

# ASM Ink

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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.



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

## Here's the latest update for your ASM calendar

With all the time you may now have on your hands, you are probably spending a lot of it wondering about this year's state archeology program for activist ASM members. You may recall that the Workshop in Archeology and the Spring Symposium were the first events to fall victim to Covid. Both were early cancellations.

Hope was held out for the Tyler Bastien Field Session and the then-distant Annual Meeting, set for November. As Covid didn't go away, the field session did. But the Annual Meeting? November! Alas, it too fell by the wayside, almost.

Busy minds and busy fingers tried to work within the new reality and rescue the programs in some form or other. Of the four, only the Spring Symposium couldn't be saved.

Here is what is happening for the other events:

So far the Annual Meeting, sponsored by the Mid-Potomac Chapter, will take place at its scheduled time, on Saturday, November 7 but as a virtual live Zoom program beginning at 9 a.m. with the business meeting consisting of officer reports (treasurer, membership secretary), the president's Year in Review and chapter reports followed by the ASM election results and the Marye Award.

Later the keynote address will be given by Julie King with subsequent talks by Susan Langley, Cassandra Michaud and Heather Bouslog. In keeping with the 100th year celebration of women achieving the right to vote through the 19th Amendment, the overall theme of the presentations is "Celebrating Maryland Women in Archeology."

To substitute for the cancelled March 28 Workshop in Archeology, the planned lectures are now available online at [https://mht.maryland.gov/archeology\\_workshop.shtml](https://mht.maryland.gov/archeology_workshop.shtml).

Along with remarks from ASM President Don Housley are the following:

**Priestly Plantations: What We Know (and Want to Find Out) About the Archeology of Jesuit Sites in Maryland**, by Laura Masur, the Catholic University of America.

**A bleak, barren sand beach: Recent Investigations at Point Lookout Light Station**, by Rob Wanner, archeologist and GIS technician with EAC/Archaeology.

**Cobble Reduction and Tool Production from Late Archaic through Late Woodland at the Elkridge Site** by Bob Wall, Towson University.

**The once great plantation is now but a wilderness: Archeological research at the Josiah Henson Site** by Cassandra Michaud, Montgomery Parks (M-NCPPC)

**Archeology at the Cloverfields Site**, by Zachary Andrews, Applied Archaeology and History Associates.

As for the field session, hopes are still extant that it will be held at the Billingsley Site in late May of next year. This would be a return to the location of last year's session to try to expand on our findings.

## Upcoming events

**November 7:** Annual meeting of ASM. Virtual.

## 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 Bouslag 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.

## Running out of time to vote

The Trump-Biden contest isn't the only game in town. ASM is also holding an election right now and your vote is requested.

Voting by mail isn't a source of contention in this election. Not only is it safe and fraud-free but it is the only way to vote, because the live Annual Meeting was cancelled due to the pandemic.

The ballots were distributed by email earlier this summer. Instructions for returning them are on the back side of the page. But they must be returned by September 10 to be counted. If you haven't returned yours yet, do so now.

The election results will be announced November 7 during the Zoom version of the meeting.

# Second DNA method moves back early date

By Asher Elbein

*Condensed from the New York Times, July 17, 2020*

Over 14,000 years ago, near a stone fire pit in the cool, dry depths of a cavern in the Pacific Northwest, a group of humans heard a call that nobody can deny: the call of nature.

This wasn't unusual — everybody poops — but unlike the vast majority of deposited droppings, these were preserved in the arid climate of what are today called the Paisley Caves of Oregon. On Wednesday, a paper published in *Science Advances* confirmed that the droppings are among the oldest known evidence of human presence in North America, which could help settle an argument about when people first arrived in the Americas, as well as crucial clues to how they lived.

Starting in the 1930s, some archeologists studying the peopling of the Americas believed that the Clovis culture were the first humans to arrive, around 13,000 years ago. But newer evidence has challenged this idea.

"For the past decade, it's been quite well accepted that pre-Clovis populations were present in America," said Lisa-Marie Shillito, an archeologist at the University of Newcastle in England and lead author on the study. "Paisley Cave is one of the key case studies for pre-Clovis populations, because it's one of the only sites where we have archeological material like stone tools in direct association with material that can be dated."

