

THE DATUM POINT

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org

July 2011

FROM THE PRESIDENT – JOHN KELSEY

After field trips and parties, we're back to a more normal schedule for the next couple of months. Our July speaker is Esther White, chief archaeologist at Mount Vernon. Esther has been a big supporter of the certification program, and I'm looking forward to learning about what's going on with Mount Vernon archaeology, which a number of Chapter members have been contributing to.

We're planning a Chapter picnic in September with the date and place yet to be determined. Stay tuned for more details.

The Colchester Archaeological Research Team (affectionately known as CART) will hold a volunteer appreciation day on Saturday, July 9th. More details will follow on this, too. If you're interested in volunteering there but haven't done so yet, this is your chance to look around, see what's already been done, and sign up. Remember that a short orientation by the CART team is required before you start digging. They can also use help in the lab and in historical research. See their update later in this issue.

Dave Thulman, another friend of the Chapter, is giving a talk on "Paleo-Indian Research in Florida: Past, Present, and Future Trends." The talk will be at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Center, Meeting Room A, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda MD 20814 on July 8th at 7 PM. This sounds like the fascinating talk that Dave gave to the Chapter a couple of years ago. He has also dug with Mike and other Chapter members at sites along the Nottoway River.

July 13th Presentation

UNDOCUMENTED PLOWZONE AND DIGITIZING TRASH: A YEAR WITH MOUNT VERNON'S ARCHAEOLOGISTS

by Esther White

Esther White is the director of archaeology at George Washington's Mount Vernon. During her two decades at the estate she has excavated everything from one of the largest whiskey distilleries in early America to the first building devoted to making fertilizer from horse manure.

Ms. White graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a BA in history and anthropology. She studied Historical Archaeology in Williamsburg, VA, receiving her MA from the College of William and Mary and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Leicester, England. She and her husband live in Alexandria, VA with their two boys, cats, and two cats.

Her talk focuses on two ongoing projects – the analysis of artifacts contained in the plowzone at the site of the proposed George Washington National Library and reanalysis and digitization of a trash midden excavated in the 1990s.



Proposed Library

UNDOCUMENTED PLOWZONE AND DIGITIZING TRASH: A YEAR WITH MOUNT VERNON'S ARCHAEOLOGISTS

By Esther C. White

During the month of July, most Virginia archaeologists are outside digging and enjoying the Commonwealth's heat and humidity. Mount Vernon's archaeologists, after several years of constant excavation, are spending this July inside "excavating" in their lab.

Construction begins this summer on the George Washington National Library after an intensive endeavor to sample plowzone and locate features associated with early 19th century artifacts recovered from the property. Historical documentation for this site has not been located, something rare at our museum, and after digging more than 400 5x5 foot squares and not finding a single cultural feature, we're working to analyze what these three clusters of artifacts might represent.



Proposed Library front

We are also re-cataloguing artifacts excavated from a large midden, associated with the mansion and kitchen that date to the earliest years of George and Martha Washington's occupation. These artifacts are the centerpiece of a new website, The Mount Vernon Midden. This website is designed to merge the archaeological site with layers of context and meaning as users move from artifacts to object based research and explore the material world of the plantation. For more information on the midden go to <http://www.mountvernonmidden.org/>.



Midden Area

Colchester Update

By the Colchester Archaeological Research Team

Last month we received a visit from Dan Hayes, our geomorphologist; he had a look at several of the prehistoric tests to lend his expertise regarding the soil deposits. We are very encouraged at his findings. There appears to be a high level of integrity with intact horizons present across the various landforms with prehistoric sites. Even without this information, the prehistoric crew already had cause for encouragement. They have been finding an amazing range of artifacts from debitage and fire-cracked rock to formal tools and pottery. Recent notable finds include a large fragment of a white quartz drill and a beautifully decorated Potomac Creek sherd.

Work at the Colchester town site has been equally productive. Excavation within Feature 36, a large,

red linear feature, raises more questions than answers. We speculate that it could be a drainage feature; everyone who has worked on the town site knows the issues with water drainage. What we can say is that there appear to be episodes of use and improvement. The profile suggests that the wide trench was excavated and filled. A smaller trench was then excavated along the trench centerline and filled with rocky deposit. We hope that post-excavation analysis will provide a chronology for these events. However, initial indications are that even the latest episode occurred during the late eighteenth century, at the presumed height of the town period. Additionally, we identified a stone masonry feature along Old Colchester Road. Although we are just starting into the feature fill, our outlook is optimistic. Already, the feature has yielded a complete iron stirrup and a colonial shoe buckle in remarkable preservation. The data from this feature should help us refine the chronology for town development.

