

# ASM Ink

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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.



[www.marylandarcheology.org](http://www.marylandarcheology.org)

## ASM still hoping to reschedule events

Not only has Covid-19 cancelled ASM's plans for an active spring, but the uncertainty about the virus' duration is making future planning difficult.

As usual, three spring events were on tap: The Workshop in Archeology, the Spring Symposium and the Tyler Bastian Field Session in Archeology. Dates were set, venues selected, speakers lined up. And then ...

The Maryland Historical Trust is in charge of the Workshop. State Terrestrial Archeologist Matt McKnight says the plan (as of now, of course) is to hold it in July, "when people will want to be indoors in the air conditioning anyway."

The second gathering, the Symposium, has been scrubbed for this year. The logistics of rescheduling it were too difficult.

The traditional dates for the Field Session are around Memorial Day, from late May until early June. The site was to be a return to last year's location, the Billingsley Site. The hope is to still go back there, but in October, dates and duration unknown.

So keep your trowels sharp, read a good archeology-related book or see a good film, documentary or otherwise. Here are some online suggestions:

- 50 Field Session StoryMap: <https://mdarchaeology.github.io/Annual-Field-Sessions/>
- MHT Blog page (with two Archeology Month oriented blogs, one an Archeology Month kick-off by John Fiveash and one about the relaunch of the Maryland Fluted Point Survey - with 3D models of Paleoindian points - by Zac Singer): <https://mdhistoricaltrust.wordpress.com/>
- MHT Facebook page (with three Archeology Month video lectures, one by Zac Singer on the relaunch of the Maryland Fluted Point Survey, one on the contact period component at Biggs Ford by Matt McKnight and one by Nate Salzman of JPPM on how to make your own pottery: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/marylandhistoricaltrust/posts/>

Keep your interest alive and we'll let you know when we can gather socially again.

# 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](mailto:charles.hall@maryland.gov) or Louise Akerson at [lakerson1@verizon.net](mailto: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](mailto:jamesggibb@verizon.net)

**Montgomery County** for lab and field work volunteers, contact Heather Bouslog at 301 563 7530 or [Heather.Bouslog@montgomeryparks.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov) or 410-313-0423.

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

## The Nansemond has its 'ghost fleet' too

By **Tamara Dietrich** *Condensed from the Bay Journal, April 1, 2020*

In a muddy bend of the Nansemond River, hidden amid Suffolk's bustling business district, lie the rotting remains of old wooden boats.

From bugeyes to barges, logboats to tugboats, canoes to crabbing skiffs, these vessels helped to resurrect this Virginia city after the ruinous Civil War. They hauled oysters and scallops up and down the mid-Atlantic, supplying hotels and restaurants from Chicago to New Orleans. In time, though, as railroads began to supplant traditional riverine shipping lanes, these vessels were abandoned near the wharfs they once serviced. They sank beneath the surface and settled onto the river bottom — lost to living memory. Until now.

Local history buffs exploring the riverbank stumbled across the submerged wrecks a few years ago during an exceptionally low tide. Today, archeologists are studying and cataloging the Nansemond "ghost fleet." Brendan Burke, president of the Maritime Heritage Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Virginia (ASV), worked the site last fall.

Burke is also a research associate for his alma mater, Longwood University, and invited his former professor, Brian Bates, to join him in studying the ghost fleet.

"The curious thing is, it was hidden in plain sight," said Bates. "You look out there and you see just a bunch of little bumps sticking out of the water at low tide. But then when you actually get above it, you go, 'Wow, that's actually a boat. And there's another one.' "

Even Suffolk natives, some of whom fished that very spot for years, had no idea what lay beneath.

Amateur historian Kermit Hobbs, 76, was one of the first to discover the wrecks. In 2014, a friend told him he'd found an old dugout canoe on the banks of the river and Hobbs, intrigued, went to check it out.

Hobbs returned a few days later when a full moon tugged the tide even lower. "That's when I saw the outline of several boats," Hobbs recalled. "Some of them were estimated to be about 80 feet long."

