

ASM Ink

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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.

www.marylandarcheology.org

Biggs Ford waiting to share more secrets

By Charles Hall

State Terrestrial Archeologist

In this season of archeological harvest the choice ripe tomato is undoubtedly the Tyler Bastian Annual Field Session.

Every year, this 11-day field extravaganza offers the membership and the public an opportunity to work alongside professional archeologists in research on the state's most significant sites. This year, with a return to the Biggs Ford site, the Society and the Maryland Historical Trust are offering a truly superlative Field Session.

First investigated by the Society's own Spencer Geasey in the 1950s, the Biggs Ford site saw a major salvage effort in 1969-1970 when planned sewer line impacts were mitigated by the new State Archeologist Tyler Bastian. His work, elegant and well-documented, sampled the 7-meter-wide path of the proposed sewer line across this site and revealed hints of two overlapping Late Woodland villages -- an earlier Montgomery Complex occupation reflected in a possible partial circle of elongated pit features and a later Keyser Complex occupation with potential partial palisade arcs and rectangular postmold patterns suggesting house structures.

Following a long hiatus, during which the property owners, Bill and Barbara Crum, protected the site from all incursions (including archeological investigations), access to the site was gained and an effort began to confirm Bastian's suspicions and to learn more about this site.

Last year, under the leadership of the "Keyser Dream Team" of Principal Investigator Joe Dent (of Winslow site fame), and Bob Wall (the Barton Village baron), the field session confirmed that the Keyser village was enclosed within a palisade approximately 100 meters in diameter. Remarkable finds included an upright intact Keyser pot, only the rim of which had been touched by the plow, and a deer rack from which all of the tines (tip ends) had been cut. It was a superlative field session marked by a record numbers of volunteers.

Some goals, however, were not realized. Not found: a Keyser structure. At the Barton site in Allegany County Bob Wall has found an oval Keyser structure. At the Biggs Ford site Tyler Bastion found rectangular structures. Joe Dent, who identified the first Montgomery structure at the Winslow Site in 2003, is looking for a pattern for Keyser structures at Biggs Ford.

Also not found: clear confirmation of a Montgomery circle of pits (as seen at Winslow and other Montgomery Complex sites).

Enter Field Session 2014.

Armed with the knowledge gained last year, Joe and Bob are again leading us to Biggs Ford with clear and focused goals: among them, identify a Keyser domestic structure and clarify the Montgomery occupation. The excavations are likely to be more concentrated into fewer blocks than

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Upcoming events

May 6 - June 28: Public archeology program at Jefferson Patterson. For information or to register, contact Ed Chaney at 410-586-8554 or ed.chaney@maryland.gov

May 23 - June 2: Annual ASM field session, Biggs Ford Site, Frederick County.

May 31: ASM board meeting, at the Biggs Ford Field Session Site. All members are welcome to stop by.

October 30 - November 2: ESAF meeting, Solomons Island, Maryland. The call is out for papers. See flier with this newsletter.

Volunteer opportunities

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

ASM field session collection: Volunteers are working on material from Chapel Point and catalogueing data entry of Rosenstock and Chapel Point material. The lab in Crownsville will be open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 3. Contact Louise Akerson at lakerson1@verizon.net or Charlie Hall chall@mdp.state.md.us

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

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.

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County welcomes volunteers for its prolific Pig Point prehistoric site. Fridays. Call Jasmine Gollup at 410-222-1318.