In other news, we are bidding Sean Tennant a fond farewell. Sean has been with C.A.R.T. since day one. He is leaving us to attend the University of Virginia where he is beginning a doctoral program in Classics. We wish him the best of luck as he moves onto bigger and better things. That said, we have a feeling that we will be seeing him around...hopefully ready to update our GIS!

We have been enjoying a lot of volunteer assistance, especially from chapter members. In May, over 400 hours of time were donated to our project. This outpouring has enabled us to open up more areas for archaeological investigation, teaching us more about thousands of years of human occupation on what is now the Old Colchester Park and preserve. We continue to have volunteer opportunities Thursdays and Fridays at the prehistoric site and in the lab; historic runs Thursdays through Saturdays. Furthermore, we are working with the folks from Mount Vernon. They have reels of documents in need of transcription, including merchant records from Colchester. Eventually these data will be integral to understanding life on Mason Neck during the mid and late eighteenth century. Anyone interested in volunteering with field, lab, or transcription should contact us at CART.volunteers@gmail.com so we can coordinate. You can always follow our

progress on our blog, <http://cartarchaeology.blogspot.com/>. Thanks for the help and support!



White Clay Tobacco Pipe in situ in Feature 52



Feature 36 South Wall Profile

MEADOWCROFT ROCKSHELTER

By Diane Schug-O'Neill

This is just a quick note to announce that the Chapter has an offer extended to go on a tour of Meadowcroft Rockshelter. This archaeological site has revealed the earliest evidence of people in North America, dating back 16,000 years. Named a National Historic Landmark in 2005, the site has provided archaeologists with a rare glimpse into the lives of the first people to arrive in the New World.

The most common cultural features encountered by archaeologists at Meadowcroft Rockshelter are fire pits and large burned areas of fire floors, refuse and storage pits, concentrations of stone artifacts, ceramics and bone that suggest the presence of specialized work areas, and roasting pits. The site has yielded the largest collection of flora and fauna materials ever recovered from a location in eastern North America.

Meadowcroft is located in southwestern Pennsylvania. Visit the site online:

<http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/secondary.aspx?id=86>

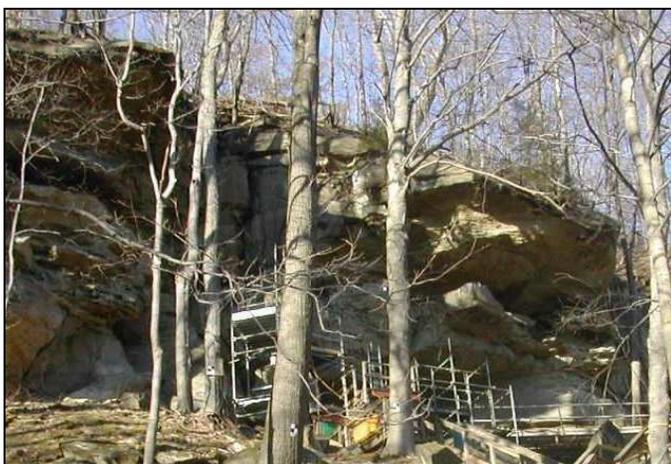
If you're interested in visiting, please let Diane Schug-O'Neill know. If there's enough interest, we may have a field trip in August. schugoneill@gmail.com.



The Visitor Center envelops part of the mountain



The rock shelter is exposed inside



The shelter was under several high bluff overhangs



The stratigraphy is labeled for interpretation

CALL FOR ASV PAPERS



2011 Student Paper Competition

The Archeological Society of Virginia (ASV) provides cash prizes to the best student papers presented at the Annual ASV Meetings. This year's conference will be held October 13-16 at the Frontier Museum in Staunton, Virginia. The competition is open to undergraduate students and graduate students. Three official award categories exist, recognizing student research contributions in Prehistoric Archeology (The McCary Award), Historical Archeology (The Williams Award), and Collections-Based Research (The Virginia Museum of Natural History Award). Two judges will evaluate the presentations. Students need not specify the award category in which they are interested.

Awards of \$100.00 are provided to contest winners, once their winning paper is submitted to the ASV's Quarterly Bulletin. In addition, award recipients will receive a free one-year membership in the Archeological Society of Virginia.

Requirements:

- 31 August 2011: Presentation abstract is due to the ASV program chair, Michael B. Barber – mike.barber@dhr.virginia.gov
- You must notify Laura Galke, student affairs committee chair, via email [Galke@gwffoundation.org] of your intent to participate by August 31, 2011.
- Please include a copy of your abstract in this email.
- Competition participants must register for the ASV annual meetings and be members of the ASV.