He uploaded his aerial footage to YouTube and called around to find someone who could tell him more about the river's history. "But nobody ever really knew anything that could help me out," Hobbs said. "So I just pretty much left it there."

A year and a half later, a Smithfield couple and ASV members working on a logboat registry happened upon his video. The canoe — or, more properly, the logboat — was retrieved and put on display at the nearby Riddick's Folly House Museum.

Burke and Bates assembled a small team; took tape measures and cameras; pulled on waders and muck boots; and spent several weeks last October cataloging 13 wrecks ranging in length from roughly 15 feet to 100 feet. What they couldn't eyeball, they detailed with sonar and a 3D laser scanner.

"What we ended up finding is a collection of derelict wooden vessels that had been [discarded] at the end of their useful lives," Burke said. "And that sounds like the end of the story, right? A bunch of junk."

"But that's where archeologists begin our research — when something goes into the ground or into the ocean or into a river, into mud, and we pull out the stories that get forgotten. Pull out the parts of our heritage that are misunderstood, or not understood at all."

The most accessible wreck is a schooner-rigged bug-eye, native to the Chesapeake Bay and one of only 25 known to be built. In its heyday. This vessel stretched about 50 feet from bow to stern, although others were bigger.

The riverfront complex began to falter sometime after World War I as five railroad lines offered faster shipping and major nearby ports had deep-water terminals to handle big cargo vessels. Workboats became obsolete. Many were discarded, some as recently as the 1930s.

"In the early 1900s, it probably seemed like a perfectly reasonable thing to do," Bates said. "It was probably quite informal — maybe one person let their boat die there and then someone else did the same thing. And after a while people figured, 'Well, OK, this is where the boats go to die.' "

The wrecks won't be removed from the Nansemond — their water-soaked wood would dry to dust, and preserving them would be far too costly.

## Trying to date-time a Maine shipwreck

By Johnny Diaz

*Condensed from the New York Times, April 6, 2020*

In 1769, a cargo ship laden with flour, pork and English goods set sail from Salem, Mass., headed to Portland, Maine. The ship encountered a fierce storm and never made it to its destination. Now a maritime archeologist believes he may have solved the mystery.

Every few years, the remains of a shipwreck have surfaced on a beach in York, Maine. Its wooden hull, which is about 50 feet long, appeared in 1958 after a storm, and again in 1978, 2007 and 2013. The last time waves exposed its frame was in March 2018.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has said it believes the wreckage dates from the period between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. But the history and identity of the ship remained uncertain in York, a small resort town 45 miles south of Portland.

Relying on historical records, archeological work and wood samples from the ship, Stefan Claesson told York town officials last month that he believed the remains most likely were from the Defiance, a sloop that was built in Massachusetts in 1754. Sloops were single-mast vessels used for transporting cargo.

"This is one of a very few examples of a pre-Revolutionary War or Colonial-built ship from New England," said Claesson, the owner of the aerial drone and archeological surveying company in New Hampshire.

Claesson, who grew up in Maine, said he first became interested in the wreckage after the storm in 2007.

The wreckage typically lies between 4 and 6 feet below the sand. About a month after it is exposed, it gets covered up naturally, but the town also trucks in sand to help the beach recover, he said.

In 2018, after waves revealed the wreckage again, Claesson sent wood samples from the hull plank and ship frame to the Cornell University Tree-Ring Laboratory in Ithaca, N.Y., to determine their age.

The analysis suggested that the trees had a ring date of about 1753.

"Of interest in this particular study was that three different species were used, two that are not commonly used in shipbuilding, that grow right here in New England and northeastern North America," Carol B. Griggs, a senior research associate at the Tree-Ring Laboratory, said on Sunday.

Whether the ship is the Defiance or another vessel, it was built in 1753 or soon after, and most likely somewhere along the New England coast, she said.

After combing through historical and notary records, including a firsthand account, Claesson learned that there was a sloop called the Defiance that had been wrecked in York in 1769. He also found that a sloop with the same name "was coincidentally built in 1754 in Massachusetts, which fits well with our tree-ring dates of circa 1753," he said.

