



Pig Point stakes prehistoric claims

By Frank D. Roylance

Condensed from the Baltimore Sun, August 14, 2011

Three years of digging at a prehistoric Indian site in Anne Arundel County has unearthed the oldest structures and human habitations in Maryland and is making this bluff above the Patuxent River one of the most important archeological sites in the Mid-Atlantic.

Last week, archeologists learned from carbon-14 dating that a stone hearth they uncovered this summer was last used 9,290 years ago. That makes the site, called Pig Point, twice as old as the earliest carbon-dated human habitation found previously in Maryland.

Yet the carbon-14 date is just the latest in a series of extraordinary discoveries at the South County site that are drawing the interest of archeologists from throughout the region.

Beginning in 2009, the team led by Anne Arundel County archeologist Al Luckenbach has found oval patterns of wigwam post holes dating from 800 to 3,000 years ago, the oldest human structures ever found in Maryland.

They have found highly decorated pottery, tools of stone and bone, personal ornaments, copper beads from the Great Lakes, exotic tools and ceramics from the Ohio and Delaware valleys, fossil shark teeth from Southern Maryland and shells from the ocean beaches.

"If you go to [archeology] meetings like the Mid-Atlantic Conference, folks are just drooling over this stuff," said Dennis Curry, an archeologist with the Maryland Historical Trust.

And it could get even better. Luckenbach's team is still finding evidence of human occupations from the Early Archaic period, 10,000 to 8,000 years ago.

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Bowen replacing Kern as ASM president

With regret Mechelle Kern has announced her resignation as president of ASM. She is being replaced by Vice President Claude Bowen.

Bowen grew up on a farm in Southern Maryland and has been a member of ASM for more than 20 years. Before becoming vice president, he served on the board of trustees for two terms. He also was president of the Southern Chapter and has represented ASM on the MHT working group on Native American remains. In addition to being vice president, he was the ASM grants administrator.

Kern, an archeologist and an educator, is not severing her ties with ASM. She will continue as president of the Anne Arundel Chapter and with several ASM responsibilities.

Her letter of resignation appears on Page 3 of this newsletter.

Upcoming events

September 10: ASM board meeting. 10 a.m. Central Library, Columbia. All members are welcome to attend.

October 8: ASM Annual Meeting, Robinson Nature Center, Columbia.

October 27-30: ESAF annual meeting, Mt. Laurel, New Jersey.

November 12: CAT workshop day.

January 4-8, 2012: Society for Historical and Underwater Archaeology (SHA) meeting, Baltimore.

Volunteer opportunities

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

The Archaeology Conservancy is looking for a few volunteers to excavate the **Pamplin Pipe Factory site** in Pamplin, Va., August 15-19 and possibly also August 22-26. Volunteers will be provided nearby hotel rooms if desired, though they may need to share a room. Contact Will Sheppard at tac_wsheppard@verizon.net or 301-682-7073 for more details.

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

Coming up November 12, CAT Workshop Day. For details, updates and information on CAT activities check the ASM website.

FRANK AND ERNEST

Tom Thaves



Mechelle Kerns' resignation letter

I regret that I will not be able to complete my term and effective September 10, 2011 I am resigning as president of ASM. I will be teaching for the U.S. Naval Academy this fall in addition to my classes with UMUC and my cultural resources consulting firm. Moreover, I am a wife and mother of two young boys (5 and 7) and must prioritize my family time. My professional and personal obligations simply leave no additional time to devote to ASM and I feel that I am neglecting my duties.

Claude Bowen will take over as president and the ASM Board will elect an interim vice president. I want only the best for ASM as I believe in its mission and programs but at this point in my life, I am not the person to lead the organization.

I hope that ASM will continue to embrace technology to attract and reach new members. I regret that I will be unable to continue my plans to bring in new membership, work closer with academic institutions and civic organizations (such as the Boy and Girl Scouts) and other state archeological societies, but I have every confidence that Claude and the ASM board will continue such plans in my absence.

