Alabama Archaeological Society

Associate Editors
Bart Henson
Dorothy Luke

STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

Editor
Amos J. Wright
2602 Green Mountain Rd.
Huntsville, Alabama 35803

MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

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SUMMER MEETING

Remember our Summer Meeting will be held at the Birmingham Museum of Art on Sunday, June 12. The program will commence at 2 p.m. and will consist of:

2-3 p.m. - Business Meeting

3 p.m. - Presentation by Dr. Rita Freed entitled "New Look at Old Faces" (Middle Egyptian Kingdom)

4 p.m. - Dr. Whitman Cross will discuss "Contemporary Egypt and the Geology of the Nile River"

5 p.m. - Tour the Museum's special Egyptian exhibit "Through Ancient Eyes". (A discounted price of $3 will be charged for the exhibit tour.)

The Museum will be open from 2 to 6 p.m. Plan to attend!

A REQUEST FOR BOOKS

P.O. Box 100-C-08140
Vienna, Illinois 62995

Alabama Archaeological Society
2602 Green Mountain Road, S.E.
Huntsville, Alabama 35803

I am an inmate of the Vienna Correctional Center's minimum security unit and have recently received my Associate in Science Degree from Southeastern Illinois College. Upon my release from this institution, I plan to continue my education in the direction of anthropology, focusing on archaeology of North America.

I am in need of books with which to better prepare for continuing my education. Unfortunately, I have no funds. If you have any damaged or otherwise unmarketable books, they would be greatly appreciated. Anything dealing with prehistory, lithic technology, ceramics, cultures, or archaeology of North America would be helpful.

June 1988

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in this matter.

(Signed)
David L. Zynda

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter

The year-end monthly meeting was held on Thursday, May 12. The guest speaker was James Lamb of the Red Mountain Museum, who spoke on the Geology of Alabama.

Bobby Hawkins

Cullman Chapter

The chapter held its monthly meeting on Monday, May 16 at the County Courthouse.

Howard King gave a short program at the April meeting on some theories of the originality of the fluted point, and there were some great displays - with, of course, much discussion concerning "arrowheads". A committee was selected to meet and discuss the library display. The result was the asking of help from the chapter on the use of certain artifacts.

Howard King

East Alabama Chapter

The speaker for our May 18th meeting was Dr. David Williams, with the History Department of Auburn University. His topic was "Indians and the Georgia Gold Rush".

Dr. Williams said that the American Indians were the first to mine gold in north Georgia, but it didn't hold the same power over them. When DeSoto came looking for it, they thought he wanted copper. On August 1, 1829, a newspaper in Habersham County, Georgia, announced that gold had been discovered, and the rush was on, with placer mining as opposed to vein mining. Some people used cradle rockers, and Long Tom's. Later these inexperienced people tried vein mining, but there were frequent cave-ins, with much loss of life. A United States mint was built in Dahlonega, Georgia.

Ownership of the gold lands became a problem. Georgia's government managed to run the Creeks over to Alabama, and send the Cherokees on the "Trail of Tears". Georgia held a lottery to parcel the land to the people who qualified. But in 1838 the gold played out; the miners left for California and the 1849 gold rush.

The dome on Georgia's state capitol is leafed with gold from north Georgia.

Chapter officers are: Dr. Gary Mullen, President; Dr. John Cottier, Program Chairman; Caroline R. Dean, Secretary. The chapter normally meets on the second Wednesday of each month.

Caroline R. Dean

Huntsville Chapter

The chapter met on Tuesday, May 24; guest speaker was Dr. Boyce Driskell of the Office of Archaeological Research. Dr. Driskell gave a most interesting talk on "Excavations at Quasr Ibrim in Southern Egypt".

The Huntsville Chapter meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium of the new Huntsville Public Library on St. Clair Avenue. The public is welcome.

Dorothy Luke

Tuscaloosa Chapter

Recently the Tuscaloosa Chapter held a membership drive at a local mall; overall response was very good.

Our May guest speaker was Boyce Driskell of the Archaeological Department of The University of Alabama. Dr. Driskell spoke on lithic tool wear and presented some slides of a northern Kentucky excavation which he conducted.

John Wm. (Bill) Adkison

MODERN HUMAN ORIGINS UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY

The origin of anatomically modern humans, Homo sapiens sapiens, has recently become a hot topic in paleoanthropology, fueled as it has been by a combination of new fossil and genetic evidence. Compared with earlier periods in human evolution, which are often represented by a frustrating sparsity of fossil and archaeological material, this last major event is blessed with wealth of cogent evidence. If any problem in human evolution is resolvable with the data currently available, then surely this is it.

Christopher Stringer and Peter Andrews of the British Museum present the first major review of the fossil and genetic evidence relating to the origin of modern humans. Without being dogmatic, Stringer and Andrews conclude that the collective evidence "favors a recent African origin for Homo sapiens", thus crystallizing what is becoming a popular, but by no means universal, view.

