

THE DATUM POINT

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org

June 2011

FROM THE PRESIDENT – JOHN KELSEY

The Chapter gave **Mike Johnson** a rousing send-off last month at Anthony's Restaurant. See more inside!

Our next meeting will be on June 8th, when **Kathleen Lowe** of the Colchester Archaeological Research Team will be discussing her team's work on the prehistoric portion of that site. As a timely addendum to the program, **Liz Crowell** has asked for a few minutes to discuss the future of Colchester and the County archaeology program, in light of Mike's retirement. This is of interest to all of us.

Our one business item at the meeting is to vote on **Paul Inashima's** request for funding from the Rubis-Fuller Research Fund. Paul's proposal was in last month's Datum Point, and I include it again at the end of this edition.

I was very gratified that two of you have expressed a willingness to help with different aspects of the Chapter's work, and I hope that others will also consider doing so. As I noted in last month's *Datum Point*, we can use help especially in the areas of program scheduling and hospitality. If you are interested in becoming a Chapter officer next year, please let me know that too.

Finally, **Ann Wood** notes that she and **CD Cox** recently saw the movie *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* and highly recommend it. The movie features a unique, 3D look at Paleolithic French cave art. It's been out for several weeks, and will probably be moving on soon. Ann and CD saw it at the Rave Motion Pictures Fairfax Corner 14. It's already on a limited schedule, but the theater staff said that it will be showing there at least one more week – through June 9th. Thanks, Ann, for the tip.

Datum Point

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June 8th's Presentation

PREHISTORIC INVESTIGATIONS AT OLD COLCHESTER PARK & PRESERVE

by
Kathleen Lowe
Fairfax County Archeology



Camp a Colchester by Rochambeau

Kathleen has eight years archaeological experience and has supervised excavations at the highest levels of investigation throughout the United States. Her research interests focus on prehistoric settlement patterns, trade and material culture, and the application of technology for archaeological analysis and interpretation.

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MIKE JOHNSON'S RETIREMENT PARTY

By John Kelsey

We had about 70 folks come – I say “about” because keeping track of numbers was an interesting challenge. The important thing is that Mike’s service with Fairfax County was appropriately celebrated, and we had a chance to thank him for his friendship and support to the Chapter over the years.



Mike’s wife (left) and daughter were there. Yes, he did have a family (aside from us!)



Mike’s son is to his left (our right), and his wife and grand-daughter.

Here’s what Mike had to say, for those of you who don’t get his emails:

“First and foremost, thanks to everyone for the incredible retirement party on Wednesday evening and the gifts, all of which were overwhelming. Thanks also to all those who participated indirectly and who have worked with me and been friends

over the years. The schedule below merely reflects a month and a half break so I can get my act together as an actively retired archeologist. That includes trying to build a lab and office at home; getting some medical stuff out of the way, working on the dissertation, planning future research, etc.”

Thanks also to those who helped put on the dinner, including especially **Martha Williams, Ann Wood, Patrick O’Neill, Diane Schug-O’Neill, and CK Gailey**. As always, thanks to **Bill McGovern** for his excellent camera work.



There was quite a crowd!



The room was packed!



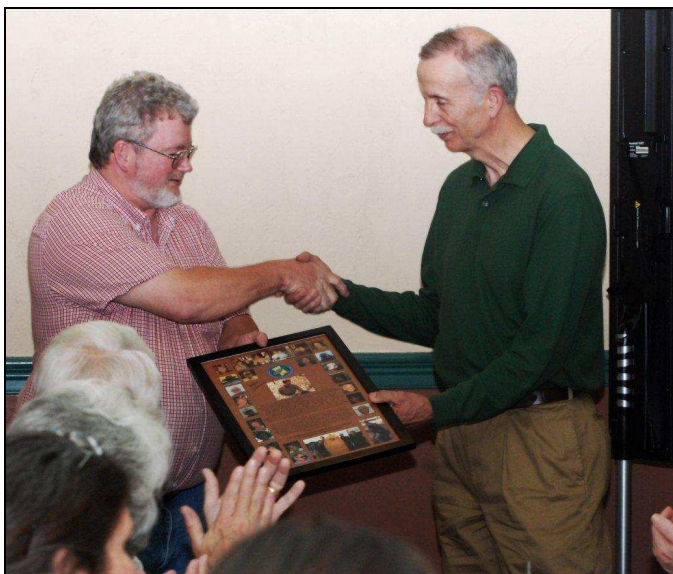
Patrick O’Neill read stories from fans!

