



ASM Ink

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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.

www.marylandarcheology.org

Annual meeting coming October 20

This year's Annual Meeting of ASM will take place at the United Methodist Church in LaPlata, Saturday October 20, hosted by the Charles County Chapter. In addition to the business meeting and the announcing of the winners of the ASM election, four different areas of archeological interest will be explored by program speakers.

Torben Rick of the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum will discuss recent archeological research at several Chesapeake shell middens in Maryland and Virginia, studies that provide insight into broader Native American cultural and environmental developments.

Although Chesapeake shell middens have been the subject of archeological inquiry for over 100 years, these sites have received relatively limited attention recently. The Bay region contains thousands of shell middens. These middens provide data that are important for helping understand human settlement and subsistence strategies, trade and exchange and environmental change.

Student archeologists from St. Mary's College of Maryland have uncovered important new evidence in the ground, in the archives and even in family paintings concerning Anglo-Native interactions in 17th-Century Maryland.

Professor Julie King will explain how this work is revealing the ways the struggle for territory shaped colonial encounters, with artifacts, architecture and even landscape emerging as central to the reinterpretation of relations of exchange, accommodation, violence and individual and cultural survival.

Jim Gibb will look at four years (2007-10) of work at Port Tobacco and how this has produced an assortment of benefits, including the Charles County Archeological Society, and numerous technical reports, conference papers, public presentations and a few professional publications.

Gibb will summarize the team's many and varied findings, highlighting new research questions spawned by the work, and will recommend future directions for archeological investigation and museum/historic site development at Port Tobacco.

Ruth Mitchell of Historic St. Mary's City will talk about findings from the Hicks-Mackall field project that has been under way since 2009. Redevelopment of this portion of St. Mary's College's campus is providing a great opportunity to examine the 18th Century.

During the 1700s St. Mary's City was dominated by the Hicks and Mackall families. A single large plantation was established during the second half of the century and excavations are being conducted at the core of the site.

New information about the 17th-Century landscape has been a surprising part of this mitigation project. One building that was once part of the Hicks-Mackall plantation has been discovered. Measuring 24 x 16 feet, it is too small to be the main dwelling, but was part of the plantation complex.

The meeting also will feature the Second Annual Silent Auction. A list of items included up for bidding is with this newsletter as is the complete program and instructions for finding the meeting site.

Upcoming events

October 20: ASM annual meeting. United Methodist Church, LaPlata.

October 25-8: ESAF meeting, Perrysburg, Ohio www.esaf-archeology.org

November 3: CAT workshops. See below.

December 1: ASM board meeting. All members are welcome to attend.

Volunteer opportunities

The following volunteer opportunities are open to CAT participants and other ASM members:

Montgomery County is offering opportunities for lab and field work Wednesdays, 9:30 to 2:30. Call 301-840-5848 or contact heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org. CAT opportunity.

ASM field session collection: Volunteers have finished upgrading the ASM field school collection. They are working on the Rosenstock (Frederick County) material. The lab in Crownsville will be open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. Contact Louise Akerson at lakerson1@verizon.net or Charlie Hall chall@mdp.state.md.us.

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County welcomes volunteers for its prolific Pig Point prehistoric site. Fridays. Call Jessie Grow at 410-222-1318.

Mount Calvert. Lab work and field work. 301-627-1286.

Jefferson Patterson Park invites volunteers to take part in its activities, including archeology, historical research and conservation. Contact Ed Chaney at echaney@mdp.state.md.us or 410-586-8554.

The Archaeological Institute of America provides an online listing of fieldwork opportunities worldwide, Call up www.archaeological.org/fieldwork/ to get started. Remember to add the extra A in archaeological.

CAT corner

Another CAT Weekend has been set for Saturday, November 3 at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Montgomery County. Workshops will be held on both Native American and historic ceramics.

For information on the CAT program, and updates, visit the ASM website.

ASM activist Marilyn Thompson dies

Marilyn Thompson, a longtime ASM activist both in front of and behind the scenes, died Sept. 6 from complications from cancer, a disease she had been fighting off and on for a series of years. She was 76.