Claesson said his research found that the Defiance was headed for Portland when it encountered a storm.

"They took anchor, but in heavy seas the crew was forced to cut the anchor cables, and were pushed ashore onto York Beach," Claesson said. "The ship was a total loss, but the crew survived."

Claesson said he has presented his research to the York town officials and the Ellis Park Committee, which manages the beach. He said he hoped town officials could protect the wreckage.

"Minimally, I hope there will be a local stewardship team assembled to keep an eye on the site during storm season, protect the site from looters and inform visitors how to interact responsibly with the site when it is exposed," he said.

## Melting ice uncovers Norse artifacts, route

By Henrik Pryser Libell and Christine Hauser

*Condensed from the New York Times, April 16, 2020*

OSLO — Ice patches that melted from the slopes of a remote mountain pass in Norway have revealed artifacts that provide new insight into the livelihood of hunters, traders and travelers along a route thousands of years old, archeologists said this month.

The relics of this distant past include tunics and mittens woven with wool, leather shoes, arrows still adorned with feathers and snowshoes made for horses. Giant stone cairns mark old pathways once used by traders to find their way through fog and heavy snow. Antlers, bone and animal dung have also been found.

The discoveries, outlined in the scientific journal *Antiquity*, were made on the central mountain range in Norway's Innlandet County by the Glacier Archaeology Program, one of many programs worldwide studying what glaciers and ice patches are laying bare as they shift and melt because of climate change.

Archeologists said that the discoveries have contributed to evidence that a mountain pass at Lendbreen, on the Lomseggen ridge in north-central Norway, was part of a larger network connecting it to the wider Viking world, making it the "first such ice site discovered in Northern Europe."

Previously, they said, the archeology of glaciated passes had been derived from research in the Alps.

"The findings are rich," said Lars Holger Pilo, a Norwegian archeologist working on the project. "It is obvious that the mountains have been more actively in use than previously believed. Although covered in ice, they have used them to pass, from farms in the area or from one side of the mountains to the other."

The program started work on the ice patch at Lendbreen in 2006, but attention increased after a wool tunic, which later was dated to the Bronze Age, was found in 2011. That led to subsequent surveys and discoveries of artifacts such as pieces of sleds, remains of horses and kitchen utensils, suggesting the route was used for trade, hunting and farming.

The findings show the pass was used from about A.D. 300 to 1500, with a peak of activity during the Viking Age in the year 1000 that reflected its importance during a period of long-range trade and commerce in Scandinavia.

The items tell a story of how the route was used and reflect local priorities, such as how farming migrated from the bottom of the valley to higher elevations in summer to take advantage of long daylight hours. It was well-traveled and it connected to other parts of the country and ultimately to ports for export.

"The thing that was really revealing is when you look at the chronology of the artifacts," said James Barrett, a medieval and environmental archeologist at the University of Cambridge, who has been working with Norwegian archeologists on the project since 2012.

"You can literally walk in the footsteps of the past," he said. "It really is showing that in what would seem to be the most remote possible place, the highest elevation is caught up in broader world trends."

The research in Norway has contributed to the body of archeological study centered on items found under ice, either in glaciers that rumble roughshod across terrain, or in ice patches that are more stationary and commonly yield pieces that are intact.

These discoveries have illuminated scientists' understanding of transhumance, which describes how, where and why people moved from one place to another for trade, food, marriage or customs — sometimes over icy mountain passes rather than through the easier terrain, but longer distances, of valleys.

In 1991, hikers accidentally discovered the remains of a man, later nicknamed Ötzi the Tyrolean Iceman, preserved in 5,300 years' worth of ice and snow in the Italian Alps. This marked the start of a promising period of archeology that has gained pace as climate warming has revealed more artifacts, said Stephanie Rogers, a research assistant professor at Auburn University's department of geosciences.

Examination of bacteria from the Iceman has contributed to the understanding of human migration and the movement of pathogens, including the one that causes stomach ulcers, to other parts of the world.

"What was that person doing up there?" she asked, adding that researchers realized that "if we found something in this place, we are going to find something in other places."

