

# THE DATUM POINT

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

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

November 2012

## FROM THE PRESIDENT – JOHN KELSEY

The Archaeological Society of Virginia held its annual meeting on October 12-14 at the Community Meeting Center in Wytheville, sponsored by the Wolf Hills Chapter. Despite the distance, the Northern Virginia Chapter was well represented – see photos below from the banquet. The program was a bit shorter than in past years, but the quality of the presentations was among the best I've seen at these meetings. Professor Cliff Boyd from Radford University gave an excellent banquet talk about the Civil War history of Saltville. The field trip to Saltville on Saturday was a highlight. Saltville has a fascinating natural history, and artifacts suggesting an “earlier than Clovis” occupation have been found in conjunction with bones from late Pleistocene megafauna.

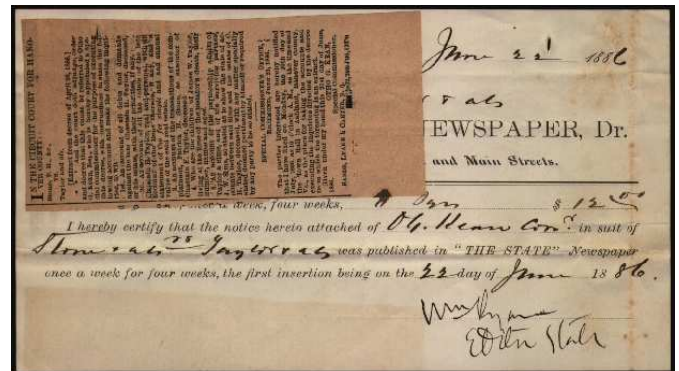
One of the highlights of the annual meeting is the recognition of new certification graduates. This year there were two – both from the Northern Virginia Chapter! Congratulations, **Rich Eilers** and **Rebecca Siegal**.

Carole Nash conducted the annual general membership meeting. There was spirited discussion of the proposed new ASV bylaws that had been emailed to membership beforehand, which Carole guided very skillfully. Mike Barber, the state archaeologist, summarized the situation well when he said that the new bylaws are a significant modernization and improvement but don't preclude further changes later that may address the concerns that some members had. The new bylaws were voted on by written ballot and were adopted by a sizeable margin.

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## November 14<sup>th</sup> presentation

### Virginia's Archivist Road Show



Sarah Nerney and her colleague Sandy from the Library of Virginia will present the LVA Archivist Road Show to the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Archeological Society of Virginia on Nov 14th. They are planning on having about an hour's worth of information on Virginia's chancery causes and Virginia maps.

The archivists offered numerous chancery suits as examples, such as a Dinwiddie County case that involved the descendants of a free African American doctor who also owned slaves, Tazewell County suits that referenced conflicts between the first settlers of Tazewell County and Native Americans, post-Civil War-era Scott County suits that brought to light lingering bitterness between pro-Union and anti-Confederacy residents, and Middlesex County suits that showed slaves suing for their freedom. The archivists showed attendees how they could access their locality's chancery causes through the Chancery Records Index.

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NVC at the Annual Meeting



More NVC at the Annual Meeting

This meeting was Dan Kegley's swan song as ASV president. Elizabeth Moore will be the ASV president for 2013-2014. Dan has done a great job, and the Board voted to express its appreciation for his leadership on behalf of the membership.

Next year's meeting will be at the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, October 24-27. It should be a great time, and I hope that many of you will be able to come.

Turning to things coming up sooner, Mike Johnson is leading another intrepid crew to the Gault site near Georgetown, Texas during the week of October 27 – November 3. There's some talk of testing other areas on the site, but we'll find out what they want us to do when we get there.

Finally, don't forget the Chapter Christmas party *cum* short meeting to elect officers for next year. It will be on December 12<sup>th</sup> (our normal meeting night.) It's a potluck affair, and I'll provide more information as we get closer to the event.

### ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY AWARDS

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, William D. Euille, Mayor of Alexandria, on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, announced the Alexandria Archaeological Commission's Ben Brenman Archaeology Awards for 2012:

- Outstanding Community Research – Lee-Fendall House Museum and Gardens
- Outstanding Historian – William F. Smith
- Outstanding Professional Archaeologist – Michael Johnson

The citation for our own Mike Johnson reads as follows:

*WHEREAS, a 2012 Brenman Award for Outstanding Professional Archaeologist is presented to Michael Johnson, who was the Fairfax County Archaeologist for 32 years and has been a longtime supporter of archaeology in Alexandria. Mike has expanded the knowledge of Northern Virginia's past by finding and studying thousands of archaeological sites. He has been a continual and enthusiastic supporter of archaeology in Alexandria through American Indian artifact identification, including the oldest object found to date – a 13,000 year old Clovis spear point, excavated at Freedmen's Cemetery.*

Congratulations, Mike!

### FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY BOND ISSUE

For those of you who are citizens of Fairfax County, you will have a chance to vote on the Parks and Park Facilities Bond issue this election day – November 6<sup>th</sup>. This is a \$75 million bond issue, and

Dr. Crowell tells me that \$1 million of that has been earmarked for archaeology and cultural resources.

Some background: Bonds for parks have been issued generally every four years in the past. These bonds provide funding for capital improvement or for support to the master planning process. Archaeology may be funded in either context. The renovation of Historic Huntley is an example of a capital improvement project that also required archaeology. Archaeological surveys at Mount Air and Oak Marr golf course are examples of support to master planning. Funding for projects such as these may be used for contract archaeology or to defray staff expenses (in conjunction with volunteers.) While emerging priorities may sometimes divert funding from specific projects, the overall funding authority (in this case, \$1 million) remains committed to support archaeology and cultural resources.

Your ballot will have a general description of the Parks and Park Facilities bonds and will not specifically mention cultural resources or archaeology. The Fairfax County website states the following concerning the relevant portion of the bond issue:

***LAND ACQUISITION AND STEWARDSHIP  
\$12,915,000***

*The land acquisition program targets sites that meet established criteria adopted by the Park Authority Board and address areas of high deficiency, adjacency to existing parkland in order to expand recreational opportunities, as well as land which protects significant natural and cultural resources. This bond provides funding countywide for the purchase of parkland as approved by the Park Authority Board in the Land Acquisition Work Plan.*

*Stewardship includes capital projects that promote the protection, enhancement, interpretation and education of natural and cultural park resources. At Colvin Run Mill, restoration of the miller's house to its period of significance is planned. Funding is also provided to renovate the tenant house at Historic Huntley, to provide wayfinding signage at Historic Centreville and Sully Woodlands, and to build a shelter at Hidden Pond Nature Center. An*

*environmental education center is also planned in Sully Woodlands.*

**THUNDERBIRD SYMPOSIUM**

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, at the Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. of Gainesville, Virginia, a small symposium was held by Thunderbird Archeology. Mainly designed to discuss the findings at the Accotink Site, where amazing colonoware was recovered and described below, the talks also included other archaeological projects in the area.

The lead-in discussion written by Boyd Sipes discussed the following. Thunderbird Archeology, a division of Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. of Gainesville, Virginia recently excavated a circa 1720 to 1769 outlying farm quarter site in Fairfax County, Virginia. Archival research revealed that the site was associated with a tobacco plantation belonging to Dennis McCarty and, subsequently to Abraham Barnes. Barnes may have initially lived on the plantation as an overseer for Dennis McCarty before marrying McCarty's wealthy widow Sarah circa 1745.

Identified as the Accotink Quarter in period deeds, site 44FX0223 included an overseer's house and a dwelling for enslaved laborers. The overseer during the late period of the occupation was identified as John Marvill from Colchester store accounts where his purchases of various goods for himself and the quarter are documented. The data recovery investigations at site 44FX0223 resulted in the recovery of one of the largest and best preserved assemblages of colonoware pottery sherds found in Virginia. **The largest colonoware assemblage found to date in Virginia was recovered at the associated Barnes/Owsley Site in the 1990s.**

The speakers at the symposium were as follows:

History and Archeology of the Accotink Quarter Site (44FX0223) by Boyd Sipe, WSSI

Analysis of the Colonoware Assemblage from Site 44FX0223 by Beth Johnson, WSSI

Faunal Analysis from Site 44FX0223 by Kevin Gibbons, WSSI

Glass Trade Beads Recovered at Site 44FX0223 by Laurie Burgess, Smithsonian Institution Interpretation of the Accotink Quarter Site (44FX0223) by Boyd Sipe, WSSI

In Comparison, Two Sites on the Old Colchester Park and Preserve by Chris Sperling, FCPA