The chapter gave Mike a beautiful plaque which read:

We, the members of the Northern Virginia Chapter, salute your many accomplishments as County Archaeologist. You have been the prime force behind field archaeology in the county, and our over 3500 registered sites are eloquent testimony to your drive and commitment. Thanks to your foresight and initiative, the ASV Certification Program got off the ground and prospered. You helped to put Virginia paleo-history on the map through your work at Cactus Hill and other sites along the Nottoway River. Because of your selfless efforts, extraordinary skill, and commitment to public archaeology, Northern Virginia has the most active volunteer program in the state.

On a much more personal note, you have been a great friend and mentor to so many of us. You unveiled the mysteries of prehistory. Who would have guessed how much fun it is to find and count rocks? Without you, some of us might have mistaken the Younger Dryas for a small, rock-inhabiting, furry rodent. Fortunately, we know that "PALEO 1" won't be driving away for good, and we look forward to many more good times and interesting adventures with you. Thanks for the memories.

Fair winds and following seas from your friends



Hal Fuller gave Mike one of Pat's paintings based on Mike in the field!



Ann Wood made the most amazing book with photos of our chapter and Mike over the years! It was something to behold!



Most of those present signed the book!

Diane Schug-O'Neill has set up a nice Flickr site with photos of the event! Just go to this web address!

http://www.flickr.com/photos/nvc_asv/sets/72157626864847476/

IN PURSUIT OF TERRESTRIAL ARTHROPODS

By Richard Eilers

Fourteen certification candidates gathered at the Lee Center for a fascinating Zooarcheology and Ethnobotany workshop led by Dr David Clark of Datum Point

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Catholic University and the Loudon Campus of Northern Virginia Community College. With strong emphasis on the forensics and their application in archeology, Dr Clark integrated his presentations with hands on exercises and examples from his current research.

For those of us who excavated at Galt, several of his examples shed light on lab techniques and discriminants used to identify floral remains on prismatic blades and why all that calcium carbonate is present. Dr Clark wished the candidates well in their efforts towards certification and hopes to see NVC members enrolled in his archeology programs at NVCC in the Fall and beyond. He indicated that audit spaces in his classes would likely be available for "mature" (as defined in the NVCC catalog) members.

Many thanks to Anne Wood for her Herculean efforts in coordinating this, previous and future field classes.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CERTIFICATION PUBLIC SERVICE HOURS

By Richard Eilers

Dave Whitmire and I will be coordinating with the Friends of Fairfax Archeology on manning a joint booth at *Celebrate Fairfax* being held the weekend of June 10th at the Government Center. This is a last minute target of opportunity, so details will be provided by email. Our priority for booth manning will be those requiring public service hours for certification, then those wishing to participate. Our thanks to Liz for contacting FOFA and initiating this valuable opportunity in our back yard. Please forward your name and desired dates and times to me at eilersrl1@aol.com.

WESTBROOK UPDATE

By Mike Johnson

About 40% of the preliminary lab sorts from block D, where we got the interesting net-marked, sandstone tempered, Culpeper pottery concentration, including big sherds, are done. Off the top of my head, I recall seeing no more than one of the 40 or so samples having pottery recovered in

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the field. However, all but maybe 3 of the samples had one or more potsherds in the lab sorts. These were not pottery crumbs either.



That means that we recovered some 40 or 50 more potsherds than we recognized in the field. The implications are that, contrary to the initial evaluation, we may find most of the pot in the block we excavated. Since, these 40 or so STP samples were in the area in which we did not recognize any pottery in the field, who knows how many will be found in the lab sort for those areas where we field recovered large sherds?

The results are more astonishing and scary, because we knew we were in a pottery block and were looking specifically for the pottery. It appears not to matter who is going through the field screens or the soil conditions. The pottery is being missed.

Interestingly, we also got 20 pieces of fire cracked rock from one, 1-foot square sample along the west edge. I have not process the samples from around that one yet, so I do not know if it is the sign of a definable hearth.

Having a chance to catch up on the lab washing and sorting should help direct what we do if and when we can get back out to the site. Since we are auditing a standard Phase II methodology, we need to address the all-important question of vertical integrity: do we have intrusive features or recognizable platform hearths? That would be the final part of the audit – the rest will be data recovery.

We know the answer to the vertical integrity question from the work supervised by Nancy Anthony at Lorton Town Center (prehistoric) and with Berno Tops at Fanny Wilson (historic). The work supervised and assisted by Berno at Turtle Hill and Land Bay A also proved beyond a doubt that upland sites, plowed or not plowed, have intrusive features. Paul Inashima's super high quality work at the David site (also assisted by Berno), which was also on an upland terrace, is the latest example. They prove beyond any doubt that all one has to do is use an appropriate sample size to find the features. Westbrook is merely the first pure audit of the method, where that was the purpose.

There will be no field or lab work involving me for the next two weeks or the first week in July. If we get access to Westbrook, I will send out a schedule as soon as possible. Lab work on Westbrook will not start up again until Tuesday (7/19) due to the need to catch up on the wet screening and lab sorting.

