



THE DATUM POINT

February 2024

Newsletter of the
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER (NVC) OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org



FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

PATRICK O'NEILL

It is cold, we had snow, but it will be spring so very soon!

I met Bob Jolley from DHR at the Everhart Mill in northwestern Loudoun County. Bill and Ginger McGovern from our chapter and Susan Ferster and Tony McGraw from the Banshee Reeks Chapter also attended. We walked much of the mill site, dating back to the 1760s, and decided in principle that the NVC and BRC would like to work with the landowner in formally recording the mill site and limited archaeological excavations. In the coming weeks, I will write up a research plan and submit it to the ASV Research Committee. Stay tuned.

Come this Weds to see and hear our own Datum Point editor give us a wonderful presentation on his field school, in-part funded by the NVC!!!

A friendly reminder. Please send in your 2024 dues if you have not done so yet.



**Chapter meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday,
February 14, at Richard Byrd
Library, 7250 Commerce St, Springfield,
VA.**

“Reflections on the Julian Williams and Eleanor Mullen Field School Scholarship at Historic Jamestown”

Presented by Kurt Fredrickson

Datum Point Editor, Cultural & Heritage
Resource Management M.A. Candidate at the
University of Maryland, and Archeological
Technician Certification student



**The 2023 Historic Jamestown field school students
and staff in the Governor's Well excavation unit.**

Reflections on the Julian Williams and Eleanor Mullen Field School Scholarship at Historic Jamestown

The humble trowel is synonymous with archaeology and has proven itself an indispensable tool for peeling back the layers of time with unmatched precision. An essential companion, no dirt surgeon would go to the field without. A trusted tool for teasing out features, artifacts, and remnants of the past. But what if there was a better way? A way that did not involve digging. For those of us who have a love affair with moving dirt in both large and small quantities this might seem sacrilegious, but not to worry. There will always be time for digging. While attending the Historic Jamestown Field School this past summer I saw firsthand how modern technology has merged with the humble analog tools that will always have a place in our toolkits. Through the use of drones, 3D photography, Ground Penetrating Radar, and Geographic Information Systems, the world below the ground can be revealed without ever moving dirt. The era of the digital scalpel has arrived, and the archaeologists at Jamestown Rediscovery are leading the way.

This summer I was fortunate to spend six weeks at the Historic Jamestown field school, funded in part by a scholarship from the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Virginia, for which I am most grateful. I look forward to contributing my newfound knowledge to future projects near and far.



Kurt Fredrickson holds a lithic found during excavations near James Fort.

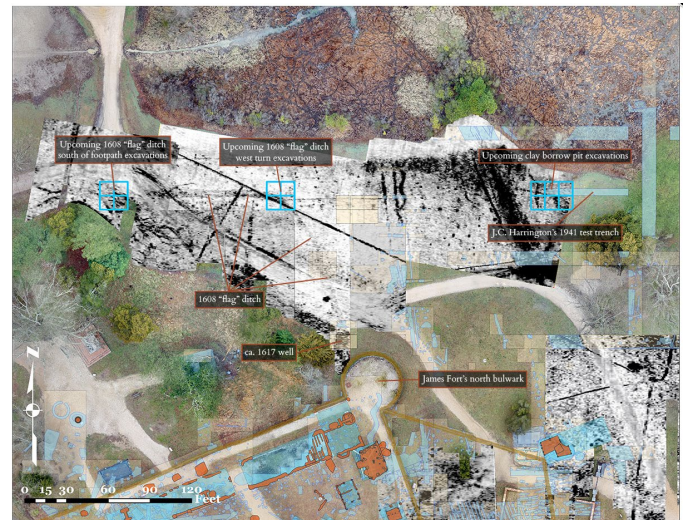
About the Field School

Jamestown's Field School provides a unique opportunity for students to contribute to the research and interpretation of early 17th-century English America. The Field School, jointly offered by the *Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation* and the University of Virginia, introduces participants to the methods and theories of American historical archaeology through hands-on fieldwork. Students help to expand the understanding of the site of James Fort (1607-1624). Throughout the Field School,

students learn excavation and recording procedures and identify and interpret 17th-century European and First People's artifacts. In addition, the Field School includes field trips and weekly seminars exploring recent contributions of historical archaeology to colonial history, new field recording and interpretation methods, and a survey of the recent literature in the discipline.

The 2023 Season at Jamestown

The 2023 field school season focused on the area north and west of the James Fort. Previous GPR surveys of the area indicated a number of features in this area. These features would become the focus on the 2023 field school. Three areas were identified for excavation. The first was an area in the grassy field north of the fort. The GPR showed a high concentration of circular and linear features. Another area further west showed a concentration of jumbled material of uncertain composition. Finally, a third area of study was identified to the east near what was believed to be a barrow pit. Field school students rotated through these units over the 6 weeks as weather allowed. The unique aspect of these features is that they correspond with the "flag" drawn on the original map of Jamestown. It is now believed that it was not a flag but in fact an extension of the fort to the north. Now called the "flag feature".



A map of James Fort showing 2023 planned excavations and GPR overlay of subsurface features, in black and white.

Research, Excavation, Preservation, Conservation & Sharing

At Jamestown the process of archaeology was far more than just excavation. If I had to summarize the takeaway from the field school. It would be that good archaeology, as all of us know, begins with sound research. This was complemented with excavation techniques. Students were not observers, but rather executed tasks side by side with staff where they could ask questions about technique and artifact identification.



Students and staff work together to open the west unit of the flag feature project area.