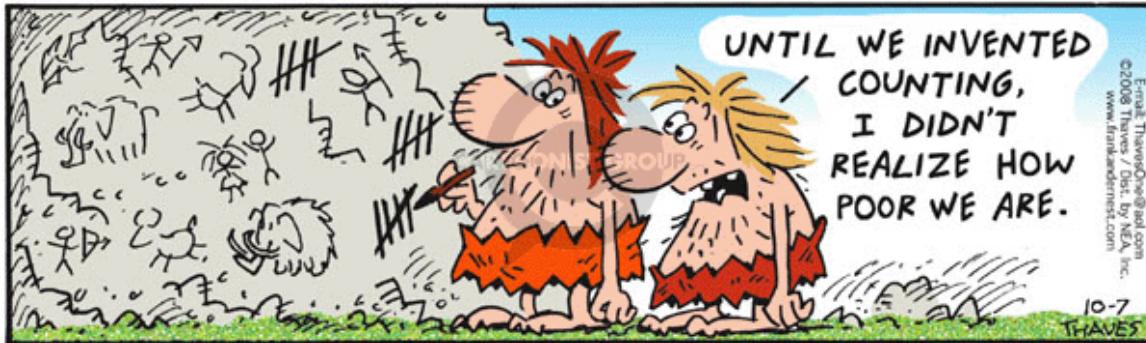
Mount Calvert. Lab work and field work. 301-627-1286.

Jefferson Patterson Park invites volunteers to take part in its activities, including archeology, historical research and conservation. Contact Ed Chaney at ed.chaney@maryland.gov 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 more information on the CAT program, and updates, visit the ASM website.





Those who missed the Spring Symposium missed a day of lively presentations covering a wide range of archeological interests, from trying to excavate in the Great Dismal Swamp to working around buildings at St. Mary's College in search of traces of previous occupations. A primer of various GPR-type assistance was provided as were talks on getting more minorities and other disciplines involved. One new well-received feature was a panel discussion. The panelist enjoying the give-and-take on "The Future of Maryland Archeology" are (l-r) Charlie Hall of MHT, consultant Jim Gibb and University of Maryland College Park PhD candidate Stefan Wolehlke.

Legislative session generally fails MHT -- again

This year's legislative session approved a state budget for fiscal year 2015 (July 2014 to June 2015) which provides level funding for the Maryland Historical Trust, meaning that no cuts in staffing or operational expenses are expected — a positive outcome given the continuing decrease in state revenues.

For the third year in a row there is no funding in the budget for the noncapital grants. Programs that in the past benefited from noncapital grants include the ASM annual field session, the ASM survey and registration program and other archeological survey and testing projects throughout the state. MHT will continue to seek support for reinstatement of the vital noncapital grant funding.

There is some good budget news for Maryland archeology, however. This year the legislature set aside \$125,000 in supplemental funds earmarked for Anne Arundel County's Lost Towns Project to undertake archeological work at the spectacular Pig Point site on the Patuxent River. MHT staff will oversee project management.

Baltimore site digs up local interest

By Scott Dance

Condensed from the Baltimore Sun, April 21, 2014

When Samuel Smith, major general of the Maryland militia, needed a headquarters to plot Baltimore's defense from British invaders in the summer of 1814, archeologists believe he called on the owner of a shop that gives Butcher's Hill its name.

Jacob Laudenslager leased much of what is Patterson Park today from landowner William Patterson, including a butcher's shop steps from where the park's iconic pagoda sits today.

Archeologists have uncovered a wall of that structure as they embark on a dig for a better understanding of what happened when thousands of militiamen camped along the hills of southeast Baltimore during the War of 1812. An excavation that began Wednesday has uncovered artifacts including bricks, mortar, glass, nails, shards of pottery and a gunflint — used to ignite gunpowder inside 19th Century firearms.

The project has drawn dozens of volunteers from the neighborhood and across the region and seeks to expose countless others to long-forgotten history buried just a few feet beneath where dogs and children play and runners pass by.

"This is a typical situation where history is forgotten," said Stephen Israel, a 73-year-old Catonsville resident who worked for 30 years as an archeologist for the Army Corps of Engineers and joined the Patterson Park dig as a volunteer. "It's one more activity to pull the community together."

On Friday, young children worked alongside retirees like Israel, sifting through dirt removed from neat trenches. In one area, archeologists are looking for evidence of Laudenslager's butcher's shop, while in two others around the base of the pagoda they are seeking traces of the earthwork defenses that helped repel the British in the Battle of Baltimore.

