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What's on MAC Lab website? Lots

By Patricia M. Samford
Director, MAC Lab

One of the goals of the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory from its early days under the leadership of Dr. Julia King has been to increase online accessibility to data critical for archeologists to conduct their research.

One of the early projects undertaken was a finding aid created to introduce users to 34 important archeological collections curated at the MAC Lab (http://www.jefpat.org/2archaeology.htm). These collections represent archeological sites uncovered from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore and they date from around 10,000 B.C. to the mid-20th Century.

Another initiative was the Comparative Archaeological Study of Colonial Chesapeake Culture (http://www.chesapeakearchaeology.org), which placed online maps, photographs and artifact inventories from 18 early sites from Virginia and Maryland.

One of the most successful web-based projects undertaken at the MAC Lab has been the Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland webpage (www.jefpat.org/diagnostic/index.htm). With funding from the National Park Service's National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, the MAC Lab launched a series of webpages in 2002 that describe prehistoric and colonial ceramic types in detail, with photos of examples and lists of reference materials. Archeologists use the site for cataloging and members of the public have been using the site to identify and date ceramics they find in their own plowed fields and gardens.

In 2008, the MAC Lab decided to focus again on this website by adding new categories of artifacts. A page on Small Finds was launched early that year to discuss miscellaneous objects not found on excavations in large quantities, the way ceramics, glass and architectural debris often are.

Small finds can be problematic to use in archeological analyses because they vary greatly and it is often difficult to find publications that provide information about them. The goal of the Small Finds section is to help fill that void by providing details about the chronology, function, manufacture, etc., of small finds recovered in Maryland.

Small Finds categories currently available are leather ornaments (decorative metal pieces used on leather accessories or horse tack), bodkins, smoker's companions, religious objects and sleeve buttons.

In addition to Small Finds, English and American ceramics dating from the last quarter of the 18th Century through circa 1850 now are being added to the website, with edged and printed earthenware and relief molded stoneware jugs now available. Painted and dipped earthenware will be added by the early summer.

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Upcoming events

June 13 – 21: Barton Site dig,

October 17: Annual ASM Meeting, Havre de Grace Maritime Museum.

Volunteer opportunities

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

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

ASM field session collection: Volunteers are needed to work on up-grading collections associated with previous field sessions. Currently being curated is the collection from the Rose Haven Site in Anne Arundel County, dating from the Archaic to early historic. The lab in Crownsville is open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. For information contact Louise Akerson lakerson1@verizon.net or Charlie Hall chall@mdp.state.md.us.

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County. 410-222-7440.

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

Jefferson Patterson Park invites volunteers to take part in its various activities, including archeology, historical research and artifact 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

For updates and information on other CAT activities check the ASM website.

A website has been set up for candidates and graduates: http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/MDcat/ . To jointhe group email MDcat-subscribe@yahoogroups.comMembers can choose to get emails or just use thewebsite to send messages. Courtesy of CAT candidate Tom Forhan.

Barton Site dig scheduled for June 13-21

By Robert Wall

Principal Investigator

The Western Maryland Chapter of ASM and the Towson University Archaeological Field School will be held at the Barton site from June 13 – 21. As outlined in a research proposal to the Archaeological Conservancy, the excavation units will be focused on the area adjacent to the Keyser structure identified in 2006-7 and on the periphery of the Susquehannock area of the site.

Last year a possible Susquehannock structure was identified in the re-excavation of an ASM field session excavation unit from 1995. Follow-up work will be undertaken in this "structure" area to more clearly identify its outline. Another two-meter deep test unit will also be placed adjacent to the ones

excavated in past years. This year we have the results of a magnetometer survey that we will be ground truthing with limited test excavations.

As always, ASM volunteers from around the state are welcome to visit and participate in the excavations. After the initial field session ends on June 21, work will continue on the deep excavation unit on selected weekends throughout the summer. For further information contact me (rdwall@towson.edu) or the western Maryland Chapter of ASM.

Lost Towns goes prehistoric

By E.B. Furgurson III

Condensed from the Annapolis Captial, May 17, 2009

County archeologists searching for clues about Native American settlements in what became Anne Arundel County have hit a trove of pottery, arrowheads and perhaps even the remnants of a wigwam near Jug Bay.

The only problem is, they haven't hit their specific target: evidence of the Middle Woodland Period settlement from roughly zero to A.D. 900. Instead, there are plenty of shards of earlier and later settlements, including amazing finds like 10,000-year-old spear points.

The dig, on property overlooking the Patuxent River, started when archeologists and volunteers from the county's Lost Towns Project dug a series of test pits to determine if there was indeed any evidence of prehistoric settlement on the site.

After finding some arrowheads and pottery shards, wider pits were dug. One turned up the shells of now locally extinct freshwater clams piled in the corner of the hole right next to what seems to be a fire pit.