In addition to participating in many UPAG chapter digs and activities, she was active in field school registration for many years until her illness curtailed her and put in many hours working on the ASM collections in the Maryland Historical Trust lab in Crownsville.

In her non-ASM life, she has worked at the Space Telescope Science Institute, the makers of Hubble.

At its September meeting, the ASM board paid tribute to her in "appreciation for the many years of service she gave the society." Lee Preston, of UPAG, called her "an enthusiastic and tireless worker." Chapter member Carla Dale remembered her for her excavation skills - "the best square maker and corners" - as well as her companionship and the good times Marilyn contributed on the chapter's rafting trips out west.

DNA confirms new human ancestor

By Hristio Boytchev

Condensed from the Washington Post, August 31, 2012

Scientists have produced a digital image of a genome tens of thousands of years old with the resolution of a typical living person's, enabling them to describe the life and history of the ancient humans in great detail, they reported in Thursday's issue of *Science* magazine.

Led by Svante Paabo of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, the scientists have created the highest quality genome sequence of ancient humans yet.

Therefore, the Denisovans — as the group has been called, after the Siberian cave harboring its fossils: a finger bone and two teeth — are much better known genetically than Neanderthals, although there are hundreds of specimens from them.

"There is no difference in what we can learn genetically about a person that lived 50,000 years ago and from a person today," Paabo said Wednesday in a conference call with reporters.

The international team of researchers used only genetic material from a tiny finger bone from a girl that lived in Siberia tens of thousands of years ago. The specimen was found in a cave in 2008 and, based on preliminary genetical analyses by the team in 2010, was attributed to a novel group of humans closely related to Neanderthals.

"The Denisovan genome is particularly close to my heart, because it was the first time that a new group of humans were discovered and defined just from DNA," Paabo said.

The scientists owe their insights mainly to new technological advances in sequencing of prehistoric DNA. "All forensics on ancient DNA were originally developed for modern DNA," said Matthias Meyer of the Max Planck Institute, lead author of the article.

The breakthrough came partly through starting the sequencing with single strands of DNA, as opposed to the usual approach of using double strands. Earlier this year, the researchers made the raw genome sequence available to the public by publishing it online.

Using the DNA alone, the scientists reconstructed the appearance of the Siberian girl: She had brown eyes and dark hair and skin. Also from genetic information, the scientists pieced together the girl's pedigree and compared it with modern humans' and Neanderthals'. The Denisovans contributed genetic material only to present Australian Aborigines and some people in Melanesia, whereas Neanderthals left their mark on everyone outside Africa, Paabo said.

Based on the mutation rate in modern humans, the team approximated the age of the Siberian girl at about 80,000 years. That conflicts with archeological data that assign the geological layer of the fossil to an age of 30,000 to 50,000 years. Carbon dating, a standard procedure to determine the age of fossils, would provide a more definitive answer, but the specimen is too small for that.

"It is amazing that we can sequence the whole genome, but there is too little carbon to date it," Paabo said.

The scientists estimated that the Denisovans split from modern humans between 700,000 and 200,000 years ago, a broad range attributed to uncertainties about the underlying mutation rates.

The researchers also inferred the population sizes of the ancient Denisovans based on the differences between genes from the father and the mother in the Siberian girl's DNA. Because the genes are very similar to each other, the scientists estimated the genetic diversity and therefore the population size to have been low, although the Denisovans have occupied large parts of Asia.

Paabo shied away from calling the Denisovans a separate species, because they interbred with the ancestors of modern humans. "I wouldn't call Neanderthals a different species from humans, either. I stay away from that debate," he added.

The scientists speculated that a single population moving out of Africa gave rise to the Denisovans and Neanderthals. The new findings support the notion that the ancestors of modern humans mixed with groups of ancient humans, instead of quickly replacing them.

As a next step, the scientists plan to re-sequence the Neanderthal using the new methods and get it on par with the genome of the Siberian girl.

