

ASM Ink

July-August 2020, Vol. 47, No. 7-8

Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.



www.marylandarcheology.org

Due to technical difficulties, having nothing to do with covid, the July issue of ASM Ink did not take place. So we are combining it with the August issue to keep records up to date.

Does dating rely too much on European lens?

By Sturt Manning

Condensed from The Conversation, April 29, 2020

Columbus famously reached the Americas in 1492. Other Europeans had made the journey before, but the century from then until 1609 marks the creation of the modern globalized world. This period brought extraordinary riches to Europe, and genocide and disease to indigenous peoples across the Americas.

The European settlement dates and personalities are known from texts and sometimes illustrations. But one thing is missing. What about indigenous history throughout this traumatic era? Until now, the standard timeline has derived, inevitably, from the European conquerors, even when scholars try to present an indigenous perspective.

This all happened just 400 to 500 years ago — how wrong could the conventional chronology for indigenous settlements be? Quite wrong, it turns out, based on radiocarbon dating my collaborators and I have carried out at a number of Iroquoian sites in Ontario and New York state. We're challenging colonialist assumptions and mapping out the correct time frames for when indigenous people were active in these places.

Archeologists estimate when a given indigenous settlement was active based on the absence or presence of certain types of European trade goods, such as metal and glass beads. It was always approximate, but became the conventional history.

Since the first known commercial fur trading missions were in the 1580s, archeologists date initial regular appearances of scattered European goods to 1580-1600. They call these two decades Glass Bead Period 1. We know some trade occurred before that, though, since indigenous people Cartier met in the 1530s had previously encountered Europeans and were ready to trade with him.

Archeologists set Glass Bead Period 2 from 1600-1630. During this time, new types of glass beads and finished metal goods were introduced and trade was more frequent.

The logic of dating based on the absence or presence of these goods would make sense if all communities had equal access to, and desire to have, such items. But these key assumptions have not been proven.

That's why the Dating Iroquoia Project exists. Made up of researchers at Cornell University, the University of Georgia and the New York State Museum, we've used radiocarbon dating and statistical modeling to date organic materials directly associated with Iroquoian sites in New York's Mohawk Valley and Ontario in Canada.

First we looked at two sites in Ontario: Warminster and Ball. Both are long argued to have had direct connections with Europeans. For instance, Samuel de Champlain likely stayed at the Warminster site in 1615-1616. Archeologists have found large numbers of trade goods at both sites.

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Upcoming events

November 7: Annual meeting of ASM. We hope.

Volunteer opportunities (non-covid)

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

ASM Volunteer Lab, most Tuesdays: The lab in Crownsville. Contact Charlie Hall at charles.hall@maryland.gov or Louise Akerson at lakerson1@verizon.net. It is currently working on cataloging artifacts from the Levering Coffee House Site, Baltimore (a mostly late 18th/early 19th Century site).

The Smithsonian Environmental Research Center seeks participants in its Citizen-Scientist Program in archeology and other environmental research programs in Edgewater. Field and lab work are conducted Wednesdays and on occasional Saturdays. Contact Jim Gibb at jamesggibb@verizon.net

Montgomery County for lab and field work volunteers, contact Heather Bouslog at 301 563 7530 or Heather.Bouslog@montgomeryparks.org

The Anne Arundel County Archaeology Program and the Lost Towns Project welcome volunteers in both field and lab at numerous sites. For diggers, the Linniston site on Gibson Island shows signs of occupation from the 17th through 19th centuries. Digging is on Fridays from 8 to 3. The lab will be open some weekdays at the Anne Arundel collection facility at 7409 Baltimore-Annapolis Blvd. in Glen Burnie. For more information and to sign up email Drew Webster at volunteers@losttownsproject.org or call 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 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.

UPAG/Howard County Recs and Parks invites volunteers interested in processing collections and conducting historical research to contact Kelly Palich at Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-0423.

CAT corner: For information on the CAT program, contact chair Kelly Palich at Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-0423.



Who will get Marye prize, who will be new ASM leaders

This year, as every year, ASM will present its highest honor, the William B. Mayre Award, at its fall meeting, November 7. Given since 1983, the award honors someone who has made "outstanding contributions to Maryland archeology."