In closing, I would ask that each member of ASM look to himself or herself to see what they could do or bring to the organization as it goes forward. ASM needs more involvement from more of its members to remain a viable organization supporting archeology in Maryland.

-- Mechelle Kerns

Pig Point stakes prehistoric claim

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As they dig even deeper into the bluff, and back in time, the next period they would reach is the "Paleo Indian" or "Clovis" time, roughly 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. Those people were the earliest whose arrival in North America, via the Bering "land bridge" from Siberia to Alaska, is universally accepted.

Last year, neighbors showed Luckenbach several fluted Clovis spear points they picked up in a field at the foot of the bluff. So his team is now on the lookout for more Paleo-Indian artifacts in their excavations, finds they could document and date.

And as they dig, they have begun to consider the chances of finding even earlier artifacts, below the Paleo level.

Claims of "pre-Paleo" discoveries elsewhere in the United States and South America have been enormously controversial among scientists. But at Pig Point, where deep, "layer cake" deposits with solid C-14 dating make chronologies quite clear, such a find would be difficult to dispute.

That would be "the absolute jackpot," said Joe Dent, an associate professor and expert in Mid-Atlantic prehistory at American University in Washington. "If they encountered pre-Paleo, this would be an international site. Archeologists worldwide would beat a path to it."

Luckenbach has said he believes Pig Point is already "the most important prehistoric archeological site in Maryland."

Setting aside the extraordinary artifacts, archeologists say Pig Point is most unique and valuable because of its nearly 10,000-year record of continuous human habitation.

"Most [Native American] sites in Maryland are 10 inches deep," Luckenbach said. The shallow deposits hold a mix of artifacts from successive Native American groups who lived there over hundreds or thousands of years, with little if any chronological separation.

Often the shallow deposits have been churned for centuries by plows. That makes it impossible to separate and study the material cultures and chronology of the people who left them behind.

There are a few deeply stratified archeological sites. Curry cited one called the Monocacy Site, excavated in the late 1960s and early 1970s at the confluence of the Potomac and Monocacy rivers, near Dickerson.

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"It's got probably 10 feet of stratified stuff," thanks to periodic river flooding, he said. "But most of that 10 feet is sterile soil [without artifacts], and covers maybe a thousand years."

At Pig Point, the tools, ceramics, food waste and traces of wigwams have been repeatedly buried by fresh deposits of soil, probably washed down from higher on the bluff. That has left a continuous record, 6 or 7 feet deep, with the oldest occupations at the bottom of the layer cake, and the most recent at the top. And carbon-14 dates from many of the 13 layers have confirmed their ages.

The first season of digging produced the site's youngest carbon date of AD 1540. As the months went by, deeper levels yielded dates of AD 530 and AD 210. This year and last, burned materials from deeper hearths have yielded carbon dates of 6,500 years before the present, then 8,500 years and last week, 9,290 years.

"The whole sequence [of C-14 dates] fit the way they should," Curry said. "It's very clear that the 6 feet of sediment is undisturbed."

Christopher Goodwin, a commercial archeologist based in Frederick who is not involved in the work, said the firm sequence of dates and discoveries at Pig Point "not only allows us to look at individual components of pre-history and describe subsistence and material culture, but it gives us the opportunity to look at long-term patterns of change. That's what archeology is all about. It's a fabulous site."

Goodwin believes the artifacts unearthed at Pig Point will become a "type collection," a kind of standard reference that will help archeologists from New England to the Southeast classify and date their own discoveries.

What impresses Luckenbach about Pig Point is the site's enduring natural bounty, which for close to 10,000 years has invited continuous occupations by human groups seeking a true Land of Pleasant Living.

The dig has uncovered traces of their menu, which included wild rice, tuckahoe, hickory nuts, freshwater mussels, and lots of game and fish, Luckenbach said. Bones and scales were sent to an expert in North Carolina, who identified them as those of yellow perch and white perch.