Everything you'd ever want to know about bricks

A look at bricks, their making and the role they played in the early Chesapeake is told in an article in the September issue of the Bay Journal. Go to <http://www.bayjournal.com> and click on Past is Prologue.

Weekend volunteers wanted for Mexico Farms dig

Volunteers are being sought for a historic-prehistoric project in Allegany County. The Smith Homestead site is located at Mexico Farms near Cumberland. Work will be conducted on three successive weekends.

On September 29-30 observational recording and measuring of outbuildings will be the focus. There is a dairy building, a log cabin, structural remains of a blacksmith forge and the barn foundation as well as a remnant of an old road.

The first weekend in October will feature shovel testing over seven acres to delineate the prehistoric area. The hope is to dig about 60 pits. Long pants are recommended.

The historical-related test units will be begun the following Saturday, October 13. At least four units will be dug on the terrace in the yard. It will take an estimated eight days to complete this process and scheduling of the remaining days will be built around volunteers' availability.

For directions to the site, and to let Suzanne Trussell know how many people to expect, get in touch with her at trussell.suzanne@yahoo.com or 301-722-0609. To learn more about the site go to marylandarcheology.org, click on Western Maryland Chapter then go to *In The Works*.

Aircraft X-ray machine finds archeological use

Condensed from Artinfo, September 12, 2012

At England's University of Southampton, a sophisticated X-ray machine is being used by archeologists to make 3-D images of ancient objects while they're still enclosed in pots, urns or blocks of soil. Originally developed to scan turbine blades in Rolls-Royce airplanes for flaws, the machine is now making it quicker and easier for scholars to identify some of the thousands of artifacts discovered in Britain every year.

Roger Bland, a coins expert at the British Museum, recently used the X-ray scanner to identify ancient Roman coins from the reigns of Marcus Aurelius, Vespasian, Trajan and Hadrian that were still inside a pottery cup.

"Removing the coins from these pots and conserving them can be a very costly and time-consuming process, but Southampton's scanner — combined with clever software — enables one to identify individual coins in the middle of a mass of coins," Bland told ARTINFO France via email. "Conventional X-rays can never do this."

Bland said that plans are under way to analyze more archeological finds using the scanner, including two very rare and fragile Iron Age metal cauldrons that are encased in massive blocks of soil.

The micro-focus machine takes X-rays from several angles at once — as many as several thousand images, with each being an individual "slice" of the whole. The software then applies mathematical formulas to create a three-dimensional image of the whole from the various slices.



More surprises from Mexico City

By Elisabeth Malkin and Sofia Castello y Tickell

Condensed from the New York Times, September 3, 2012

MEXICO CITY — The skeleton is that of a young woman, perhaps an Aztec noble, found intact and buried in the empire's most sacred spot more than 500 years ago. Almost 2,000 human bones were heaped around her, and she is a mystery.

There are other discoveries yet to be deciphered from the latest excavation site at the heart of this vast metropolis, where the Aztecs built their great temple and the Spanish conquerors laid the foundation of their new empire.

Before announcing the finding of the unusual burial site and the remains of what may be a sacred tree last month, archeologists had also recently revealed a giant round stuccoed platform decorated with serpents' heads and a floor carved in relief that appears to show a holy war.

Mexico City might be one of the world's classic megacities, but it is also an archeological wonder, and more than three decades after a chance discovery set off a systematic exploration of the Aztecs' ceremonial spaces, surprises are still being uncovered in the city's superimposed layers.

"It's a living city that has been transforming since the pre-Hispanic epoch," said Raúl Barrera, who leads the exploration of the city's center for the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

"The Mexicas themselves dismantled their temples," to build over them, he explained, using the Aztecs' name for themselves. "The Spanish constructed the cathedral, their houses, with the same stones from the pre-Hispanic temples. What we have found are the remains of that whole process."

Perhaps nowhere else in the world is the evidence of a rupture between civilizations as dramatic as in Mexico City's giant central square, known as the Zócalo, where the ruin of the Aztecs' Templo Mayor abuts the ponderous cathedral the Spanish erected to declare their spiritual dominance.

