

Alabama Archaeological Society

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STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

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MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

SOIL COMPACTION - GETTING WORSE, BUT WHY?

Something is happening to our soils. You can feel it through the soles of your boots as you walk from field to field. You can sense it in the palm of your hand as you ease a tile line probe into the dirt. You can see it when rainwater runs off a field instead of soaking into it.

What is believed to be happening is the creation of a compacted layer of soil in the top foot or so of dirt - dense enough to hamper water infiltration and hinder root penetration. This may be more than the plow-sole phenomenon. The causes are complex, and they probably reflect the hell-bent way we farm today. Soil scientists aren't sure what to make of it yet. But some are literally starting to dig for some answers.

USDA-ARS soil scientist Al Trowse, at the National Tillage Machinery Laboratory in Auburn, Alabama, has devoted his career to studying soil compaction. He has concluded that it may be more responsible for stifling corn yields than many had imagined. "I'd go so far as to say that compaction may be one of the reasons top corn yields are 200 bu. instead of 300 bu."

Won't freezing and thawing break compacted areas? Trowse doubts that there is ice crystal formation deep enough in the soil to cause much heaving action in the compacted layers formed under today's farming conditions. One thing seems sure - if there is freezing and thawing action, it isn't enough to reduce the problem, judging from growing concern about compaction.

(From Farm Journal, December 1977)

Editor's Note: The excellent color photographs in the December 1977 issue of Farm Journal well illustrate the compacted zones which have a great similarity to the "clay caps" found on archaeological sites excavated in areas previously cultivated, especially in riverine settings. Is it possible that thin compacted zones 12" to 20" beneath the surface caused by recent agricultural practices have been interpreted to be of Indian origin?

February 1978

Dr. Al Trowse is past President of the Alabama Archaeological Society and was the keynote speaker at an international symposium held in Nigeria in December 1977 on the subjects of soils and soil compaction as related to crop production.

LETTER FROM MILT HARRIS

Mr. Milt Harris has written the Society expressing his appreciation for the honor of election to Society Honorary Life Member. Milt observed that there were many members entitled to such an honor, but that he truly appreciated his personal election; and that he and Bea are placing the beautifully framed certificate in a prominent place in their home.

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter - The Chapter meets the first Wednesday of each month at the Red Mountain Museum, 1425 22nd Street South. Call Tom Hutto for further information at 956-1895.

Cullman Chapter - The January program was a slide presentation on bone tools given by Mr. Al Beinlich of the Muscle Shoals Chapter.

East Alabama Chapter - David W. Chase was the speaker at the meeting on January 11. He described an important Woodland site with fiber-tempered and steatite pottery overlain with corded and complicated stamped pottery. The site on Catoma Creek, just south of Montgomery, appears to cover four to five acres. A sewage pipeline with a ditch four feet deep and a right of way of 90 feet is going right through this site. The engineers have determined that the location of the pipeline cannot be moved. To date, Dave has been unable to obtain additional funds to continue investigations at this important site, which contains artifacts of the Calloway phase.

The next Chapter meeting will be on Wednesday, February 8, in Thach Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Dr. Greg Jean, Auburn University, will speak on a phase of Historical Archaeology, such as Industrial Archaeology (emphasis on old mills), or perhaps on the importance of the study of historic cemeteries. It is important that the Chapter members attend this meeting, as the election of officers will be held during the business session.

Huntsville Chapter - The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Senior Center, 300 Church Street, N. W. The speaker at the January meeting was Mr. Houston Wright, who gave a talk on the Mississippian culture in the Southeast. Mr. Wright showed numerous slides of Mississippian mounds and mound groups at sites throughout the Southeastern United States, and discussed their relationships in terms of other cultures in the area. This very interesting program was well attended.

Montgomery Chapter - For our January meeting, the Montgomery Chapter enjoyed an informative Prehistoric Pottery Workshop given by David Chase. In February we will have a slide and cassette program of some of the objects from the King Tut Exhibit. This meeting will be held February 7, 1978; 7:30 p. m.; Conference Room, Third Floor, Liberal Arts Building; Auburn University at Montgomery Campus. Everyone is invited to attend.

Muscle Shoals - The Muscle Shoals Chapter held its January meeting on the 9th. Al Beinlich of Sheffield presented a program entitled "Peyote, Indian Ceremony and Drug". Our next meeting will be on February 6. Carey Oakley will bring us a program on "The St. Clair County Copena Burial Cave".

ARTIFACT RESTORATION, FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It has recently come to my attention that a number of people in Alabama are having artifacts in their collections restored by individuals who do this commercially. The purpose of this article is to point out certain aspects of the practice for additional consideration.