"Eighty-five hundred years ago, it's supposed to be a different environment," he said. "But when you think about what we got out of the pit, it's exactly what you'd get still today."

Based on the unique and exotic artifacts he's recovered at Pig Point, he believes the area may have been an important junction for trade, cultural and perhaps religious exchange between the Ohio Valley and the Atlantic coast, and still other cultures to the north and south.

What may be almost as remarkable as the discoveries Luckenbach and his team are making, archeologists say, is the fact that he's been allowed to conduct the dig at all.

Despite financial woes at both the state and county levels, the work has continued for three seasons, funded by Anne Arundel County and grants from the Maryland Historical Trust, as well as private donations. County staff, volunteers and college interns from at least four states have dug two days a week, every week, from April to the first frost.

"It's very unusual for a county archeology office to have the support to engage in a multiyear project like this, and to just do it to find out what's there," Dent said. "It's amazing what Al's been able to do."

Dent praised the property owner, William Brown, who first contacted Luckenbach about the artifacts he was finding there and who has pitched in to help as Luckenbach's crews dug deeper and deeper holes in the front yard of a rental house on his property.

"People are enthusiastic about archeologists for a while," Dent said. "But after we've been camped out in your front yard for three years, the fascination very often wanes. He [Brown] is an archeologist's dream."

Why does he do it?

"Because they're learning and I'm learning," Brown said. "And it's important."

Coming up next month: ASM's Annual Meeting

The theme for this year's Annual Meeting is "Changing Lives, Changing Landscapes." It takes place Saturday Oct. 8 at the brand new Robinson Nature Center in Howard County. A varied lineup of speakers has been arranged. Full details will be available in next month's newsletter and on the ASM website.

Time is rapidly running out

1. It's a well-known historical fact that no one can win the William B. Marye Award without first being nominated. If there is someone who you think should be honored for outstanding contribution to Maryland archeology, you are almost out of time to submit that person's name. Nominations are due by September 8. See the ASM website for the nomination form.

2. ASM also is looking for contributions to a silent auction to be held during this year's Annual Meeting, Oct. 8 in Howard County. Do you have something that you think someone else will treasure or enjoy? Something physical, a service? Items need not be archeology related. A contribution form can be found on the ASM website on the Hot News Page. The deadline is Sept. 16.

17th Century governor's house probed

By Jason Babcock

Condensed from Southern Maryland News, June 8, 2011

From 1634 until 1695, St. Mary's City was Maryland's first capital. However, for a time official business of the colony was also sometimes conducted on waterfront property in Maddox.

The eighth governor of Maryland, Thomas Notley, lived on the Wicomico River on land today called Notley Hall. It is here where the Council of Maryland sometimes met and where Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert, sometimes resided.

A group of archeologists and students from St. Mary's College of Maryland worked last month in a cornfield excavated for clues to exactly where Notley's home was. They found Indian ceramics and other artifacts predating Notley's time there. They also found red and yellow bricks, a sure sign of a structure on the site.

Once the color and texture of the soil changes, it tracks back into the prehistoric period, said Skylar Bauer, who just graduated from the college with a degree in anthropology. She made the Notley site her senior research project.

Bauer said there was "almost definitely" an Indian settlement on the land before English settlers arrived.

The bricks were easier to find. Many of them are exposed in the field where it is likely a structure was, said Professor Julie King, who is supervising the dig.

Red bricks are a common find, but most of these bricks are yellow. Records show that a vessel from Sweden brought over 50,000 yellow bricks, which were used for chimneys or decorative work in the area, King said. "They're on the edge of the world," she said of the Maryland colonists. "They've got these Swedish bricks and they're trying to replicate the world they left behind."

It is only the second time that the site has been explored by archeologists. The last time was in 1981. "Everybody knew it was Notley Hall, but nobody ever did any work," King said.