Archaeology at Mount Air: Providing Some Context by Liz Crowell; FCPA

Cultural Variation in Akan Pottery Villages by Tara Tetrault, DCHPO

History and Archeology –A War of 1812 Action in Fairfax County by Patrick O’Neill

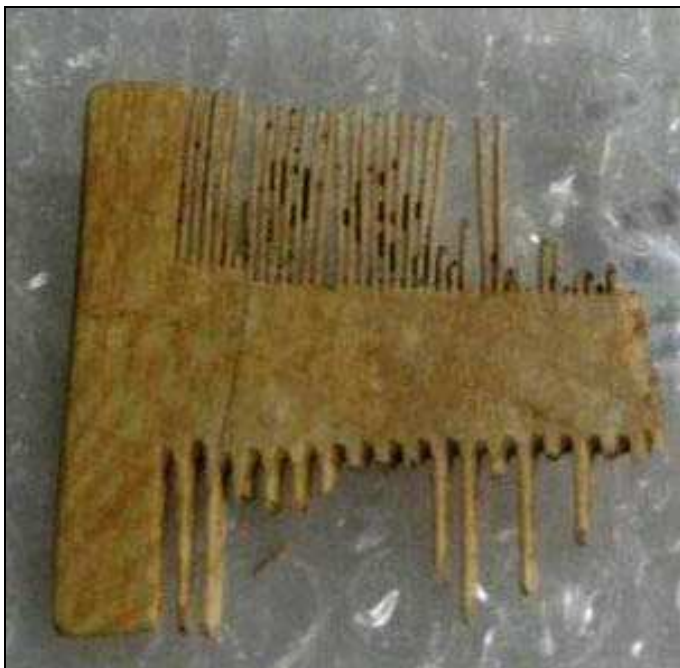
The Belle Pre Bottle Company (Site 44AX0215), City of Alexandria, Virginia by John Mullen, WSSI

An Ordinary on the Potomac Path at Broad Run, Data Recovery at an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Rural Tavern in Loudoun County by Andrés Garzon-Oechsle, WSSI

The following photographs are of the artifacts recovered from the Accotink Quarter Site by Jackie Cuyler and Patrick O’Neill



Buttons



Bone comb

## UP-COMING EVENTS



- “*Who Owns the Past: Competing Claims for Antiquities from the Holy Land,*” AIA Circuit Lecture on Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM at the Elliott School, 1957 E. St., NW, Room 113, the George Washington University.

- “*Refugees from Slavery: Contrabands in Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia,*” a program co-sponsored by the National Park Service and the Office of Historic Alexandria, will be presented on November 8<sup>th</sup> at the Alexandria Black History Museum from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM.



- Fairfax County’s 8<sup>th</sup> Annual History Conference will be held on Saturday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at the Stacy Sherwood Conference Center in Fairfax, VA.

- The 2012 Jamestown Conference will be held on Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup> in the Lane Auditorium at the Bruton Hills complex in Williamsburg from 9AM to 4:30 PM. For more information, see <http://www.apva.org/jr.html>.

- “*Crazy Bet: Elizabeth Van Lew.*” Filmmaker Bert Morgan will present his research on Elizabeth Van Lew, who nursed Union prisoners at Richmond’s Libby Prison and was part of the network of Union spies in the Confederate capitol, November 17<sup>th</sup> at 2 PM at the Civil War Interpretive Center at Historic Blenheim.

- “The Nature of Philistine Settlement in Early Iron Age Israel,” a lecture by Dr. Linda Meiberg of the University of Pennsylvania, at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, 6125 Montrose Rd, Rockville,



MD on November 29<sup>th</sup> at 8 PM. For more information, see [www.jccgw.org/baf](http://www.jccgw.org/baf).

- “*Secrets of Orkney’s Stone-Age Temple: Ritual and Religion Before Stonehenge*,” an evening seminar at the S. Dillon Ripley Center, 1100 Jefferson Drive, SW, Washington DC, December 5<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM.

## **STONE TOOLS HINT AT THE ORIGINS OF THE MODERN HUMAN MIND**

Bill Cole submitted this article to review!

<http://arstechnica.com/science/2012/11/stone-tools-hint-at-the-origins-of-the-modern-human-mind/>



Despite intense scientific inquiry, there are still major gaps in our knowledge about early human life. One major question that remains unanswered: when humans were first capable of complex cognition? In other words, when did early humans develop sophisticated cognitive abilities, such as prioritization and cultural transmission, that we would recognize today?

