the tools, the team also used experimental replication to show that pressure flaking was used in the final retouching phase of the points. The shaping of both heated and non-heated tools -- known as knapping -- was done by Mourre using silcrete chunks collected by Henshilwood from outcrops roughly 20 miles from Blombos Cave.

The silcrete samples used in the replication stage of the study were heated by Henshilwood in collaboration with Kyle Brown of Arizona State University, who published a 2009 paper in *Science* on the heat-treatment of silcrete in South Africa.

The team members compared attributes of points and flakes created for the experiments by percussion and pressure with points and flakes found in Blombos Cave, finding that unheated silcrete chunks first shaped with quartzite stone hammers and further worked on with wooden hammers known as billets could not be pressure flaked.


"Pressure flaking adds to the repertoire of technological advances during the Still Bay (period) and helps define it as a time when novel ideas were rapidly introduced," wrote the authors in *Science*. "This flexible approach to technology may have conferred an advantage to the groups of *Homo sapiens* who migrated out of Africa about 60,000 years ago."







RIBBON CUTTING

Washington Rochambeau

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Park Authority Board, the Lorton Heritage Society and the Mason Neck Citizens Association cordially invite you to ribbon cutting ceremonies for a four-panel interpretive display commemorating the Washington Rochambeau armies' passage through Fairfax County and encampment at Colchester. Ceremonies will be held at **11 a.m. on Saturday, November 13, 2010 at Mason Neck West Park.** The park is located at 10418 Old Colchester Rd., in Lorton, VA. The ceremony will be followed by light refreshments. For more information please contact the Public Information Office at 703-324-8662.



 If accommodations or alternate formats are needed, please call 703-324-8563, TTY 703-803-3354. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ada.htm

NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	John Kelsey	jkelsey@cox.net 703-922-8107
Vice-Presidents	Will and Wilke Nelson	wilkenelson@gmail.com
Treasurer	C.K. Gailey	treas@nvcasv.org
Corresponding Sec.	Maggie Johnson	stillmaggie@cox.net 703-455-6902
Recording Sec.	Felicia Glapion	glapfk11@yahoo.com
Editor	Patrick O'Neill	patrickloneill@verizon.net 703-249-9593

Fairfax County Archaeologists (FCPA)

Chapter Sponsors call 703-534-3881

Elizabeth Crowell	elizabeth.crowell@fairfaxcounty.gov
Mike Johnson	michael.johnson@fairfaxcounty.gov

Other Public Archaeological Programs in N. Va.

Mount Vernon	Esther White	ewhite@mountvernon.org
Gunston Hall	Dave Shonyo	archaeology@gunstonhall.org 703-550-0441
Alexandria Museum	Pam Cressey	pamela.cressey@alexandriava.gov 703-838-4399 (information)

NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Individual (\$15) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Family (\$17) _____

New _____

Renewal _____

Return to:

NVC/Archeological Society of Virginia
2855 Annandale Rd.
Falls Church, VA 22042

Chapter members should join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia.
asv-archeology.org

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

Northern Virginia Chapter
Archeological Society of Virginia
2855 Annandale Rd.
Falls Church, VA 22042

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**Help NVC-ASV Save Postage and be GREEN!
Have the Datum Point emailed to you!**