



## Scouts meet archeology, both win

By Dave Gerrie

One of the more poignant remarks at ASM's Spring Symposium noted the sea of "gray heads" in the audience. It is a constant struggle to bring the young into a discipline that deals almost solely with the old.

The Society knows of a valuable, energetic program that regularly involves youth in local archeology, but it is profitable to remind ourselves of it occasionally. The Boy Scouts of America merit badge program includes a fairly sophisticated, culturally aware Archeology Merit Badge program.

The program requires, among other elements, active participation in local archeology and events. We held such an event recently in Southern Maryland and the results were impressive for both scouting and for archeology in Maryland.

Among a number of events at the "Environmental Awareness" camporee in April, the Zekiah District (Charles County) sponsored a two-day archeological exercise at the Mirant Mid-Atlantic property on the lower Zekiah Swamp. The event included site location, conservation and preservation as well as extensive background exploration of local settlements. It concluded with an eight-hour excavation at the Newburg farmhouse that introduced scouts to the basics of surveying, shovel tests and moving volumes of dirt with trowels and paint brushes.

As much as possible, the excavation was conducted using standard practices, although much abbreviated because of the timeframe. Some special accommodations were constructed, including stabilized and shorter shaker screens and pre-established grids.

Nearly 30 scouts from the rank of "First Class" through "Life" (13 - 16 years old) participated in the program. The scouts had to complete about a week in prerequisites as well as the daylong excavation.

The excitement and enthusiasm of these youths, both during the event and after, should be inspiring to the Society. Even the paucity of artifacts (a few nails, gnawed bones and relocated shells) didn't discourage them. (A full report of the "excavation" is to be presented to the Mirant Corporation and will be available at the Zekiah website, which is under Districts (Zekiah) at the main National Capitol Area website, <http://www.boy Scouts-ncac.org>).

Scouts are an active and engaged part of every locality in Maryland. Their merit badge program provides a valuable and often lifelong entree into disciplines and skills the scope of which is rarely seen in youths of this age in Maryland. Each merit badge must be led by a qualified counselor and Archeology is no exception.

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## Upcoming events

**September 12:** ASM board meeting. Howard County Central Library, Columbia. 10 a.m. All members are welcome to attend.

**September 19-20:** The 17th Annual Native American Festival of the Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians at the ball field in Vienna, Maryland. For information, call the NWBI Office at 410-376-3889.

**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 County** is offering opportunities for lab and field work Wednesdays, 9:30 to 2:30. Call 301-840-5848 or contact [james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org](mailto:james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org) or [heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org](mailto: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. The project is almost finished. The final batch is the collection from the Kanawa Springs Site (18FR8), a Frederick County Woodland site. The lab in Crownsville is open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. Contact Louise Akerson at [lakerson1@verizon.net](mailto:lakerson1@verizon.net) or Charlie Hall [chall@mdp.state.md.us](mailto: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](mailto: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/](http://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 is available to candidates and graduates:

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/MDcat/> . To join the group email [MDcat-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:MDcat-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) Members can choose to get emails or just use the website to send messages. Courtesy of CAT candidate Tom Forhan.

## Bethesda site linked to Uncle Tom's Cabin

Montgomery County is inviting the public to participate in a dig on a Bethesda site tied to the famous Civil War-era novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The old Riley farm is associated with the Reverend Josiah Henson, who lived and worked on this property as a slave from 1795 to 1825. Henson's life and autobiography inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel.

The session will run from September 8 through 17. Diggers are welcome for one day or all days. There is a charge of \$25 a day. Register on [www.parkpass.org](http://www.parkpass.org)

# Early man also changed landscape

By Christopher Joyce

*NPR Weekend Edition Sunday, August 23, 2009*

Archeologists who study early hunter-gatherer societies are discovering that even the simplest cultures altered their environments, whether they meant to or not.

For example, aboriginal people in Australia burned huge areas to change the landscape so they could hunt animals more easily. Perhaps the most famous example is the way mastodons and giant sloth and other ice-age animals were killed off by roving bands of hungry humans.

Torben Rick, an archeologist at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, says the notion of hunter-gatherers living in perfect harmony with their environment is going the way of the dodo (another animal extinguished by early humans). He says he's discovered that indigenous people even altered America's coastlines, thousands of years ago.