The field of transhumance has gained momentum in the past 10 to 20 years as artifacts have been laid bare because of the warming climate melting ice patches and moving glaciers, Rogers said.

"Perhaps this site in Norway had the perfect characteristics for transhumance across the border," she said. "But maybe it was just the perfect setting, passed down for hundreds or thousands of years. It seems like this one in particular is a treasure trove in terms of artifacts."

Pilo said the Norwegian team did not find human remains, possibly because relatives of anyone missing likely would have come to rescue their family members. The tunic might have been flung off by a person in the irrational throes of hypothermia, he said.

Although ice patches move less than glaciers do, some of the finds on the Lendbreen patch were displaced vertically, and others were shifted by meltwater and strong winds.

The ruins of an undated stone-built shelter were situated near the top of the ice patch, making Lendbreen the only one of five mountain passes on the Lomseggen ridge to have such a shelter and a large number of cairns.

Transportation-related artifacts, such as remains of sleds, walking sticks and pieces of a Bronze Age ski, were also laid bare.

The movement, or lack of movement, of some objects can also be telling. Iron horseshoes and nails are less likely to have been displaced than the lighter organic objects, and "should therefore provide a reliable indication of the route," the researchers wrote.

Although some of the artifacts were found in pieces, "they do not obliterate what remains a clear trail of features and finds that delineate a short crossing place over the mountain ridge," according to the findings.

"It was clearly a route of special significance," the researchers said.

*Check with chapter to see if the event is still on*

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:ccasm2010@gmail.com). Website [ccarchsoc.blogspot.com](http://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](mailto:donhou704@earthlink.net) or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: [www.asmmidpotomac.org](http://www.asmmidpotomac.org) Email: [asmmidpotomac@gmail.com](mailto:asmmidpotomac@gmail.com)

**May 21:** Bob Hines will give an update on and plans for excavation at the Riggs House in Brookeville.

### 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](http://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](mailto:dancoates@comcast.net) Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake>

**May (Exact date TBA):** Annual Picnic Meeting. St. Patrick's Irish Catholic Church, Conowingo

### 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 [Ccoogan@smcm.edu](mailto:Ccoogan@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](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358) or [www.upperpatuxentarchaeology.com](http://www.upperpatuxentarchaeology.com) or call Kelly Palich, 410 313 0423.

**May 9:** Steve Curtis and Kelly Palich on the Mill Town of Tridelphia.

# 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](mailto:wmdasm@yahoo.com) Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm>

**May:** No meeting scheduled. **June 26:** TBA

**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 21078-2104 or 410-273-9619 or [dancoates@comcast.net](mailto:dancoates@comcast.net)

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

**President**

Don Housley  
301-424-8526  
[donhou704@earthlink.net](mailto:donhou704@earthlink.net)

**Secretary**

Elaine Hall  
240-426-1298  
[Elaine.frances.hall@gmail.com](mailto:Elaine.frances.hall@gmail.com)

**Membership Secretary**

Ethan Bean  
765-716-5282  
[beans32@comcast.net](mailto:beans32@comcast.net)

**Vice President**

Valerie Hall  
301-814-8028  
[valeriehall@gmail.com](mailto:valeriehall@gmail.com)

**Treasurer**

Larry Seastrum  
410-740-2613  
[seastrum@verizon.net](mailto:seastrum@verizon.net)

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**At-Large Trustees:**

Brent Chippendale  
240-362-6627  
[brentchip@embarqmail.com](mailto:brentchip@embarqmail.com)

Barbara Israel  
410-945-5514  
[barbaraisrael@comcast.net](mailto:barbaraisrael@comcast.net)

Lynne Bullhack  
301-460-5356  
[lbullhack@aol.com](mailto:lbullhack@aol.com)

Aaron Jarvis  
410-997-1962  
[jarvisa@juno.com](mailto:jarvisa@juno.com)

Katherine Fernstrom  
410-243-2757  
[kfernstrom@towson.edu](mailto:kfernstrom@towson.edu)

Fran Kline  
571-228-0171  
[fran.eno.kline@gmail.com](mailto:fran.eno.kline@gmail.com)