"I was thinking we could have a little prehistoric clambake here," quipped county archeologist Al Luckenbach.

He said staff from the county's adjacent Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary were excited about the find and contacted a shellfish expert from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who will visit the site to see the white shells herself.

Another pit, 5 feet by 5 feet, bore more shards and arrowheads, evidence of Late Woodland Period settlement. "The bow and arrow were not invented (locally) until 800 or 900 A.D., the end of the Middle Woodland," Luckenbach explained.

The same pit has yielded other evidence of Indian settlement: a telltale pattern of dark, round spots in the earth, indicative of the saplings stuck into the ground to build a wigwam.

"You see them there, about six inches apart," Luckenbach said. But there were two slightly arching rows of the sapling ghosts about a foot apart.

"I can't explain that, yet," he said. "It could mean they returned to the site year after year."

Luckenback thinks the wigwam dates from A.D. 500 and could be the oldest structure ever found in Maryland.

Jane Cox, assistant director of the Lost Towns Project, crouched on the ground, barely scraping the surface of the pit's dirt with the edge of her trowel. Each pass of the trowel made the now dark smudges, where the saplings once supported the rest of the wigwam's structure, stand out.

But within minutes the dry air would render the surface pale again, and she'd have to scrape again, hoping to set up a photograph of the pattern for the project's records.

"Ooh-hoo," she exclaimed, reaching into the dirt. She opened her hand to reveal a dusty arrowhead, fully intact, with spiked edges.

"I think that's a Kanawha point," said Shawn Sharpe, Lost Towns' field director. "Or maybe its a Kessel or St. Albans."

Luckenbach believes generations of Native Americans came to the spot along the Patuxent to feast on the water's bounty.

"For 10,000 years, we think, they were here on this promontory overlooking the river for a period in spring or fall, then would move on to another camp," he said, perhaps working inland to take advantage of berries, deer and other game.

The study, funded by a grant from the Maryland Historical Trust beginning last year, is delving into the Middle Woodland Period.

Some 500 sites have been noted across the county over the years. Luckenbach and the Lost Towns crew have mapped about 150 likely sites, and hope to narrow their focus down to about "seven of the best ones where we find intact Middle Woodland settlement."

Britain, 'detectorists' work together

By Mary Jordan

Condensed from the Washington Post, May 11, 2009

PENARTH, Wales -- Derek Eveleigh walked carefully, searching for buried treasure.

"It's such a thrill when I find something -- and I often do," Eveleigh said as he listened to the steady beeps of his metal detector. Not far away from this Welsh seaside town, he recently found 6,000 copper coins dating to the Roman Empire.

"It turned out they were 1,700 years old! Many emperors ago," said Eveleigh, 79, one of thousands of British "metal detectorists" who search for history as a hobby.

While archeologists in many countries, including the United States, disparage amateurs like Eveleigh, Britain embraces them. Last year alone, 4,300 metal detectorists reported tens of thousands of finds: Bronze Age axes, Roman brooches and hairpins, medieval candlesticks and swords and thousands of other relics.

Before museum archeologists began working with metal detector enthusiasts a decade ago, only about 25 reported discoveries annually met the official definition of "treasure" -- the most rare finds, which include gold and silver caches more than 300 years old. Every year since, that number has soared, hitting 802 last year.

"The collections in our museums would be thinner without the detectorists' finds," said Roger Bland, head of Portable Antiquities and Treasure at the British Museum in London, as he pointed out jewelry, coins and other displays found by weekend warriors combing fields for fun.

All around the world, long-buried antiquities are turning up as modern farm machinery plows ever deeper into the soil. At the same time, more sophisticated detectors can pinpoint coins, swords, necklaces, knives and other relics hidden deeper underground.

This has alarmed many.

Looters are sneaking onto protected historical sites -- Civil War battlefields in the United States, archeological sites in Thailand, cemeteries in Italy -- and finding objects to sell privately.

In England, these thieves with metal detectors are called "nighthawks." People are prohibited from bringing detectors onto protected historical sites and monuments, but many holes in the ground have been discovered where items have been removed.

In Ireland, as in many countries, the use of metal detectors is restricted.

Nessa O'Connor, archeological curator at the National Museum of Ireland, said there is concern that treasure seekers will "dig a hole through an Iron Age burial" to get a brooch and destroy the historical information that could be gleaned from a careful unearthing.

British authorities estimate there are about 10,000 metal-detecting enthusiasts and say the vast majority are responsible people who obey the law, seek permission to go on private land and even watch out for thieves. Also, by working with detectorists, offering to authenticate objects and paying market value for those declared treasure, British museums aim to minimize the number of antiquities quietly dug up and sold on eBay.

In many European countries, buried treasures recovered from the soil and not traced to any family are deemed state property; often a relatively small fee is paid to the finder. That is also seen as a reason many finders choose to keep secret their discoveries and sell them privately.