Not every day at Jamestown was accommodating to field work. In fact, it rained a lot. Fortunately, Jamestown also has a pretty great conservation and curation lab. Students rotated through the lab a few days each week to get hands on experience with items previously recovered, and items recovered in the field school excavation. I was fortunate to have found a big rusty “Cheeto” when excavating the above pictured unit. Although it was initially resigned to being nothing more than a chunk of iron, I had other inclinations. After closer examination, to include X-rays, which students learned how to do,

my suspicions were confirmed. It was a knife. Students were also involved in the chemistry of conservation, as well as corrosion management through air abrasion. I was happy to see that the pocketknife was conserved and dated to the 19th or early 20th century. While not 17th century, it still represents a personal artifact that someone once carried, which I think is pretty is cool.



As a public archaeology site, we were constantly engaging with the public and explaining what was happening and why it was important that this type of work is done to protect historic resources. Having a captive and willing audience is something I enjoy when talking about archaeology.

Overall, the Historic Jamestown field school was an excellent experience that provided applicable

skills to working sites in Virginia and beyond. I was already able to apply GPR skills I acquired to the survey being conducted at the Bull Run Mountain Preserve, and GIS skills to projects in Shenandoah. So, I'd like to think this was a good investment on the part of the Northern Virginia Chapter. Again, I'd like to express my thanks to the Chapter for their confidence and scholarship for this field school. I am a better archaeologist for it. I would highly encourage anyone wanting to really refine their understanding of archaeology to attend any field school. Although I have a bias toward Jamestown. If anyone has questions feel free to reach out but be ready to talk for a while as there's a lot to cover.



Students explain to visitors what is happening in the excavation unit in the north field.



CART

Fairfax County Archaeological Research Team

Dig Into History and Volunteer with Archaeology!

Get involved in preserving history! The Archaeology and Collections Branch is relaunching its volunteer program this spring.

Join us on February 16 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and explore opportunities like archaeological fieldwork, lab projects, cemetery preservation and supporting museum collections.

For more information and to register visit the Volunteer Info Session Opportunity page:

https://volunteer.fairfaxcounty.gov/custom/1380/opp_details/189251%C2%A0

Space is limited. Additional questions can be emailed to:

fcpa-archaeology@fairfaxcounty.gov



Many folks know that archaeologists excavate test units using scientific methods. One of these methods is following vertical soil layers across a site; we refer to these layers as strata. Stratigraphic layers can be deposited by natural or cultural events such as a flood or the backfilling of an old, unused cellar. Both of these events help archaeologists to determine the time period and length of time a site was being used or occupied.

How many different soil colors do you see in this photo? During excavation an archaeologist will remove all of the soil colors separately. Other markers of soil layers changing, besides color, can be the texture or contents such as ash, rock or charcoal. Various aspects of soil can provide insight into changes in land usage. The artifacts from each layer can then be carefully studied in the lab to determine the age of the soil layer or strata.

To see more from CART, check out our latest artiFACTS blog posts by clicking the blue title link below.



The Humble Oyster

By Heather Hembrey, M.A., M.A.A

Please visit

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/artifacts>

to

read the entire article and more



Julian Williams and Eleanor Mullen Field School Scholarship Available

To be eligible for consideration for the scholarship the applicant must be a member of the ASV in good standing for at least four months prior to the application deadline date of May 1. The scholarship award of up to \$400 but not more than \$750, or 25 percent of the fund total in special circumstances, may be used for:

- tuition and fees;
- travel, lodging, and subsistence expenses;
- equipment and supplies to be used by the recipient during the field study experience, or
- any other legitimate expense that serves to enhance the field study experience.

The recipient(s) will be announced on or before the June issue of the Datum Point. Two people may receive a scholarship in any one year.

Learn more about the scholarship at [Williams-Mullen Field School Scholarship](#) and how to apply at [Williams-Mullen Scholarship Application](#).



2023 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Patrick O'Neill	PATRICKLONEILL@VERIZON.NET 703-244-6275
Vice-President	Yvonne French	yvonne.french2@gmail.com
Treasurer	Barbara Leven	levenbarbara2@gmail.com
Corresponding Sec	John Kelsey	jkelsey@cox.net
Recording Sec	Diane Schug-O'Neill	schugoneill@gmail.com
Datum Point Editor	Kurt Fredrickson	Kurt.N.Fredrickson@hotmail.com
Webmaster	Chris Havlicek	christo829@juno.com
Certification Liaison	Ann Wood	annpwood@gmail.com

Other Public Archaeological Programs in Northern Virginia/DC

Fairfax Co. Archaeology (FCPA)	Dr. Elizabeth Crowell	elizabeth.crowell@fairfaxcounty.gov 703-534-3881
Mount Vernon	Joe Downer	JDowner@mountvernon.org 703.799.6831
Gunston Hall	Dave Shonyo	archaeology@gunstonhall.org 703-638-9724
Alexandria Museum	Dr. Eleanor Breen	Eleanor.Breen@alexandriava.gov 703-838-4399
DC City Archaeologist	Dr. Ruth Trocolli	Ruth.Trocolli@dc.gov 202-442-8836
Germanna Foundation	Kelly Arford-Horne, MA, RPA	kelly.arford-horne@germanna.org 540-423-1700

NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Dues:

Individual (\$15) _____

Family (\$17) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Please make check payable to NVC/ASV.

Return to:

Barbara Leven, Treasurer, NVC/ASV

9518 Liberty Tree Lane

Vienna VA 22182

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2nd Wed. of each month. *Due to COVID-19 concerns, meetings may take place in-person and/or on Zoom. Details with start time and on-line/in-person information will be provided in the Datum Point newsletter prior to each meeting.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!