Baltimore Heritage, a nonprofit focused on local history, launched the project as part of a broader effort to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812 and Baltimore's key role in turning the war toward an end. Its findings will be on display in September amid a large festival in Patterson Park marking the 200th anniversary of the battles fought at North Point and in Baltimore.

Eight-year-old Ronan Glick came with his mother, Kathleen Adrian, and brother Declan Glick, 2, from their home in Lauraville to experience some hands-on archeology. Ronan had been intrigued by War of 1812 history after visits to Fort McHenry, and when neighbor Jason Shellenhamer invited him to the dig, he was eager for a visit. Shellenhamer is field director of the project for the Louis Berger Group, an archeology firm based in Washington.

"Do you want to see a gunflint?" Shellenhamer asked as he explained the project to Ronan and other visitors. Ronan gave an excited nod as Shellenhamer explained just what exactly a gunflint was.

The spectacle of people digging knee-deep holes and shaking dirt through wood-framed sifters drew the attention of many a runner and walker shuffling by, including 58-year-old East Baltimore resident Michael Wright. Eager to learn more about local history, he planned to sign up for a volunteer shift helping with the dig.

"I would love to fill my time, especially with something meaningful," Wright said.

Dig organizers are hoping for more attention as the weather warms and visitors flock to Patterson Park over the next month. They held a community open house Saturday and will welcome visitors during the Kinetic Sculpture Race on May 3.

Archeologists will be working on quiet days in the park, too, until May 15.

All the while, they will be answering questions from passersby, hoping to remind neighbors of the forgotten history, if not get them involved. Mike Marcaccio, a 67-year-old former stock broker and history teacher, read news stories about the dig and joined in for the first time Friday.

"I always wanted to do archeology, and it was very convenient," he said.

Getting to the straight and not-so-narrow

By Mark St. John Erickson

Condensed from the Hampton Roads Daily Press, April 20, 2014

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — President Franklin D. Roosevelt wasn't the only one impressed by Duke of Gloucester Street when he dedicated Colonial Williamsburg's (CW) newly reconstructed 18th-Century thoroughfare in 1934.

Laid out according to a plan drawn by Gov. Francis Nicholson the mile-long, 99-foot-wide prospect linking the statehouse with the College of William and Mary was designed to not only catch the eye but also embody the power and authority of the British Crown.

So well did it do its job that scholars still celebrate it as a milestone achievement in early American town planning. But when workmen began shaping the iconic street in the early 1700s, what they found was a horse path that not only meandered back and forth but also rolled up and down a long ridge cut by ravines and gullies.

And only by probing deep have archeologists digging over the past six weeks found evidence of the ambitious colonial public works campaign that so dramatically transformed this lost landscape.

"These ravines were hundreds of thousands of years old when the people of Williamsburg decided they wanted to put in a long, straight street that ran from the college to the capitol," says CW archeologist Andrew Edwards, who's leading the exploration of the sole-surviving but much-changed gully that visibly butts up against Duke of Gloucester Street.

"What we're finding is that they filled most of them pretty early on, putting in brick drains to carry away the water. And they were still trying to fill in the sides of this one in the mid-1700s with burned bricks from the fire that destroyed the first capitol."

Rooted as much in geometry and Baroque-period design principles as the actual survey conducted by Theodorick Bland in 1699, Nicholson's sketch championed an idealized vision of Virginia's new capital.

Where anyone else may have seen a town about to be built along a wandering, often up-and-down ridge, the man who had just previously laid out the famous circles and radiating streets of the new Colonial Maryland capital in Annapolis saw the potential for creating impressive vistas and a physical symbol of royal order.

Just how far that vision deviated from the facts on the ground, however, can be seen in what Nicholson and his builders found when they walked down the path to the spot where he had imagined the new capitol rising as a symmetrical bookend to the college's Wren Building.

"The place where they wanted to put the capitol was 30 or 40 feet down. So they had to move it back to the east by 200 feet," CW architectural historian Carl Lounsbury said.