The most famous signs of human occupation at Paisley Caves are preserved dung called coprolites. In 2007, an ongoing excavation of the caves led by Dennis Jenkins of the University of Oregon, a co-author of the new study, found coprolites at the lowest levels of the dig and radiocarbon dated them to around 14,000 years old.

According to Vaughn Bryant Jr, a specialist in coprolites at Texas A&M who was not involved in the study, the first round of DNA analysis suggested that they had been deposited by humans. But some archeologists argued that the specimens had been left by animals and were accidentally contaminated by later humans.

Contamination is always a possibility with DNA analysis, said Ian Bull, a chemist at the University of Bristol in England and a co-author on the paper. But in 2017, Shillito's team analyzed the droppings using a technique that looked for organic compounds called lipids. Unlike DNA, the process of identifying lipids doesn't amplify them: the fecal biomarkers are very difficult to accidentally contaminate. The presence of both human DNA and human fecal markers makes it all but certain that the dung belonged to 14,000-year-old squatters.

"This is a really good example of how you can get synergy between multiple lines of analysis," Bull said.

But the Paisley Caves aren't just America's oldest-known outhouse. Coprolites can also offer a glimpse into how people lived. "They're really great not just for looking to see whether people are present, but as nice little packages of information about diet and health," Shillito said.

The dung found at Paisley Cave suggests a varied diet, not just of large game like mammoths that early Americans are stereotyped as eating. It contains partially digested seed coatings, rodent bones and the outer casings of insects, as well as organic compounds from plants.

Shillito said that in coprolites, "what you largely find is that maybe they were hunting large animals sometimes, but on a day-to-day basis their diets were a lot more varied and diverse."

The coprolites in Paisley Cave also aren't concentrated in latrines or central rubbish pits, which became common in Europe and Asia around 12,000 years ago, as roving bands began living in more permanent settlements, and thus had to begin managing their waste.

Instead, Shillito said, the droppings in the cave generally seem to have been left where they lay. While that might seem strange to us, Shillito said, it makes sense for nomadic people who likely used the cave sporadically.

The team's research is part of a larger project studying the entire assemblage of coprolites laid down in Paisley Caves over thousands of years, in hopes of mapping how diets changed alongside shifts in the climate and environment. Moreover, these fecal remains — along with others from Texas, New Mexico, and Utah — suggest how quickly the first Americans settled the continent.

As more pre-Clovis sites are found, Shillito said, so do opportunities for research. "We'll get a more detailed idea of exactly how people were moving around across the continent, and what they were doing in the environment, rather than just thinking about when they got there."

# Looking back to help look forward

By Bradley Leppert

*Condensed from the Columbus Dispatch, July 5, 2020*

A recent study suggests archeology offer any insights that will help us get out of the dire circumstances we're in with regard to our environment.

The Roman orator Cicero declared that history was the "light of truth."

I wanted to become an archeologist because I was convinced that archeology could shed that light on all of human history — not just on the last few thousand years that people have been writing down selected bits of their histories on clay tablets or reams of paper. I hoped that by building a better understanding of the past, we would have the tools for making good decisions about our future.

Our future is in grave peril at this moment in history. The rapid rise of industries based on burning fossil fuels has led to unprecedented concentrations of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. This is driving profound changes in our global climate that could bring about the collapse of our civilization. Unfortunately, the political influence of those massively wealthy industries is making it hard to do the things we need to do to save ourselves.

Can archeology offer any insights that will help us get out of this mess?

University of Maryland archeologists Marcy Rockman and Carrie Hritz think it can. They offered examples in a paper published in April in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Archeological investigations of company housing associated with 19th Century textile mills in Lowell, Mass., document the history of the system responsible for climate change. In the 1820s, the owners of the mills treated their employees fairly. By the turn of the century, however, they were unfairly exploiting them.

Rockman and Hritz observe that "archeology in Lowell shows that there is no singular form of capitalism. Rather, it has continuously shifted over time and manifested its shifting values in real, tangible ways for the people who lived, and are living, through them."

That means there is no reason why capitalism can't shift again and adopt values that promote sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

Shifting the values of capitalism is not the only challenge we face in reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, a marine biologist writing in the June 3 edition of *The Washington Post*, makes it clear that if we care about maintaining a habitable planet, we must "become actively anti-racist" because "our racial-inequality crisis is intertwined with our climate crisis."