Since the 1996 Treasure Act became law, finders in Britain are offered market value for their discoveries and museums have the first option to buy official treasures.

Mark Lodwick, an archeologist at the National Museum Wales, is part of a network of "finds liaison officers" -- archeologists throughout England and Wales who regularly attend metal-detectorist club meetings so people know to call them when they hit a relic.

"Every day the phone rings," Lodwick said.

The overwhelming majority of items turned over to museum archeologists are returned to the finders after their information is recorded.

Rare discoveries -- such as the million-dollar 10th-Century Viking treasure trove a father and son discovered with their metal detectors two years ago -- receive extensive publicity. But most have little commercial value -- cracked pieces of medieval pottery, for instance -- though archeologists and enthusiasts still cherish what they tell of life centuries ago.

"If you want to get into metal detecting to make a profit, forget it," said Trevor Austin, general secretary for the National Council for Metal Detecting, a body that represents those in the hobby. "As a general rule, people get into it for the historical aspect, to find a Roman or medieval coin -- that's the interest."

Americans come to Britain to pursue the hobby here because of the liberal laws and the richness of the country's buried bounty.

Dick Stout, founder of the Federation of Metal Detector and Archeological Clubs in the United States, said there have been only rare examples of U.S. archeologists working with detectorists. After a fire swept through the Little Bighorn Battlefield in Montana in 1984, a team of detectorists helped find remnants of the battle where George Armstrong Custer made his famous last stand.

Eveleigh's 5,913 copper coins were found to date from A.D. 260 to 269 and valued at $83,000. "If they were gold or silver, they would be worth much more," said Eveleigh, who will split the money with the landowner, as is customary.

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Continued from Page One

English and American ceramics dating from the last quarter of the 18th Century through circa 1850 also are being added to the website, with edged and printed earthenware and relief molded stoneware jugs now available. Painted and dipped earthenware will be added by the early summer.

The lab has been assisted in this ceramic project with funding from the Maryland Historical Trust Board, which was used to hire George L. Miller, a noted British and American ceramics scholar.

Another new initiative by the lab is a website on wood and wood charcoal identification. Funded by a grant from the National Park Service's Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, this online resource (http://www.jefpat.org/Wood & Charcoal Identification/Wood and Charcoal ID Introduction.htm) will be an invaluable tool for archeologists and paleobotanists.

This website project was headed by Dr. Harry Alden, a botanist and world-recognized expert in the microscopic identification of plant materials. Alden created a type collection of unburnt wood and charcoal samples for trees and woody shrubs found in the Northern Chesapeake region.

Using this collection, which is housed at the MAC Lab, he created online wood and charcoal identification tools for 25 of the most commonly occurring trees and shrubs in the region. High-resolution photographs of magnified thin sections of wood and charcoal have been labeled to show key characteristics of cellular structure useful in identification.

The webpage also contains a section on wood and charcoal identification basics, a glossary and a bibliography, as well as links to other websites. This website became available in March.

Finally, this summer the Lab will be premiering a webpage and database devoted to the climate-induced environmental changes that have occurred in the Chesapeake Bay region over the last 20,000 years. This project uses botanical data available from archeological evidence to track how plant communities have evolved and changed over this time.

Archeobotanist Justine McKnight and Dr. Martin Gallivan, archeologist and professor of anthropology at the College of William and Mary, created a database of microscopic pollen, phytoliths, seeds, nuts and other charred plant remains from 90 archeological sites spanning 12,000 years of Maryland history.

The new webpage will have a searchable online database of paleobotanical data from Maryland archeological sites, descriptions of the 90 sites and a summary of environmental change in a narrative form.

This research tool will be of great use to scholars trying to develop a context for interpreting the plant remains found on newly excavated archeological sites and also will be invaluable to researchers interested in environmental changes. Check out www.jefpat.org this summer to see the paleobotany site.

Book review: A garden of earthly delights

"Kitchens, Smokehouses, and Privies: Outbuildings and the Architecture of Daily Life in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic," by Michael Olmert, Cornell University Press, 286 pages, $28

We call them outbuildings, but when they were in use they usually were called outhouses -- the collection of little buildings that supplemented a colonial-era house. They were not ornamental garden follies, but served various purposes and each was a thought-out, refined statement of the times.

Michael Olmert has spent years tramping around the Chesapeake region, looking, photographing and studying these buildings. "Kitchens, Smokehouses, and Privies" is the satisfying fruit of his labors. As the subtitle indicates, he looks not only at the buildings but also at the usually neglected stories they tell about the societies that used them.