In a big, sunny laboratory at the Smithsonian, Rick pulls a palm-sized shell out of a plastic bag.

"These are red abalones," he says. "This one is 6,500 years old." He says people living on the islands of California dumped these shells after eating the abalone and, unknowingly, became "dune-builders."

"So there might have been a five-foot dune there at one time right above the beach," Rick says, "and a group of hunter-gatherers came in, lived on top of that dune, dumped their refuse there and left. And this creates a pavement there that anchors that sand."

Small dunes eventually became big ones, built up like a layer cake, with trash dividing each layer.

Then there were intentional changes that people wrought, like the clam gardens of the Pacific Northwest.

People built rock walls into the ocean shallows.

"What these rock walls do," says Rick, "is they create behind them an area of sandy substrate that's really good for clams. You can kind of think of them like a terraced garden."

Rick has also found layers of sea otter bones thousands of years old in California's Channel Islands. The layers *above* just had sea urchin remains. He thinks people killed the otters because they ate too many shellfish. Since otters also prey on sea urchins, the urchin population exploded. All those urchins ate up the kelp forests, creating what Rick calls an "urchin barren."

Rick says intentionally or not, hunter-gatherers altered the environment for a long, long time, long before agriculture emerged. University of Nebraska anthropologist Raymond Hames, who studies how people interact with their environment, says they had no choice.

"The take-home point to some extent is that humans do things to make their life easier," Hames says. "It was really hard to make a living back then, so you know, you took advantage of the knowledge and skills you had in order to make the environment useful to you."

Hames says sometimes in early human history, changing the environment led to disaster.

"The problem is that your successes lead to population growth, which then leads to more pressure on the system to produce more resources," he says. "Your successes can set you up for even greater failures."

Many archeologists argue that societies like the Easter Islanders and the Mayans suffered after over-exploiting their forests and land.

Rick notes that human activity is now threatening places like the Everglades and the Chesapeake Bay. Scientists are trying to restore them, but to what condition? He says archeology can provide snapshots of what these places looked like at different moments in time, and how much people had altered them.

## Nominations sought for endangered list

Is there an endangered Maryland site that you think should be saved? Preservation Maryland is seeking nominations for its 2010 Endangered Maryland list of threatened historic or cultural sites.

The list "presents an opportunity to raise public awareness, create dialogue and find solutions for threatened sites," the group says. The sites may be endangered by demolition, vandalism, neglect or development.

Information on making a nomination is on the group's website, [www.preservationmaryland.org](http://www.preservationmaryland.org) or by calling 410-685-2886. Deadline for nominations is September 25.

## History unearthed at Beallsville site

By Meghan Tierney

*Condensed from the Montgomery Gazette, July 31, 2009*

Oyster shells, glass, coal, nails, ceramic pipe stems, a 1918 liberty dime, even a glass Yoo-hoo bottle — each is a clue to the history of Beallsville's Darby Store.

A team of volunteer archeologists is spending three weeks excavating around the historic site at the corner of Beallsville and Darnestown roads, a space occupied by various buildings since the 1800s. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission purchased the store and adjacent Darby House for \$670,000 in 2004, a year after the nonprofit Montgomery Preservation Inc. declared the deteriorating building one of the county's most endangered historic sites.

The building will be stabilized by the end of the year, says county cultural resources planner Julie Mueller. If the stabilization goes as planned, the structure will be moved back from the corner sometime next year, she said.

The volunteer archeologists are excavating key areas around the store and its future site before any artifacts buried in the ground are lost to history forever.

"It's kind of a puzzle you have to put together," Mueller said. The county conducts archeological digs whenever it needs to disturb land at a historic site, she said.

Excavations are particularly important when "there are layers of history, like at the Darby Store," Mueller said.

A store and blacksmith shop were built on the corner, now part of the Beallsville Historic District, in the mid-1800s and demolished by Harry C. Darby after he bought the land in 1908, according to county documents. He built the two-and-a-half-story general store in 1910, where residents bought supplies and picked up their mail until it closed in 1974. A tractor trailer destroyed the front porch in the late 1980s.