Johnson points out that because people of color suffer more from the effects of climate change, they are significantly more concerned about this issue than white people are. But black voices are being silenced. Johnson asks, "How can we expect Black Americans to focus on climate when we are so at risk on our streets, in our communities, and even within our own homes?"

The Society for American Archaeology issued a statement last month asserting that "archeologists must continue to examine the imbalances of power in society that lead to racial violence. We believe that proper, contextual understanding of power is necessary to overcome and heal from the problems we face today."

Archeology can shed some of that "light of truth" on our problems, but we must be willing to be guided by that light if we are to find our way out of the darkness.

# Covid bored? Go dig up a trove in backyard

*Condensed from news services, August 2020*

Here's one unexpected result of a pandemic lockdown. Many more people seem to be digging up treasure troves of artifacts. Dozens of backyard finds have been reported in the United Kingdom over the past several months as people spend a lot more time in their backyards.

Back in June a Scottish man dug up a bronze object buried in a field near the town of Peebles. He calls it in. After more digging he and his friends found a haul of stuff that's about 3,000 years old. Somehow the leather and wood are still preserved in the soil. Organic materials doesn't usually survive because it is susceptible to disintegrating, to bacteria, things like that.

Metal detectorist Mariusz Stepien said he was "shaking with happiness" when he made the discovery near Peebles, about 22 miles south of Edinburgh.

"I thought I've never seen anything like this before and felt from the very beginning that this might be something spectacular and I've just discovered a big part of Scottish history," he said.

Stepien and his friends contacted the Scottish government's Treasure Trove unit.

"I wish I could say we were excited straight away but actually they were objects I've never seen before, so I wasn't sure what we were looking at," said Emily Freeman, head of the unit, which is part of government. She works with amateur treasure hunters.

Stepien and his friends camped in the field for 22 days as archeologists uncovered the assemblage of artifacts. These included a complete horse harness, buckles, rings, ornaments, a sword still in its scabbard and axle caps from a chariot.

Freeman said it is only the second Bronze Age hoard ever excavated in Scotland. "It was an amazing opportunity for us to not only recover bronze artifacts, but organic material as well," she said. "There is still a lot of work to be done to assess the artifacts and understand why they were deposited."

# Effort to 'rewrite history books' ends in jailing

**By Sarah Cascone**

*Condensed from artnet news, June 12, 2020*

A Spanish archeologist who was celebrated in 2006 for discovering one of the earliest representations of the crucifixion has been found guilty of faking the find — and several others.

Eliseo Gil has been sentenced to two years and three months in prison for falsifying records and artifacts, including one that incorrectly suggested that the written Basque language was six centuries older than previously known.

The scam was "one of the greatest falsifications or manipulations relating to archeological materials from the Roman world," the lead police officer on the case told the court, as reported by the *Guardian*.

Gil made headlines when he unveiled the results of excavations in Veleia, a Roman town near the Basque city of Vitoria, claiming his discoveries would "rewrite the history books," but the authenticity of the artifacts was soon called into question.

By 2008, experts had pointed out several red flags. Some of the objects contained traces of modern glue and references to nonexistent gods. The much-lauded crucifixion scene read "RIP," which contradicts Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus.

# Putting clay arrowheads to the test

By Daniel Hughes

*Condensed from the Columbus Dispatch, May 31, 2020*

Kent State University archeologist Michelle Bebber, along with several colleagues, answered a question it never even would have occurred to me to ask.

Why did no prehistoric cultures ever make their arrowheads from ceramic?

I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit that when I first saw the title of their paper, "The non-invention of the ceramic arrowhead in world archaeology," published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*, I chuckled. Why would anyone even think of making an arrowhead out of ceramic?

Actually, there are a number of reasons why prehistoric people might have decided to do just that. Over the past 30,000 years that people have been making stuff out of clay, such as figurines and pottery vessels, we know that some groups made ceramic hide-scrappers and sling stones. Maybe they just used clay when they couldn't get stone; but then, why no arrowheads — ever?

Like Sherlock Holmes, who famously understood the importance of the dog that didn't bark in the night, Bebber and her colleagues recognized that the non-invention of the ceramic arrowhead was a mystery worth investigating.

They decided to use "controlled experimental ballistics" to compare how well two types of fired clay arrowheads performed when compared with typical flint arrowheads.

The two sets of ceramic arrowheads reflected the range of sophistication in ceramic technology available to ancient societies, from those with access to high-quality clay and specialized pottery kilns to those with lesser-quality clay and just open fires.