The recipient need not be a member of ASM, a Marylander, or even an archeologist, as past awards have shown. Last year's winner was Claude Bowen, given for his many years of dedicated service to ASM and to Maryland archeology. A complete list of former winners appears on the nomination form which is available on the website.

Do you know someone who should be added to the list? Now is your chance to make it happen. Submit the name and the reasons the person deserves the award (specifics, not generalities help the award committee decide). Past nominations are not kept so people must be re-nominated to be eligible. The form must be received by committee chairman Maureen Kavanagh by August 17. Her address is on the form.

Another chance for you to get involved in ASM: Members have received by email a ballot for the ongoing ASM board of trustees election. Because of the uncertainty covid is playing with scheduled events, mail-in voting is the way to go this year. We can assure you any ballot sent in will be recorded and no election fraud committed.

A problem for archeologists of the future

By **Rossella Tercatin**

Condensed from the Jerusalem Post, July 26, 2020

In July 1945, a test conducted in the deserts of New Mexico officially propelled humanity into the nuclear era. Only weeks after the Trinity Test, atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In the following decades, while no other nuclear device was detonated in an act of war, military tests and studies continued.

Seventy-five years later, space archeologists are wondering how to warn humanity of the future that the sites where these experiments were carried out are still dangerous, Alice Gorman, associate professor at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, told *The Jerusalem Post*.

"Teenagers nowadays do not understand how to work a dial telephone, a device that was incredibly common only one or two generations ago," she said. "The type of plutonium used in the Trinity Test, plutonium-239, has a half-life of 24,000 years, meaning that after this time, only half of it will have decayed into a safe, non-radioactive element. How do we communicate to people living then that the site is dangerous?"

Gorman said the issue presents two challenging elements: What materials can survive such a long time, and what form of language can be used to deliver the actual message?

"As for the first difficulty, we know that stones and pottery last a very long time," she said. "But the second point raises a big archeological question related to symbolic communication. If we look at rock art from 20,000 years ago, we can see that there are pictures of animals, but we do not know what those pictures mean. Therefore, it is possible that our current symbols to mark radioactive sites, the yellow [and] black sign, will be interpreted as an invitation to explore the area, rather than to keep away from it."

The issue is especially important for archaeologists of the future because in some cases, while the danger would be very limited or not even relevant on the surface, the nuclear waste and its radiation are deeper in the ground, and conducting a dig would be especially risky.

New technology, new Stonehenge find

By Megan Specia

Condensed from the New York Times, June 22, 2020

LONDON — A new archeological discovery at the site of an ancient village near Stonehenge promises to offer significant clues about life more than 4,500 years ago in the Neolithic period, and could even “write a whole new chapter in the story” of the celebrated structure’s landscape, experts say.

The find also makes the site the largest prehistoric structure in Britain and possibly in Europe, according to Vincent Gaffney, of the University of Bradford, an archeologist involved in the analysis.

“It has completely transformed how we understand this landscape — there is no doubt about it,” he said. Stonehenge has long drawn visitors to admire its looming stone slabs, even as its origins and purpose are still being explored.

The study, published online on Sunday, outlines the discovery of a large circle of shafts surrounding the ancient village — known as the Durrington Walls henge monument — about two miles from Stonehenge. The trenches, each of which is around 30 feet wide and 15 feet deep, are thought to have been part of a ritual boundary area between the two sites.

Uncovered through remote sensing technology and ground sampling, the discovery could amount to one of the most significant finds ever made at the site, archeologists and experts said.

“As the place where the builders of Stonehenge lived and feasted, Durrington Walls is key to unlocking the story of the wider Stonehenge landscape,” Nick Snashall, the National Trust archeologist for the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, said in a statement.

Over the past decade, the ancient site at Stonehenge has been slowly revealing its secrets — as well as details about the lives of those who built it — thanks largely to the Stonehenge Hidden Landscapes Project, a partnership among several universities and research institutions that was behind the latest discovery.

Stonehenge is positioned to align with the sunrise and sunset on the winter and summer solstices. And while the biggest questions about the structure — why was it built, and what purpose did it serve? — have yet to be definitively answered, many experts say it was probably a sacred site that people visited for significant ceremonies, including burials.

The latest discovery was made using new techniques including a magnetic remote sensing survey of the area — technology that has both revolutionized experts’ understanding of the site and led to vast changes in archeology in general. Gaffney said.