Opinions have ebbed and flowed over the decades, with, until recently, a strong Eurocentric flavor to it all. The 30,000-year-old Cro-Magnon people of southwestern France long epitomized what it meant to be modern humans. They made a sophisticated stone tool technology, which was characterized by fine blades, and went on to create carvings and cave paintings that dazzled prehistorians. This period came to be known as the Upper Paleolithic, a phrase

that soon was synonymous with the emergence of modern humans. Implicit in this view was that modern humans could be recognized as much by their cultural products as by their anatomy.

The Neanderthal people have also dazzled prehistorians, not only because the fossil record for this prehuman species is the richest by far, but also because they appeared to have buried their dead with ritual, a very human behavior indeed. And the big question about the Neanderthals was, how did they relate to modern humans? Were they directly ancestral to Homo sapiens? Or were they a distinct branch of the human evolutionary tree that ended in extinction and contributed nothing to modern humans? Neanderthals' current biological designation as Homo sapiens neanderthalensis - a subspecies of Homo sapiens - reflects the sentiment of the past several decades that we are exceedingly closely related to them, probably as direct descendants.

Until recently, specimens of Neanderthal pelvises were incomplete, but it seemed that the pelvic outlet was bigger than in modern humans. This observation encouraged the speculation that Neanderthal babies were bigger than those of modern humans, born perhaps after a longer gestational period. However, when Yoel Rak and his colleagues at Tel Aviv University recently examined a virtually complete pelvis from the Kebara cave in Israel, it turned out that the outlet was simply a different shape from that of modern humans, not bigger at all.

Not only that, but the structure and orientation of the sockets into which the thigh bones fit are distinctly different from those of modern humans. "We are left with little choice but to attribute these differences to locomotion and posture-related biomechanics", says Rak and B. Arensburg. For other observers, these differences make unlikely a close evolutionary relationship between Neanderthals and modern humans.

If the Kebara pelvis is not convincing evidence against an ancestor-descendant relationship between Neanderthals and modern humans, then a new result from a nearby cave surely is. The cave is Qafzeh, also in Israel, site of some early modern human cranial specimens that were discovered in the 1930's. What makes them interesting now is an age of 92,000 years produced by thermoluminescence dating: the new date doubles the previous estimate.

If the Qafzeh fossils really are this old - and biostratigraphic data and shortly-to-be-published electron spin resonance results suggest that they are - then there are several important implications. First, according to current fossil evidence, Neanderthals did not turn up in southwest Asia until about 60,000 years ago, which is more than 30,000 years later than the early modern humans at Qafzeh. The notion that Neanderthals evolved into modern humans therefore looks unlikely at best.

Second, taking Eurasia as a whole, Neanderthals and modern humans coexisted for at least 60,000 years, which not only reinforces the first point but also argues for a greater biological distinctiveness than is implied by the shared subspecific status.

(From an article by Roger Lewin in "Science"; Vol. 239, March 11, 1988.)

HEIRS TO ANCIENT AIR

Giovanni Battista Belzoni was not known for his light touch. He etched a space for himself in the annals of archaeology by being one of the first Westerners to begin excavating and collecting artifacts in Egypt. But he was more a heavy-handed plunderer than a scholar, and the scars of his work still mar the tombs of several pharoahs.

From such inauspicious beginnings, archaeology has evolved over the last century and a half into a rigorous science. And at the cutting edge, a project currently under way in Egypt is using a high-tech nondestructive approach to probe an ancient chamber.

Borrowing equipment from moon missions and nuclear power plants, the members of this project are seeking to probe a sealed pit that lies at the foot of the Great Pyramid of Khufu, known in the West by the Greek name Cheops. In 1954, archaeologists discovered this chamber and an identical neighbor, both of which were hewn from the limestone bedrock and capped with limestone blocks.

When they opened the first chamber, they found a disassembled wooden boat in near-perfect condition. The ancient Egyptian workers had sealed off the chamber with a gypsum mortar that protected the wood from water, oxygen and bacteria - the principal elements of decay.

The other chamber of Cheops was left unopened.

Until this year, that is. In October, scientists finally plan to open the second chamber. However, instead of searching for a second boat, these scientists are primarily interested in finding another artifact preserved by the chamber - ancient Egyptian air.

The goal of the present project is to retrieve samples of the atmosphere from inside the chamber and at the same time avoid contaminating the chamber with anything from the outside world, says Zahi Hawass, who is working for the Egyptian Antiquities Organization, co-sponsor of the project with the National Geographic Society. "Once this atmosphere is analyzed", says Hawass, "its composition can be simulated in the museum environment to protect organic antiquities like wood [or] textiles, maybe mummies".