"What that tells you is how massive this particular ravine was — and how much they had to fill."

The struggle against geography lasted into the mid-1700s and beyond.

"The most heroic work was probably done early in the century. But this was a very long campaign that started off with public projects and ended with private efforts," said Edward Chappell, director of CW's department of architectural and archeological research and archeology.

"The coffeehouse sits on a prominent Duke of Gloucester Street lot across the ravine from the capitol. But it was not built for 50 years because the slope was so uneven."

Over time, workmen filled in nearly a half-dozen large gullies in their effort to straighten and flatten the capital's main street.

They also constructed the massive brick retaining wall that still holds up the street between the Post Office and the Dubois grocery, then built and buried nearly half-a-dozen vaulted brick drains under and around the street to carry away water.

Many of those changes have been unearthed and studied during recent archeological projects. Much of that data will reappear in CW's ongoing Virtual Williamsburg project, which is attempting to recreate the landscape of the late 1700s through digital modeling.

'Nazi War Diggers' gets a second look

By Tom Mashberg

Condensed from the International New York Times, March 31, 2014

National Geographic Channel said Monday that it would "indefinitely" pull a planned television series on unearthing Nazi war graves after days of blistering criticism from archeologists and others who said the show handled the dead with macabre disrespect.

The channel said that after "consulting with colleagues" at the National Geographic Society it would not broadcast the series, "Nazi War Diggers," in May as scheduled "while questions raised in recent days regarding accusations about the program can be properly reviewed." The show was to have been broadcast globally except in the United States.

National Geographic Channel International had commissioned four episodes of the show, in which two British metal detecting specialists, a Polish relics hunter and an American, Craig Gottlieb, who deals in Nazi World War II artifacts, hunt for the graves of German and Red Army soldiers on the Eastern Front.

National Geographic Channel issued a statement Friday defending the show and saying the criticism was premature, based on early publicity materials that "did not provide important context about our team's methodology." The channel pulled those materials from its website.

That did not appease archeologists, battlefield historians and others who have mounted a social-media and a letter-writing campaign aimed in particular at the National Geographic Society.

The channel said in its Friday statement that the Latvian government had approved the team's work, which took place on Latvian and Polish soil. But the critics contacted the Latvian War Museum, which said in a statement that it had opposed the show.

National Geographic also said that none of the items dug up during filming would be sold but instead would be donated to war museums. The critics however found a posting on a military collectors' online forum in which Gottlieb described locating a Latvian war helmet in June and preparing it for sale.

"This is treasure hunting, not archeology," said Tony Pollard, director of the Center for Battlefield Archaeology at the University of Glasgow.

At 91, collector decides to repatriate artifacts

By Andy Proffet

Condensed from The Shelbyville (Indiana) News, April 3, 2014

WALDRON — The FBI on Wednesday was working with a collector near Waldron with assessment of cultural artifacts in his collection. FBI spokesman Drew Northern called 91-year-old Donald C. Miller of Waldron "an amateur archeologist," who had collected the artifacts over his lifetime.

"Mr. Miller has a large collection of artifacts and we are working with him to help him repatriate those items to the appropriate folks," Northern said. "There are treaties and statutes that deal with repatriation of cultural artifacts, and Mr. Miller is working with us to return those."

Northern said he couldn't specify whether the artifacts in question were of native American or foreign origin.

"But they are items of great cultural value that Mr. Miller has amassed in his private collection over the years, and the FBI is there, we have our resources meticulously cataloging and collecting and working with Mr. Miller to preserve these items," Northern said.

Northern said Miller had contacted the FBI about returning the items, but couldn't elaborate on why Miller was looking to repatriate the artifacts now.

Outside agencies brought in archeologists and anthropologists to help catalog the items. They will then decide if any were stolen or need to be repatriated to the indigenous tribes they came from.

Authorities said Miller was cooperative so far and was not considered a criminal suspect. Miller told agents he had been collecting the artifacts since he was a child.