“People have been studying Stonehenge forever, and you shouldn’t be able to discover something this large still,” he said. “But it’s been made possible by the technology.”

Magnetometers allowed the archeologists to peer into the ground without digging and to survey tracts of land by attaching the devices to A.T.V.s driven over miles of countryside.

Whereas much archeology in decades past relied on excavation to understand a site, these sensors allow a greater understanding of features that are unseen on the surface of the landscape, Gaffney said.

The result has been a growing insight into daily life experienced by people several millennia ago.

“Stonehenge was for the dead, Durrington was for the living,” Gaffney said. “But now, what we are probably looking at was this great big boundary around them probably warning people of what they are approaching.”

He said that the pits had been set at a deliberate distance and that their locations would have had to be paced out from a central point. That is a significant clue about people living in the area at the time, he said, because it “means they could count” — making it among the earliest evidence for counting in Britain.

Experts in English historical sites greeted the discovery with excitement but said that further exploration was required in order to fully grasp its significance.

Susan Greaney, a historian at English Heritage, which manages Stonehenge and hundreds of other historic sites, welcomed further investigation. She said that the research had “uncovered tantalizing hints of yet another new archeological feature in the Stonehenge landscape, this time on an extraordinary scale.”

Gaffney said that exploration would continue, but that there would be no rush to excavate. “Remote sensing has taken us a long way,” he said, “and I think it’s going to take us further still.”

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Too many white faces spoil the result

By **Joanne Hammond**

Condensed from Kamloops (British Columbia) This Week, July 22, 2020

Go to any gathering of archeologists in this province and you will look upon a sea of white faces. Visit archeological sites and you will overwhelmingly see white people in charge. Deal with the Archaeology Branch in Victoria and you will learn the staff that manages a 15,000-year-old archaeological record that is 99 per cent Indigenous lacks representation from those communities.

But why is it a problem? Don't archeologists, and other scientists, apply their knowledge and methods in unbiased ways? Doesn't the evidence speak for itself? Aren't training and education sufficient?

To begin answering these questions, let's consider the history of history-making.

Much of early archeology was indisputably racist — antiquarians dedicated to identifying the vast spectrum of non-European peoples, then organizing them into hierarchies from more to less sophisticated, with European (and later North American) white cultures at the top.

A common approach to this involved measuring skulls. The idea was to identify features associated with more intelligent, moral, "advanced" peoples and with less intelligent, immoral, "barbaric" peoples. Called phrenology, this now-debunked race science was practiced widely on black and Indigenous people, living and dead.

In British Columbia, early archeology was consumed with the idea of confirming the primitive nature of Indigenous peoples using this method, which led to horrific exhumation of burial grounds by the men considered the founders of B.C. archeology. In 1899, Harlan I. Smith wrote to Franz Boas on how this was done: "By taking skeletons out on our backs we got them out without Indians realizing the bulk & so free from objections. But when the Indian return from fishing it will not be pleasant to be here."

These stolen ancestors remain in museums, the property of "science," and this history of grave-robbing remains a stain on our field.

Does dating rely too much on European lens?

Continued from Page One

When my colleagues and I examined and radiocarbon dated plant remains (maize, bean, plum) and a wooden post, the calendar ages we came up with are entirely consistent with historical estimates and the glass bead chronology. The dating methods agreed, placing Ball circa 1565-1590 and Warminster circa 1590-1620.

However, the picture was quite different at several other major Iroquois sites that lack such close European connections. Our radiocarbon tests came up with substantially different date ranges compared with previous estimates that were based on the presence or absence of various European goods.

For example, the Jean-Baptiste Lainé, or Mantle, site northeast of Toronto is currently the largest and most complex Iroquoian village excavated in Ontario. Excavated between 2003-2005, archeologists dated the site to 1500-1530 because it lacks most trade goods and had just three European-source metal objects. But our radiocarbon dating now places it between about 1586 and 1623, most likely 1599-1614. That means previous dates were off the mark by as much as 50 to 100 years.

Other sites belonging to this same ancestral Wendat (Wyandotte) community are also more recent than assumed. A site called Draper was conventionally dated to the second half of the 1400s, but radiocarbon dating places it at least 50 years later, between 1521 and 1557. Several other Ontario Iroquoian sites lacking large trade good assemblages vary by several decades to around 50 years from conventional dates.