The site remained a viable commercial outpost after the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad opened in 1873 even though it didn't stop in Beallsville because travelers from Poolesville and Rockville passed through the crossroads on their way to upcounty stations, according to Don Housley, president of the Mid-Potomac Chapter of the Maryland Archeological Society.

"Usually when the railroad came in, if it didn't go through your town then your town was dead, but Beallsville continued," Housley said.

Darby's son used the building for storage and it was filled wall-to-wall with everything from wheelbarrows, old sofas and paint cans to historic receipts and ledger books that will help researchers complete the puzzle, Mueller said.

Last week about 10 volunteers worked their way through layers of clay soil marked into small grids, stopping only when they no longer found artifacts. Items such as nails and pieces of glass were documented, placed into labeled bags and set aside for further analysis.

"Artifacts are important to us only in the context that they're found. A lot of people go to Civil War battlefields and find bullets, but once you remove it, it loses its context," volunteer Mike Robinson, 63, of Rockville said as he sifted through clods of soil. "Archeology is a destructive science. Once you

dig a hole and take an artifact out, it can't be replaced."

## Back hoe? AA site uses goats instead

By Frederick N. Rasmussen

*Condensed from the Baltimore Sun, August 9, 2009*

Perhaps a herd of goats will help Gibson Islanders solve a mystery that was created when an ancient tulip poplar that blew over six years ago during Tropical Storm Isabel revealed several handmade bricks in its extensively tangled root ball.

Earlier this year, a Gibson Islander out for a stroll with his dog was greeted with a present of a handmade brick when his dog exited the thick underbrush. The passer-by realized that it wasn't a typical run-of-the-mill Home Depot brick; it turns out it harks back to the 18th Century.

The tree and bricks are thought to be part of a grave site, with the identity of its occupant or occupants unknown. They are located in an area dense with vegetation on the 925-acre Anne Arundel County island that juts into warm Chesapeake Bay waters and was settled in 1640.

Jim Morrison, the president of the Gibson Island Historical Society, and other volunteers, who had been joined by an archeologist, spent three days recently probing the site and despite the difficulty caused by the extensive layers of vegetation, think they've discovered a below-ground, brick-lined burial chamber.

"The site is about 10 feet long with the grave about 4 feet below the surface. When we discovered coffin nails, we stopped. In order to dig in a grave site, special permits are needed," Morrison said.

After Morrison learned that a herd of goats was chewing its way through the invasive vegetation that had become a problem at Hancock's Resolution, a pre-Civil War farm that is now an Anne Arundel County park, he thought goats might be able to solve the vegetation problem at Gibson Island.

Last Monday, a herd of 29 goats from Eco-Goats, a Davidsonville company co-owned by Brian Knox, were brought to the site. Even though the timetable calls for the goats to be

finished with their work by week's end, they have at times seemed to be observing a work slowdown.

"They're very popular with the residents who have discovered them and have fun watching them. They in turn have fun watching the people," Morrison said, which results in less munching.

Knox says the goats have a hearty appetite and 100 goats can eat a half-acre of pesky undergrowth a day, or somewhere in the range of 20 pounds to 30 pounds per goat. "Since we use no herbicides, it's a green alternative,"

Knox said.

Betty deKeyser, a professional genealogist in Pasadena, is working with the group to identify the remains. "Artifacts found at the grave such as pottery shards and bits of glass have been identified by our archeologist as dating from 1770 to 1820, so we have a definite time period to date the grave," deKeyser said.

She said it might be John Gibson, for whom the island was named in 1819, or it could be William Worthington, who owned the island in the 18th Century and died in 1770.

"Right now, it's a mystery grave," she said. "Our hope is that after the goats have finished their work, we'll be able to locate any other graves that might be there."

**Free Range** | Bill Whitehead

## Who should get ASM's highest honor?

The William B. Marye Award is ASM's highest honor. Nominees need not be ASM members or residents of Maryland. The only criteria is that they have made outstanding contributions to Maryland archeology.

To nominate someone, provide as much detail as possible in a concise statement on the form included with this issue of ASM Ink. Nominations are due by September 21 and should be mailed to the Marye Award Committee chair: Tyler Bastian, 13047 Penn Shop Road, Mt. Airy, MD 21771.