APPLICATION FOR RUBIS-FULLER RESEARCH GRANT

By Wil Nelson

Paul Inashima has requested a \$900 grant from the Chapter's Rubis-Fuller Research Fund. The officers have reviewed the grant request and unanimously recommend its approval to the Chapter. We will vote on Paul's request at the June 8th Chapter meeting. Here is his proposal:

Rubis-Fuller Research Fund Research Proposal

Applicant: Paul Y. Inashima

Research Associate:
Dr. Linda Scott Cummings
PaleoResearch Institute
2675 Youngfield Street
Golden, CO 80401

A total of \$900 is requested to support the analysis of two soil samples from Lexington Plantation (44FX736) for historic landscape pollen.

Studies of the Mason-era cultural landscapes at Gunston Hall and Lexington have been hampered by the lack of historical records which describe or depict the contemporary setting. At George Mason IV's Gunston Hall, archeological research is limited by the extensive sequence of changes to the landscape which occurred after his death in 1792. At George Mason V's Lexington, on the other hand, few changes occurred to the grounds after his demise in 1796. Hence, the potential for the recovery and identification of historic pollen at Lexington is heightened.

In conjunction with the archeological discovery of planting features, pollen data would contribute significantly to reconstructing the appearance of the cultural landscape at Lexington and to informing on the landscape philosophy of the Masons.

The proposed research would (1) assess the feasibility of recovering historic pollen within the Lexington grounds and (2) attempt to preliminarily define the nature of the planting composition in the terraced garden and orchard areas. Successful identification of historic pollen profiles would, in turn, increase the possibility of obtaining additional funding from other sources for further archeological and pollen investigations

Colchester Archaeology Update

By: The Colchester Archaeological Research Team

May brought warmer temperatures and ever-thickening vegetation, especially the kind that makes you itch, to the Old Colchester Park and Preserve. Not only is the landscape changing, so is the composition of our team. After a brief stint in a Master's program at Ball State, Stefan Woehlke was accepted into a doctoral program at the University of Maryland. Ball State's loss is our gain as Stefan is returning to work with C.A.R.T. Another May addition is Allison Harmon, an intern from the Public History program at Stevenson University in Baltimore. We are seeing departures as well. George Mason University interns Justin Herbst and Mike Burmeister completed their time with us.

The prehistoric crew has been excavating test units around the core of the large Late Woodland site.

Testing is recovering increased artifact counts. But, equally interesting, the site is yielding more and varied diagnostic artifacts. In May, we recovered a fishtail point, evidence of transitional Archaic/Woodland occupation; the tentative identification of a point base as a possible Early Archaic Palmer is very exciting. Interesting soils accompany the interesting artifacts and Dan Hayes, the geomorphologist, will be paying a visit shortly. To get the most up to date information about the prehistoric site, be sure to catch Kathleen Lowe's presentation to the chapter at the June 8th meeting.

The historic folks have been focusing primarily on the town site and the word of the month is, "Features!" One test unit found the edge of a very red, linear feature. Many test units later and the thing keeps going. Initial tests into the feature date it to the colonial period. So far, interpretation has been elusive with opinions varying from a drainage feature (and if our experience with the water table is any indication of the historic trends they would have needed it) to a lot boundary feature. Additionally, testing along the road found a huge log or buried tree fall. After exhaustive sawing, it removal exposed a stone masonry feature. We are working on an adjacent test unit to enable characterization.

In sad news, Mary Edith Roysdon passed away recently. She was an ardent supporter of Fairfax County cultural resources, in particular archaeology in her front yard in Colchester. So much so, that when she had to move she sold her house to the Park Authority. We know it as our field house and archaeological lab and office facilities. Her home has become ours and we are grateful to be using it in a way she would have enjoyed.

The ASV membership remains our greatest source for volunteers. We have volunteer excavation opportunities Thursdays and Fridays at the prehistoric site and Thursdays through Saturdays on the historic side. We are also ramping up our lab work so those who like the artifacts but prefer to stay away from the heat and wildlife should drop a line. Anyone who has not already been out need only attend a brief orientation. These can be conducted on site, Fridays and Saturdays. To schedule an orientation or, for the oriented to let us

know you would like to lend a hand, send an email to us at CART.volunteers@gmail.com so we can put you on the calendar. You can always follow our progress on our blog, <http://cartarchaeology.blogspot.com/>. Thanks for the help and support!



Volunteer Bill Cole Helps on Prehistoric Site



Colonial Wine Bottle Break in Feature 36

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Alexandria Museum	Pam Cressey	pamela.cressey@alexandriava.gov 703-838-4399 (information)

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Individual (\$15) _____

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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!!!!

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