Book review: Security on the 1756 frontier

The Archaeology of the French and Indian War Frontier Forts, edited by Lawrence E. Babits and Stephanie Gandulla, University of Florida Press, 2103. 303 pages. \$80.

Fort-building had long been a science adjusted by military engineers as warfare changed. But as anyone knows who has worked on or studied early historic forts, ideas on how the forts should look frequently came into conflict with the reality of the landscape into which they must be placed - the terrain just won't accommodate the theory and adjustments had to be made.

That is what this collection of reports finds time and again as archeology discovers the difference between the how-to-do-it plans and the in-situ remains of some French and Indian War era forts.

Over the years archeologists have examined some three dozen of these forts. Many of their reports are either missing or hard for the general public to read. Other forts, such as Ticonderoga, Fort William Henry and Fort Stanwix have been and remain well documented.

So for this compilation the editors settled on 11 forts stretching from the Carolinas through Canada, with each chapter written by someone heavily involved in the excavation. The forts are Fort Prince George in South Carolina, Fort Loudoun in Tennessee and Fort Loudoun in Virginia (there were several Fort Loudouns scattered among the colonies), Fort Dobbs in North Carolina, Fort Vause in Virginia, Edwards's Fort in today's West Virginia, several forts at Crown Point, New York, Fort Frontenac in Ontario, Michilimackinac on the upper Great Lakes and Fort de Chartres in Illinois.

The selection does not include any in Maryland, such as Fort Frederick. Fort Cumberland in Allegany County has basically disappeared. In fact, the editors seem to forget that Maryland existed, jumping the western frontier from Pennsylvania to Virginia.

The forts did not all serve the same purpose. Some were military bases, some were defensive positions and some were basically trading posts. Some forts saw action, some didn't, some were eventually abandoned. Most were wooden, but not all. (Incidentally, stockade posts abutted each other while palisade posts were four to nine inches apart.) Some were decades old when the war started and many had fallen, or fell, into various states of disrepair which received various degrees of attention. Size varied considerably - Crown Point covered an area of six acres.

Above-ground traces remain of some of the forts, others produced artifacts close to the surface, but the sandy soil of Michilimackinac resulted in upright logs being found in a footing ditch six feet below the current surface.

"The new archeological data, in conjunction with a reassessment of the documents, demonstrates how historical archeology can change the understanding of a region's history," Babits writes. Another author points out accurately, "The essays in this volume reflect the remarkable diversity of local conditions and experiences."

The volume also includes a history of the period, a look at art of fort-design and an attempt to see what comparing and contrasting the various forts might tell us. The book is heavily illustrated with maps (ancient and modern), diagrams, profiles, photos and the like. The writing is clear. A glossary is provided for some less-familiar terms but entries are hit and miss. A map showing all the fort locations on a single page would have been nice.

For anyone interested in the French and Indian War period, this book is invaluable.

-- Myron Beckenstein

Perils of the workplace: Arsenic and old graves

Embalming was uncommon until the Civil War, when it was used to send fallen soldiers home. Blood, which decomposes rapidly, was replaced with anything handy that didn't. Often it was whiskey....

Arsenic turned out to work even better, and was cheaper. Until it was banned in the 1890s, it was used widely, and heavy arsenic levels are sometimes a problem for archeologists examining some old U.S. graveyards. What they generally find is that the bodies decomposed anyway, but the arsenic stayed.

-- From "The World Without Us," by Alan Weisman

Biggs Ford waiting to share more secrets

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last year, possibly expanding around the area where the intact pot was recovered and around the northern palisade trench, and searching for a continuation of Tyler's arc of elongated pits.

Participants will work at newly refurbished screens where they will learn to identify at least two types of prehistoric ceramics (Shepard and Keyser), at least two lithic tool making materials (quartz and rhyolite) and at least three types of projectile points (Levanna, Madison and Potomac). They also are likely to encounter faunal material (including Elk) and other materials. The site offers the chance to define and excavate both pit features and postmolds.