## Scouts meet archeology, and both are winners

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A qualified archeologist willing to lead an annual merit badge program would be a welcome addition to the Boy Scouts and quite an opportunity for the ASM to introduce the next generation to archeology. If you'd like to participate in this worthwhile program, the Zekiah District would be happy to help or you can contact your local scout council.

In the Washington metropolitan area, go to the NCAC website, <http://www.boy Scouts-ncac.org>, for the Baltimore region, <http://www.baltimorebsa.org/>. Scouting districts are staffed by volunteers and generally the district "advancement" committee is where to start. If you have questions, I'll be more than happy to help you navigate through the BSA bureaucracy. Contact me at [gerrie@Newport-Hall.com](mailto:gerrie@Newport-Hall.com)

## Chapter notes

### Anne Arundel

Meeting five times a year in February, April, June, September and November, the chapter has a new meeting location: Severna Park Branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library, 45 McKinsey Road. 7:30 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns-Nocerito at [AAChapASM@hotmail.com](mailto:AAChapASM@hotmail.com) or visit the chapter website [www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php](http://www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php)

**Sept. 8:** Speaker TBA

**Nov. 3:** Speaker 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](mailto: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](mailto:paulamartino@hotmail.com) or 301-752-2852.

**Sept. 8:** Paula Martino, "A Life In Ruins: Archaeological Explorations in Tel Kabri, Israel 2009."

**Oct. 13:** Julie King.

**Nov. 10:** Ed Chaney talking on "Ye dwelling house wherein the plaintiff's grandfather lived:" Excavations on an early 18th Century plantation

### 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](mailto:heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org), or call 301-840-5848 or Don Housley at [donhou704@earthlink.net](mailto:donhou704@earthlink.net) or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: [www.asmmidpotomac.wordpress.com](http://www.asmmidpotomac.wordpress.com)

## 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 or [jlazelle@msn.com](mailto:jlazelle@msn.com) or Nancy Geasey at 301-378-0212.

**Sept. 9:** Ellen Georgi, archeologist and Urbana Middle School teacher, on her archeological tour of China.

## Northern Chesapeake

Meetings are the second Wednesday 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](mailto:aspst20@yahoo.com) Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake>

**Sept. 9:** Dan Coates on "Prehistoric Soapstone and Bone" at Harford Glen.

**Oct. 17:** Annual Meeting

**Nov. 11:** Dan Coates on "Ice House Display Visit" at Liriodendron Mansion.

**Dec. 7:** Bob Wheelersburg on "Washington Boro, Pennsylvania" at Harford Glen.

## Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of every other 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. Contact Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or [leeprestonjr@comcast.net](mailto:leeprestonjr@comcast.net)

**Sept. 14:** Dan Coates "Prehistoric Soapstone and Bone - Hard Use of Soft Tools", a lecture and hands-on demonstration.

**Nov. 9:** Lee Preston, "Extreme Mammals: From Mole Rats to Bipedes, Let's Look at the 200 Million Year History of Mammals and Their Uniqueness."

**Jan. 11:** Steve Israel, "Report on the Rockdale Road Rockshelter: A Late Woodland Campsite."

**March 8:** Laura Cripps, "Report on Bibracte, a Romano-Celtic Temple Site in France " (excavated in 2009).

**May 10:** "The Brown's of Mt. Pleasant : 307 Years of Ownership in Howard County " or the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual J. Alfred Prufrock History/Archaeology Team Competition Game."

## 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](mailto:wmdasm@yahoo.com) Website: [www.geocities.com/wmdasm](http://www.geocities.com/wmdasm)

**Sept. 25:** James Herbstritt of the State Museum of Pennsylvania will speak on the Shanks Ferry Culture.

**Oct. 23:** Archeological geophysicist Timothy Horsley of the University of Michigan will report on this spring's magnetometer survey of the Barton Site.



**Nov. 7:** Field trip to Fort Ligonier, a French & Indian War era fortification in west central Pennsylvania.

**December:** No meeting scheduled due to the holidays.

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

**Submissions welcome.** Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, MD 20782, 301-864-5289 or [myronbeck@verizon.net](mailto:myronbeck@verizon.net)

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