Notley, a Catholic who became a Protestant, was a merchant who came to St. Mary's County in 1662 from Barbados. He was on good terms with Lord Baltimore's family as well as their opponent, Josiah Fendall, who threatened to overthrow the Calvert family's rule of the Maryland colony.

Notley served in the lower house of the Maryland assembly and was governor from 1676 to 1679 and justice of the Provincial Court during that same time.

It was in 1676 that a new brick state house was built at St. Mary's City that also served as the colony's and the county's courthouse. That building stood until it was pulled down in 1830, according to "Narrative and Critical History of America," by Justin Winsor. A reconstructed state house now sits in the site.

The Provincial Council met at various locations, King said, and would go to Notley's property because it was close for the Piscataway Indians.

Notley was a wealthy man. When he died in April 1679, he had 2,750 acres of land, 34,560 pounds of tobacco, 29 slaves, seven servants and book collection, according to a property inventory. Notley had no survivors and his assets went to Charles Calvert.

Today, the property investigated last month during the archaeological dig is under an agricultural easement and can't be developed, King said.

Chapter notes

Anne Arundel

Meets five times a year in February, April, June, September and November at the Severna Park Branch of the County Public Library, 45 McKinsey Road. 7:30 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns at AACHapASM@hotmail.com or the chapter website www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php

September 20: TBA

November 15: TBA

Central

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 first Wednesday (September-May) at Historic LaPlata Train Station. Contact President Carol Cowherd at cowherdcl@gmail.com or 301-375-9489.

September 7: Tim Thoman, manager of the Native American Village at Jefferson Patterson, will demonstrate flintknapping.

October 5: Jim Gibb will explore the history and architecture of Maryland mills and show how archeological investigations have revealed remarkable differences in technology.

November 2: Julia A. King, professor of anthropology, St. Mary's College of Maryland, will discuss this summer's search for the Piscataway Fort and other work in the Zekiah swamp.

December 7: Tom Forhan will speak on historic archeology of the Riley Tract Rock Creek Park, Washington, DC. Before the government acquired the land for Rock Creek Park in 1890, the area was farmed by a diverse group of landowners and tenants, including William Riley.

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@gmail.com>
Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mid-Potomac-Archaeology/182856471768>
Email: asmmidpotomac@gmail.com

September 15: Meeting at Needwood Mansion, 6700 Needwood Road, Derwood. Speaker and topic to be determined. Check our facebook page or website for updates.

October 20: Meeting at Needwood Mansion at 7:30. Check our Facebook page or website for updates about speaker and topic.

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick on the second Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. Contact Jeremy Lazelle at 301-845-9855 or jlazelle@msn.com or Nancy Geasey at 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>

September 14: Bill McIntyre talks about "40 Years Working in the HCAS/ASNC." At Harford Glen.

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 Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or leeprestonjr@comcast.net

September 12: Roy Brown on "Prehistory: Animal, Vegetable, Mineral."

October 10: Lab session. Artifacts from Mt. Pleasant and the PFI.

November 14: Dana Kollman on Page and Keyser internment regimes from the middle and upper Potomac River valley.

December 12: Lab session. Native American and historic artifacts.

January. No meeting.

February 13: Lee Preston on "Made in China: From Terra Cotta Soldiers, to Porcelain and Silk."

March 12: Lousie Akerson on "Late Eighteenth/early Nineteenth Century Ceramics." A workshop on the difference between porcelain, stoneware and redware, and some of the common decorations found on late 18th/early 19th Century ceramics. Visuals will include slides and reproduction ceramics.

April 9: Celeste Huecker on Easter Island.

May 14: Kathie Fernstrom on a subject TBD.

June 11: TBD

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>

September 23: Dana Kollmann talks about applying forensic archeology and anthropology in the search for and recovery of a missing man in Vermont.

October 28: Fred Will speaks on the development and use of wooden barn stars unique to farms of south central Pennsylvania.

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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

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