For details about this year's annual meetings online:

<http://asv-archeology.org/News/NewsAM.html>



Students should prepare a written version of their presentation, to be submitted by October 1. This written paper should be provided to Laura Galke, Student Affairs Committee chair. An email to Laura Galke (Galke@gwffoundation.org) with the paper (draft version is acceptable) as an attachment is encouraged. Papers sent via the postal service should arrive to Ms. Galke, 268 King's Highway, Fredericksburg, Virginia 22405, by September 23, 2011.

- Participants should prepare an oral presentation to present at the Annual Meeting in October. The presentation should be no more than 20 minutes in length and visual accompaniment in the form of a PowerPoint presentation is encouraged. Presentations will be evaluated based upon content, effectiveness of presentation, professionalism, contribution to the field, and enthusiasm.

- Participants are responsible for attending the ASV Annual Meetings in October and for presenting their paper at their assigned time.

Please watch for upcoming announcements in the ASV newsletter and website for additional details. If you have any questions regarding the contest, please contact

Laura Galke, Student Affairs Committee Chair,

Galke@gwffoundation.org Phone: 540-370-0732 ext. 26.





ASV CALL FOR PAPERS

ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

71st Annual Meeting

October 13 - 16, 2011

Frontier Museum, Staunton, Virginia

Sleep Inn, Staunton

Are you looking for an avenue to share your knowledge of Virginia archaeology and history? The Archeological Society of Virginia is calling for archaeological papers for their 2011 Annual Meeting. Members of the ASV and others are encouraged to participate.

- Formal presentations - 20 minutes.
- Student papers - 20 minutes (contact Laura Galke at Galke@gwffoundation.org).
- Chapter presentations - 10 minutes.
- Poster sessions are permitted.
- Handouts are encouraged.

Deadline for abstract submission is August 31, 2011. Please complete the form below.

NAME _____

COMPANY/AFFILIATION _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PAPER TITLE _____

E-mail _____ ASV Member _____ COVA member _____

Audio-Visual needs: slide projector _____ computer projector _____ overhead projector _____

Please mail ASV member abstract and biographical information to:

Michael B. Barber, State Archaeologist
Western Regional Preservation Office
962 Kime Lane, Salem, Virginia 24153
mike.barber@dhr.virginia.gov
540 387-5398

Dr. David Clark at Catholic University offered this class in Spring 2011



Forensic Anthropology 204: Applied Field Project



Sat. April 9, 2011 (8:30am-4:00pm)

After months of intensive classroom work and laboratory analysis students will take to the field and conduct a mock (staged) forensic site recovery of “unknown” skeletal remains.

THE CASE: Fictional Campus Police Report

On April 1, 2011 at 12:72 am, Catholic University police received an anonymous phone call reporting the discovery of bone remains on the North Side of Campus between the old red building (Marist Hall) and the woods. Due to some impaired speech problems and confusion regarding location of the bones, the individual hung-up during initial questioning by campus police. Among other things, officers were wondering how individuals “tripped over bones” roaming campus in the middle of the night. However, not taking the report lightly, campus police immediately called Dr. D.T. Clark, archaeologist/bone specialist (aka “The Bone Man”) at the Archaeology Lab, Department of Anthropology in the basement of Marist Hall. Dr. Clark agreed to conduct a standard, daylight skirmish-line survey at his earliest convenience on the north side of campus and report any findings.

The Project

Students will report to the front of Marist Hall at 8:30 am (April, 9 2011) wearing appropriate clothing (hat, long pants/shirt, hard-soled shoes) for the survey and possible excavation recovery of any skeleton remains. Bring sufficient food/water for an all-day project.

Dr. Clark will provide all necessary equipment for any possible recovery. Student should bring a camera. As discussed in class, students will write-up a detailed report of their activities throughout the day. If remains are discovered, students will be instructed on a forensic scene set-up and recovery. You are expected to use class information to interpret any possible crime scene with bone remains in the field (i.e. sexing, aging, cause of death, era/time of death, associated artifacts). Details will be provided in the field and in the lab.

Students will prepare a final report of their findings using the following format:

- Title
- Table of Contents with page numbers
- Introduction (briefly what the report is about)
- Discussion of findings by topic (student decide on topic sequence)
- Photos (**within text**)
- Summary of findings (your interpretations with supporting rationale)



NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

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703-534-3881

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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: _____

[] Please send *Datum Point* via e-mail

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 2nd Wed. 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

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