My colleagues and I have also investigated a number of sites in the Mohawk Valley. During the 16th and early 17th centuries, the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers formed a key transport route from the Atlantic coast inland for Europeans and their trade goods. Again, we found that radiocarbon dating casts doubt on the conventional time frame attributed to a number of sites in the area.

Why was some of the previous chronology wrong? The answer seems to be that scholars viewed the topic through a pervasive colonial lens. Researchers mistakenly assumed that trade goods were equally available, and desired, all over the region, and considered all indigenous groups as the same.

To the contrary, it was Wendat custom, for example, that the lineage whose members first discovered a trade route claimed rights to it. Such "ownership" could be a source of power and status. Thus it would make sense to see uneven distributions of certain trade goods, as mediated by the controlling groups. Some people were "in," with access, and others may have been "out."

Ethnohistoric records indicate cases of indigenous groups rejecting contact with Europeans and their goods. For example, Jesuit missionaries described an entire village no longer using French kettles because the foreigners and their goods were blamed for disease.

There are other reasons European goods do or do not show up in the archeological record. How near or far a place was from transport routes, and local politics, both within and between groups, could play a role. Whether Europeans made direct contact, or there were only indirect links, could affect availability. Objects used and kept in settlements could also vary from those intentionally buried in cemeteries.

Above all, the majority of sites are only partly investigated at best, some are as yet unknown. And sadly the archeological record is affected by the looting and destruction of sites.

Only a direct dating approach removes the Eurocentric and historical lens, allowing an independent time frame for sites and past narratives.

Apart from changing the dates for textbooks and museum displays, the re-dating of a number of Iroquoian sites raises major questions about the social, political and economic history of indigenous communities.

For example, conventionally, researchers place the start of a shift to larger and fortified communities, and evidence of increased conflict, in the mid-15th Century.

However, our radiocarbon dates find that some of the key sites are from a century later, dating from the mid-16th to start of the 17th centuries. The timing raises questions of whether and how early contacts with Europeans did or did not play a role. This period was also during the peak of what's called the Little Ice Age, perhaps indicating the changes in indigenous settlements have some association with climate challenge.

Our new radiocarbon dates indicate the correct time frame; they pose, but do not answer, many other remaining questions.

Chapter News

Anne Arundel

Anne Arundel Chapter will be meeting at the Schmidt Center at SERC, the second Tuesday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m. Parking in front of the venue. For information, contact Jim Gibb at JamesGGibb@verizon.net

Central Chapter

Central Chapter holds bimonthly meetings at MICA's Bunting Center in Baltimore. For information contact Katharine Fernstrom at kwfappraising@gmail.com. New Facebook page is "Central Chapter of the ASM."

Charles County

Meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday (September-May) at the LaPlata Police Department. Contact President Carol Cowherd at ccasm2010@gmail.com. Website ccarchsoc.blogspot.com and Facebook [@ccasm2010](https://www.facebook.com/ccasm2010)

Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Needwood Mansion in Derwood. Dinner at a local restaurant at 5:30 p.m. Contact Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: www.asmmidpotomac.org Email: asmmidpotomac@gmail.com

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. For more information, visit the chapter's web page at digfrederick.com or call 301-378-0212.

Northern Chesapeake

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>

St. Mary's County

Meetings are the third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Joseph D. Carter State Office Building in the Russell Conference Room, Leonardtown. For information contact Chris Coogan at Cicoogan@smcm.edu

Upper Patuxent

Meetings the second Saturday or Sunday of the month, at the Heritage Program Office, 9944 Route 108, Ellicott City, unless otherwise noted. www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358 or www.upperpatuxentarchaeology.com or call Kelly Palich, 410 313 0423.

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. Email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm>

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-percent discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Ethan Bean, 609 N. Paca Street, Apt. 3, Baltimore, MD 21201 for membership rates. For publication sales, not including newsletter or journal, contact Dan Coates at ASM publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace MD 20178-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net

Submissions: Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 3126 Gracefield Rd., Apt 106, Silver Spring, MD. 20905 or 240-867-3662 or myronbeck@verizon.net

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