Bebber made 35 of each type of ceramic arrowhead, carefully shaping them to approximate the size and shape of the stone arrowheads to which they would be compared. Each of the points were attached to identical shafts.

Then the team fired the arrows from a compound bow mounted on a device that ensured the speed of each arrow would be the same. The targets were blocks of clay or birch wood about 9 feet away. Bebber and her colleagues evaluated the points based on how far they penetrated the target and how well they held up to repeated use.

The team determined that low-quality ceramic points did not penetrate the target as deeply as the flint arrowheads. Even worse, all but one "broke catastrophically upon impact." In contrast, only 25 percent of the high-quality ceramic arrowheads broke.

These results demonstrate why ancient people never used ceramic arrowheads. They simply did not perform anywhere near as well as flint points.

Bebber and her team's rigorous experiments might seem like a lot of work to prove something that seems intuitively obvious, but just because something seems obvious doesn't mean it's true.

NON SEQUITUR

by WILEY





# Finding where ‘Hamilton’ figure died in fight

By Adam Parker

*Condensed from the Charleston, S.C., Post and Courier, August 13, 2020*

In the hit Broadway show “Hamilton,” one of the prominent secondary characters is John Laurens of South Carolina. In the musical, we don’t learn much about Laurens — only that he was a good friend of Alexander Hamilton and a fierce patriot.

And we know that, at age 27, in August 1782, he was killed in action near the end of the Revolutionary War. Maybe you know that he died at the battle of Tar Bluff on the Combahee River.

Historians have recorded the details of the skirmish and the events leading up to it, but the precise location of Laurens’ last military confrontation was not known until now. Thanks to a recent project of the South Carolina Battlefield Preservation Trust — the work was led by archeologist and GIS specialist Mike Yianopoulos — we now have new evidence that sheds more light on Laurens.

“We’d like to preserve as many of the Revolutionary War battlefields as we can,” said Trust executive director Douglas Bostick. “We’ve identified 72 battlefields across the state that we’d like to preserve or interpret.”

The Trust, a nonprofit membership organization that can secure grants for land acquisition, sometimes buys old battlefields outright, sometimes purchases historic land adjacent to existing parks and sometimes negotiates a conservation easement to protect the site from development.

Since some old battlefields are located on private property, the Trust seeks to work with property owners to facilitate research and documentation.

The area where Laurens fell is part of a private quail hunting preserve, so Yianopoulos and his team have been working hard to finish their survey before fall. He said the discoveries have enabled him to pinpoint where the wartime action occurred.

Technology was key. Metal detectors helped them locate all kinds of artifacts — musket balls dropped and fired, an Irish halfpenny dated 1775, a bayonet and, critically, grapeshot, which proved that the British had indeed captured a howitzer cannon from the Patriots and used it against their harassers.

It was all mapped using GPS so patterns could be discerned. Yianopoulos also employed LIDAR (an acronym for Light Detection and Ranging), which removes vegetation and surface material from an image to reveal underlying features.

A crude, hand-sketched map of the shoreline and troop positions drawn from memory by an unknown British officer includes two tiny creeks, narrow ditches really, between which the battle raged. These creeks also appeared in the LIDAR images.

Laurens wasn’t supposed to be stationed at Tar Bluff. He was bedridden, possibly sick with malaria, when he received word of the upcoming skirmish. It was more than 10 months after the Battle of Yorktown, and British troops were evacuating Charleston. But on their way out of town, they raided local rice fields and plantations. A contingent of the Continental Army led by Brigadier General Mordecai Gist planned to intercept them at a ferry crossing. Laurens left his sickbed to join them.

A rabid advocate of American independence, Laurens would several times try and fail to convince his well-connected father, and then the South Carolina House of Representatives, to permit him to organize battalions of formerly enslaved people. Though the Continental Congress agreed to the recruitment scheme, resistance in South Carolina proved too powerful for young Laurens to overcome.

“He’s an honest-to-god abolitionist in South Carolina in the 18th Century,” Bostick tells *Atlas Obscura*. “He’s writing to his father about ‘all men being created equal,’ and needing to free the slaves. When he died, that important voice in what he was advocating for then disappeared.”

## Chapter News

Check with your local chapter to see what activities will take place.

### 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)

### 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>

### 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](mailto: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](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.

### 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>



**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](mailto:dancoates@comcast.net)

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