"The culture of outbuildings was made possible by vast class differences, economic hardship, servitude, and slavery," he points out. For instance: "The detached kitchen of the Tidewater was a departure from architectural custom. It had little to do with the threat of fire [more houses burned down than kitchens] and everything to do with slavery…. Like manna from heaven, food just appeared [in the main house], like grace itself, justifying the family's status and privilege."

Laundries too once were part of the main house. As outbuildings, they sometimes were shared a structure, such as a kitchen-laundry building or a dairy-laundry. The end of slavery marked their end.

Smokehouses generally were square with a pyramidal roof, the roof shape allowing more room for hanging meat so that heat and smoke could preserve the meat by evaporating the water content. These buildings are windowless but can have small vents.

Dairies are identified by the wide eaves of their roofs and the high, horizontal openings on the walls that maximize passive cooling. They are a clean work building (even though germs weren't understood at this time) and the work often was done, or at least supervised, by the females of the household. Even before technology made them obsolete, they passed out of fashion.

Privies or "necessaries" were of various sizes and accommodated a various number of users -- today's sense of privacy did not seem to be the norm then.

The office usually stood to the right of the yard as one approached the front of the house. Offices came in a variety of shapes and sizes. In fact, it sometimes is hard to tell from a foundation that the disappeared building was an office.

Another common structure was the dovecote, which provided meat, eggs, down, fertilizer and gunpowder. Some were substantial buildings, but others were post-in-ground constructions not designed to last or to leave much trace for archeologists. They assumed a variety of shapes.

The final outbuilding discussed is the icehouse. "Mainly, icehouses served at the pleasure of a few, and depended on the backbreaking labor of many." They leave traces since they required underground construction.

The final two chapters deal with octagonal or hextagonal buildings, shapes that had religious connotations.

"The small buildings that once dotted the colonial backyard were purpose-built structures designed to do a single task and do it well," Olmert writes. "Outbuildings were important elements in the drama of

American life from the seventeenth century up to the Civil War, especially in the mid-Atlantic colonies, and more particularly in the Chesapeake Tidewater."

There was method to the arrangement of the buildings too. Clean work was kept away from dirty work and often effort was made to balance the buildings' locations for esthetic purposes.

The end of slavery curtailed much of their use, but after World War II "the introduction of public services and better roads, the old ways began to disappear for good."

Abundantly illustrated, Olmert's book is a rich, informative combination of scholarship, shoe leather and reader-friendly writing. It includes extensive notes and discussion of sources.

-- Myron Beckenstein

Chapter notes

Anne Arundel

The Chapter meets five times a year in February, April, June, September, and November at the All Hallows Parish Brick Church at the Parish Hall near London Town, at 7 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns-Nocerito at AAChapASM@hotmail.com or visit the chapter website www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php

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 7:30 on the second Tuesday (September–May) at the Port Tobacco Court House. Contact President Paula Martino at paulamartino@hotmail.com or 301-752-2852.

Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Agricultural History Farm Park Activity Center in Derwood. Dinner at a local restaurant is at 6. Monthly lab nights are the first Thursday of the month. Contact heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org, or call 301-840-5848 or Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. . Chapter website: www.mid-potomacarchaeology.org

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick, on the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. Contact Jeremy Lazelle at 301-845-9855 orjlazelle@msn.com or Nancy Geaseyat 301-378-0212.

Northern Chesapeake

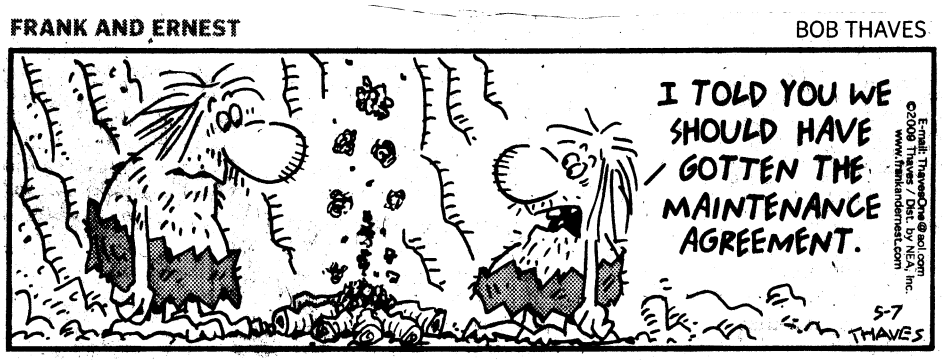
Meetings are the second Thursday of the month. Members and guests assemble at 6:30 p.m. for light refreshments. A business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30.Contact Ann Persson at 410-272-3425 or aspst20@yahoo.com Website: http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake

Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Mt. Ida, near the courthouse in Ellicott City. Potluck suppers are held at 6:15 in September and March. Otherwise, dinner is available at an Ellicott City restaurant. For information, contact Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or leeprestonjr@comcast.net

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: www.geocities.com/wmdasm



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

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

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

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