Organic decay is a central concern for archaeologists, who not only find artifacts but also seek to preserve them for future study. Scientists do not yet fully understand what qualities protected these ancient materials through the centuries, and museums often lack sufficient funds to adequately control the environment of displays and storage rooms. For these reasons, many organic artifacts begin to decay rapidly once they are removed from their resting spots. Indeed, the wooden boat, which was assembled and put on display in 1982, has started to show signs of deterioration. Several observers have noted with irony that while this boat survived more than 4,000 years, it is in danger of disintegrating within a few decades.

The project plan is to drill a hole 3 1/2 inches in diameter through one of the 14-ton limestone blocks that roof the pit. The researchers will sample

the air, take both video and still pictures and then insert devices to monitor the environment of the chamber. All the equipment, even the cameras, must fit through this small hole. And to further complicate matters, the researchers must protect the contents of the chamber from anything that will change the inner environment, which includes even the heat from the surrounding desert.

Because this project - the first of its kind - aims to be completely non-destructive, the planners have meticulously outlined every step, as if preparing for the launching of a moon probe. In fact, one of the central participants, Farouk El-Baz, worked extensively on the Apollo missions from 1967 to 1972 and now heads the Center for Remote Sensing at Boston University.

In the end, whether or not the chamber's seal has remained intact, the project will have accomplished one of its primary tasks simply by testing these nondestructive archaeological techniques. "Once we leave and seal it, it will be as if nothing had even intruded", says Rogers.

With time, the new techniques might redefine archaeology, says Rogers: "I think that's the way the archaeology of the future will be - look, don't touch". If so, then this research philosophy will bring new resonances to an old museum phrase.

(From an article by Richard Monastersky in "Science News", Vol. 132)

CREEK INDIAN HERITAGE MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

The Creek Indian Heritage Memorial Association held an organizational meeting in Columbus, Georgia recently. The Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization by the State of Georgia on May 2. It was formed to coordinate efforts to design, fund and construct a Creek Indian Heritage Memorial at Fort Mitchell, Alabama. In addition, the Association will conduct activities to educate the general public about the historic Creek Indian way of life and its impact on the Chattahoochee Valley area of Georgia and Alabama.

(From a press release by the Historic Chattahoochee Commission - May 9, 1988)

SUMMER 1988 MUSEUM EXPEDITION

The State Museum of Natural History Summer 1988 Museum Expedition No. 10 will be a paleontological expedition to the remnants of the ancient seas of Alabama. Share the total experience of living in the field under canvas, excavating the remains of extinct species, learning fossil identification and laboratory techniques.

There will be four week-long sessions; participants (ages 14 through adults) may attend one or more: June 19-25, June 26-July 2, July 3-9, and July 10-16. Write to The University of Alabama; State Museum of Natural History; Box 5897; Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487.

CANYON WALLS WEAR INDIAN PICTOGRAPHS

Sprawled along the parched border between Mexico and Texas like a runaway watering hole is Lake Amistad. It wanders along the border for about 80 miles, from near Del Rio up toward the town of Langtry.

Above the waterline, the bluffs tower, straining to be once again as tall as they were before Amistad Dam was built and their feet were covered. And along those bluffs a story is told.

It's a tale visible in 8,000-year-old Indian pictographs and in the remains of an 1880's-vintage narrow-gauge railroad bed that wanders over and through the canyon walls. One has nothing to do with the other, except that together they reveal something of the past and of civilizations that lived there.

It was some 8,000 to 10,000 years ago that Indians settled in the pitted canyon walls of Amistad. At that time, their cave dwellings were high up the 200- to 300-foot bluffs. But when Amistad Dam was completed in 1968, it raised the water level behind it by about 90 feet, covering some of the shelters with their pictographs and making others more accessible by boat.

Today, all along the walls of Lake Amistad you can find the cluttered and faintly colorful figures drawn by the Indians. One of the most popular sites is Panther Cave, which is about 7 miles south of the Pecos River boat landing, just inside Seminole Canyon.

(From an article in "Southern Living" - 1988)

PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

After more than five years of work, NAVY GRAY: A STORY OF THE CONFEDERATE NAVY ON THE CHATTAHOOCHEE AND APALACHICOLA RIVERS has been released by the Historic Chattahoochee Commission. This absorbing chronicle, by Dr. Maxine Turner, tells the story of Confederate naval operations on this river system. The book was published by The University of Alabama Press for the Comission and the James W. Woodruff, Jr. Confederate Naval Museum in Columbus, Georgia.

Copies are $27.45 postpaid and may be ordered by sending a check or money order to Historic Chattahoochee Commission; P. O. Box 33; Eufaula, Alabama 36027-0033.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of *Journal of Alabama Archaeology* Vol. 20-29 each issue ..... ($2.50 to Members) $5.00 pp
Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint, each issue .... $5.00 pp
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Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology (Juvenile) ..... $7.00 pp

CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO: **ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**
SEND CHECKS TO: **MR. EUGENE FUTATO, Office of Archaeological Research**
1 Mound State Monument, Moundville, Alabama 35474

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Mr. Amos J. Wright
2602 Green Mountain Road SE
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