"I think the ideological war was more difficult for the Spanish than armed warfare," said Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, the archeologist who first led the excavation of the Templo Mayor.

There are other, older places in the world where ruins rise from traffic-clogged streets, where foreign invaders ended empires. But it is different here, academics say.

"They blew the top of it off; they didn't do that to the Colosseum," said David Carrasco, a historian at Harvard. "In Rome, the ancient Roman city stands alongside the medieval and the modern city."

A Spanish chronicler of the conquest, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, wrote that "of all these wonders" of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, "all is overthrown and lost, nothing left standing."

Since 1790, though, when construction work to pave the Zócalo unearthed the first giant Aztec carvings, Tenochtitlan has been giving up its secrets. Archeologists began exploring the Templo Mayor a century ago, but the discovery of a giant monolith depicting the decapitated, dismembered Aztec moon goddess Coyolxauhqui in 1978 led to a full-scale excavation that continues today.

In the first five years, archeologists had uncovered large parts of the temple that lay underneath a structure razed by the Spanish after the 1521 conquest. Past Aztec emperors had built new temples over earlier ones, which unwittingly spared the older structures.

The archeological project "wasn't just that we were going to find an enormous temple," Matos said. "It was what it meant within Aztec society. That building was very important because for them it was the center of the universe."

There is still much more to uncover around the Templo Mayor. The 16th-Century Franciscan Friar Bernardino de Sahagún left a record of what Matos calls the Aztecs' sacred precinct of temples and palaces, now a densely packed square about seven blocks on each side.

The Sahagún account, compiled from Aztecs' recollections of their lost city, has proved strikingly accurate. Of the 78 structures he described, archeologists have found vestiges of more than half.

Much of what the friar and other witnesses chronicled now lies as deep as 25 feet underground. To get there, Barrera's team must first navigate the electricity lines and water mains that are the guts of the modern city and then travel down through a colonial layer, which yields its own set of artifacts.

But despite the guidance from historical records, Mexico City's archeologists cannot dig anywhere they

please. To excavate under the area's hotels, diners, cheap clothing stands and used bookstores would entail fraught negotiation.

Still, in a strange sort of payback, the ruins themselves sometimes make it possible for the archeologists to enter private property and begin digging.

Since the 16th Century, the city has pumped water from deep wells to satisfy its thirst, causing the clays beneath the surface to sink as water is sucked from them, rather like a dry sponge. But the buildings settle unevenly, buckling over the solid stone Aztec ruins below, lending many of the sacred precinct's streets a swaying, drunken air.

As cracks open and the buildings tilt, many of them need restoration, which by law allows archeologists from the anthropology and history institute to keep watch. If historic remains are found, the owner must foot the bill to restore them.

When the cathedral needed to be rescued in the 1990s, engineers dug 30 shafts to stabilize the structure and Matos and his team descended as far as 65 feet to see what was underneath.

"It's the vengeance of the gods," he said. "The cathedral is falling and the monuments to the ancient gods are what's causing it to fall."

Chapter notes

Anne Arundel

Meets five times a year in February, April, June, September and November at the home of Pat and Stephen Hittle, 102 Evon Court, Severna Park. 7:30 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns at AACHapASM@hotmail.com or the chapter website www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php

Central Maryland

Central Chapter has no formal meetings planned, but it does engage in field work and related activities. Contact chapter President Stephen Israel, 410-945-5514 or ssisrael@verizon.net

Charles County

Meetings are held 7 on the second Thursday (September-May) in the community room of the LaPlata Police Department. Contact President Carol Cowherd at cowherdcl@gmail.com or 301-375-9489. Chapter website is charlescoasm.org and its blog is ccarchsoc.blogspot.com

October 11: Bob Sonderman will talk on glass artifacts.

November 8: Peter Quantock will be presenting his Geophysical study at Port Tobacco.

December 13: Michael Lucas will talk about the War of 1812 at Nottingham.

Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at a local restaurant at 5:45 p.m. Contact heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org or call 301-840-5848 or Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: <http://www.asmmidpotomac.org> Email: asmmidpotomac@gmail.com

October 18: Lorraine Minor, president of the Genealogy Club of the Montgomery County Historical Society, will speak about doing genealogical research at Needwood Mansion, 6700 Needwood Road, Derwood.

November 15: Lab workshop, 6-9:30 p.m.

December: Holiday party.

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick the second Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. For more information, visit the chapter's web page at digfrederick.com or contact Nancy Geasey at 301-378-0212 or Jeremy Lazelle at jlazelle@msn.com or call 301-378-0212.

Northern Chesapeake

Meetings are the second Wednesday of the month. Members and guests assemble at 6:30 for light refreshments. A business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30. Contact Dan Coates at 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake>

October 10: Report of the Elk Landing Field Session by Jim Gibb at the Historical Society of Cecil County, Elkton.

November 14: "Cresthull Redux: The Kolomoki Site and the Cresthull Collection," by Bill McIntyre and Dan Coates. Havre de Grace City Hall.

December: Annual Appreciation and Awards Dinner. Program and Site TBA.

*** The 2013 program is still being developed; however the confirmed information is listed below.

January 9: Program TBA. Havre de Grace City Hall.

February 13: Jim Gibb on the results of the May 2012 field session. Historical Society of Harford County, Bel Air.

March 13: - TBA (biblical archeology site). Harford Jewish Center, Havre de Grace.

April: Friday date TBA. Annual Maryland Archeology Month Presentation. Edgewood Hall, Harford Community College, Bel Air.

May: Sunday date TBA. Annual ASNC Picnic. Upper Bay Museum, North East.

Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Mt. Ida in Ellicott City. Potluck suppers are held at 6:15 in September and March. Otherwise, dinner is available at the Diamondback in Ellicott City at 6 p.m. Contact Dave Cavey at 410 747-0093 or hoplite1@comcast.net

October 8: Banjo's at Bagendon; a summary of the 2012 season of excavations at Bagendon, Cirencester (UK) presented by Laura Cripps.

November 12: Jim Gibb will talk about a new program at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Anne Arundel County that now involves archeology.

Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. in the LaVale Library, unless noted. Contact Roy Brown, 301-724-7769. Chapter email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm>

October 26: Mimi Hernandez of the Appalachian Center for Ethnobotanical Studies will speak on the use of wild plants for culinary and medicinal purposes by people of the region both past and present.

November: Field trip, to be arranged.

Archeological Society of Maryland
ASM Ink
P.O. Box 1331
Huntingtown, MD 20639-1331

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The Archeological Society of Maryland Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization devoted to the study and conservation of Maryland archeology.

ASM members receive the monthly newsletter, ASM Ink; the biannual journal, MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY, reduced admission to ASM events and a 10% discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Belinda Urquiza for membership rates. For publication sales, contact Dan Coates at ASM Publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace, MD 21078-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net

Submissions welcome. Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, MD. 20782, 301-864-5289 or myronbeck@verizon.net

President

Claude Bowen
301-953-1947
clauder.bowen@comcast.net

Vice President

Tom Forhan
301-270-8073
dufour27@gmail.com

Secretary

Suzanne Bucci
304-876-2189
suzruns4fun@frontier.com

Treasurer

Jim Gibb
410-263-1102
JamesGGibb@verizon.net

Membership Secretary

Belinda Urquiza
PO Box 1331
Huntingtown, MD
20639
410-535-2586
burquiza@comcast.net

At-Large Trustees

Laura Cripps
443-518-4554
LCripps@howardcc.edu

John Fiveash
443-618-0494
jsfiveash@comcast.net

Valerie Hall
301-814-8028
valeriehall@gmail.com

Barbara Israel
410-945-5514
baisrael@verizon.net

Annetta Schott
443-949-4122
annettaschott@gmail.com

Jaimie Wilder
301-741-2869
jaimiwilder@comcast.net