A new study in *Nature* addresses this; after six years of excavation, archaeologists have unearthed technologically-advanced stone tools that were created about 71,000 years ago. This finding enhances our knowledge about the history of human tool use, suggesting that sophisticated cognitive

abilities were present relatively early in human history. It also raises the possibility that tools may have given early humans an advantage as they ventured out of Africa.

The ancient tools, called microliths, were found at a site called Pinnacle Point in South Africa. Microliths are small stone tools—less than 50mm in length—that are heat-treated and trimmed into specific shapes. The “bladelets” found at Pinnacle Point closely resemble tools from other sites that were used as the points of arrows and other compound projectile weapons. However, optical dating techniques suggest the Pinnacle Point tools are 6,000 to 10,000 years older than those found at other sites. So humans may have created and used bows and arrows earlier than previously thought.

Not only is this finding interesting in terms of weaponry, but the complex process required to make microliths suggests these early humans had surprisingly modern cognitive abilities. Early humans would have needed to identify and collect the mineral needed for the blade and the wood needed for the heat source, prepare the blades, create and maintain the controlled fire to heat-treat them, reshape the heated blades into microliths, carve wood or bone into shafts, and mount the microlith on the shaft to form a compound tool. Furthermore, the researchers believe microlithic technology persisted at Pinnacle Point for at least 11,000 years, indicating that this intricate process must have been passed down across multiple generations. Following—and passing along—this “recipe” implies microlith-makers living more than 70,000 years ago were capable of foresight, prioritization of tasks, and cultural transmission. All of those are certainly sophisticated cognitive capabilities.

Other studies have used symbolic representation, such as body ornaments and carved decorations, as a proxy for the modern human mind. These types of objects generally appear in the archaeological record between 100,000 and 60,000 years ago. However, critics have argued the thoughts motivating the creation and use of these objects is

unclear, and therefore they are not a good proxy for advanced cognition. The authors of the *Nature* study disagree, saying that complex ideas and transmission are a better way to measure what makes a human mind “modern.” Interestingly, the age of the Pinnacle Point microliths—71,000 years—falls squarely in the range of when scientists believe symbolic representation first appeared on the scene.

The researchers assert the skill associated with making microliths would have been hugely beneficial to early humans. Projectile weapons such as bows and arrows would allow them to kill with greater accuracy and from longer distances. Microlithic technology may have given early modern humans an advantage over both prey and Neanderthals, assisting their migration from Africa and perhaps enabling their eventual spread across the globe.

### **VIKING OUTPOST IN CANADA**

Go to this link to read a National Geographic article about a cool Viking outpost they have found in Canada!

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/10/121019-viking-outpost-second-new-canada-science-sutherland/>



For the past 50 years—since the discovery of a thousand-year-old Viking way station in Newfoundland—archaeologists and amateur historians have combed North America's east coast searching for traces of Viking visitors.

It has been a long, fruitless quest, littered with bizarre claims and embarrassing failures. But at a conference in Canada earlier this month, archaeologist Patricia Sutherland announced new evidence that points strongly to the discovery of the second Viking outpost ever discovered in the Americas.

While digging in the ruins of a centuries-old building on Baffin Island (map), far above the Arctic Circle, a team led by Sutherland, adjunct professor of archaeology at Memorial University in Newfoundland and a research fellow at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, found some very intriguing whetstones. Wear grooves in the blade-sharpening tools bear traces of copper alloys such as bronze—materials known to have been made by Viking metal smiths but unknown among the Arctic's native inhabitants.

Taken together with her earlier discoveries, Sutherland's new findings further strengthen the case for a Viking camp on Baffin Island. "While her evidence was compelling before, I find it convincing now," said James Tuck, professor emeritus of archaeology, also at Memorial University.

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Alexandria Museum	Pam Cressey	<a href="mailto:pamela.cressey@alexandriava.gov">pamela.cressey@alexandriava.gov</a> 703-838-4399 (information)

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Isabella Pease, Treasurer, NVC/ASV  
8304 Graceway Drive  
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**Chapter members should join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia at [asv-archeology.org](http://asv-archeology.org)**

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed. of each month at the James Lee Center, 2855-A Annandale Road, Falls Church, VA.

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!**

### *THE DATUM POINT*

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Archeological Society of Virginia  
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