The Maryland Historical Trust staff will offer daily tool and excavation technique clinics. For those who would like to get a better (cleaner) look at the artifacts, and for a change of pace, a field lab will be set up beside the cool babbling waters of Glade Creek under the shade of a large awning.

The session kicks off Friday May 23 at a very civilized 10:30 a.m. (not to be repeated). No on-site parking area is available: participant parking is at the Fredericktowne Baptist Church about 1 mile to the east of the site (8645 Biggs Ford Rd.). Shuttle service to the site will be provided beginning at 9 a.m. that first Friday and beginning at 8 thereafter throughout the Field Session until June 2.

The workday (if you want to call archeology "work") will begin at 8:30 and continue until 4, with an hour lunch break at noon. The shuttle service will return participants to the church parking lot beginning at 4. The shuttle also will be available on an as-needed basis during the lunch hour for those who can only participate for a half-day.

Pre-registration is not required, but is strongly encouraged. A form is available with this newsletter or on the Society's website at marylandarcheology.org/2014_FS.php. Forms are due by May 17.

For those planning to attend for several days (most of you, I hope) and not inclined to commute, limited camping opportunities are available and there are several motels in the Frederick area. A list is on the website.

Come on and be part of the story. Join in the science, the education, the excitement, the discovery, the fellowship. Join Joe, Bob, and your Society at the Biggs Ford Site.

PS: Bob is once again bringing his Towson Field School students, who, he reports, will be offered extra credit for assisting with the backfilling.

Chapter notes

Anne Arundel

Meets the second Tuesday of the month at the Severna Park Branch Library, 45 West McKinsey Road, Severna Park. 7:30 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns at AAChapASM@hotmail.com or the chapter website <http://www.aachapasm.org/calendar.html>

Central Maryland

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 at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday (September-May) in the community room of the LaPlata Police Department. Contact President Carol Cowherd at cowlherdcl@gmail.com or 301-375-9489. Chapter website is charlescoasm.org and its blog is ccarchsoc.blogspot.com

May 8: Laura Cripps will talk about experiences with geophysical techniques.

Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Needwood Mansion, 6700 Needwood Road, Derwood. Dinner at a local restaurant at 5:45 p.m. Contact heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org or 301-840-5848 or Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: <http://www.asmmidpotomac.org> Email: asmmidpotomac@gmail.com Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mid-Potomac-Archaeology/182856471768>

May 16: Eddie Franceschi, planner with the Montgomery Soil Conservation District, will conduct a workshop on soil analysis from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Agricultural History Farm Park. Bring \$7 for pizza dinner or your own food.

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick the second Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. For more information, visit the chapter's web page at digfrederick.com or call 301-378-0212.

May 14: Tim Peterson will update the findings at the prolific Pig Point Site in Anne Arundel County.

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>

June 1: Annual picnic. This year an indoor gathering at the Liriodendron Mansion in Bel Air in conjunction with the opening of the "Prehistoric Culture of the Northern Chesapeake" exhibit.

Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Ellicott City Colored School. Dinner is available at the Diamondback in Ellicott City at 5:30 p.m. Labs are held the second and fourth Saturdays of the month. For location and other chapter information contact Dave Cavey at 410-747-0093 or hoplite1@comcast.net On Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358> or try UPArchaeologygroup@yahoo.com or <http://uparchaeologygroup.weebly.com/>

May 12: SHA archeologist Carol Ebright on Folck's Mill in Allegany County that became a Civil War battlefield site.

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>

June 6: "Artifacts of the Barton Site" presented by Roy Brown. A review of some the many artifacts that have been excavated over the past 20 years.

June 14-15: Barton site excavations under the supervision of Bob Wall. There are 50 cm of soil dating from 8,500 to 12,000 in last year's deep unit yet to be removed and examined. Volunteers welcome.

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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 Robin Martin for membership rates. For publication sales, not including newsletter or Journal, contact Dan Coates at ASM Publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace, MD 21078-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net

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