There are two current philosophies of artifact restoration. The first is the art history viewpoint, which holds that the purpose of restoration is to return the object as closely as possible to its original appearance. In this case the restoration should not be noticeable. The second type of restoration is the scientific type, and its purpose is to increase the informative value of an object. An example would be an attempt to take sherds and indicate how the specimen may have looked, if complete. In this case, restoration is done so as not to detract from the object, but so that the restored portions are clearly differentiated. Both philosophies agree that whatever is done must be reversible, if at all possible.

The work done by some restorers is of the former type and is of excellent quality. However, this type of restoration is based in the concept of the object for the sake of the object, an idea which must be given careful consideration with respect to the aims and goals of archaeology.

The other, and far more serious, aspect of this matter is that some of these people will not take cash for their work. They demand payment in artifacts. These are broken biface blades and projectile points, etc. Presumably, these serve as raw material for the fake artifact trade.

Two dictionaries define the verb "to sell" as "to exchange for money or its equivalent" (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language), and "to give up property for money or other valuable consideration" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged). Thus, in a very

real sense, exchanging artifacts for a service is selling artifacts.

The practice may be rationalized in the minds of some because only broken specimens are involved. This is apparently an outgrowth of the object-for-sake-of-object point of view, for these broken artifacts are valuable scientific specimens. A review of the recent literature dealing with lithic analysis will demonstrate their importance in many studies of tool manufacture and use, including such additional topics as the selection and distribution of raw materials, artifact recycling, definition of site function, and of activity areas, etc. In fact, many of these studies depend on broken specimens for most or all of the relevant data.

In summary, the restoration of artifacts is not necessarily a bad practice in itself. In many instances it has a very beneficial effect. However, there are several negative aspects of the way it is being practiced by some elements. The most serious of these is that scientific specimens are being collected to be sold, and presumably to be destroyed; at the same time supporting the trade in fake artifacts. I would ask that those engaged in this activity read the lead paragraph on the membership page in this newsletter and consider whether or not they support the stated goals of this society. Then consider whether or not such a practice is in accordance with these goals.

Eugene Futato
Moundville

ILLICIT ARTIFACTS: A BOOMING BUSINESS

Illegal and booming, the trade in ancient artifacts has become a multimillion-dollar business. Its growth, especially recently, is reflected in the inflation-hedging resurgence of interest in international art. As the demand for antiquities skyrockets, ancient sites - and with them the data that make possible the reconstruction of extinct cultures - are being destroyed at an ever-increasing rate.

In many instances, the trade is so well organized that photographs of an idol are first circulated and, after an order is received, the object is stolen for the not-always unsuspecting client.

Today, looting has become a way of life in many countries. So drastic are its effects that the United Nations Social Defense Research Institute compiled a special survey of archaeological looting in Mexico, Italy and India.

Thefts from India and Italy are often pale mirrorings of the ruthless plunder in Central America. In Colombia, for example, the growing

interest for collecting antiquities combined with the appearance of dealers on the international market has given new impetus to looters. This is particularly unfortunate for archaeologists because many ancient cultures are known only from the activities of treasure hunters.

Scientists are not alone in their outrage of antiquities theft; so are the leaders of countries from which the artifacts originate. This often puts a strain on the relationship between legitimate excavators and their host countries. Last year, at an underwater site off Turkey, site inspectors falsely accused a University museum expedition of "misappropriating" gold objects. The Turkish government filed a complaint with the State Department. Fortunately, museum officials were able to prove that the objects had been legitimately bought.

To stem the flow of illegal artifacts, a UNESCO convention in 1971 drew up an international resolution urging countries to prohibit export of antiquities, and scrupulously monitor incoming activities as to origin, purchaser, and legal obtainment. It was unanimously endorsed at the UN, mostly to the chagrin of private collectors - especially those who counted on black market items to fill their collections. The U. S. now has a law barring the import of large pre-Columbian architecture, but the problem doubtless will continue as long as there is big money in antiquities.

(From SCI Digest, June 1977)

MEETINGS

The Florida Anthropological Society will hold its 30th annual meeting in Fort Walton Beach on April 1, 1978. The meeting will be at the Sheraton Marina Inn, beginning at 9:00 a.m. A banquet that night will feature Dr. Charles Fairbanks as speaker. Alabama residents who might want more details may contact Mrs. Yulee Lazarus at the Temple Mound Museum in Fort Walton Beach.

J. Raymond Williams
President
Florida Anthropological
Society

The Georgia Academy of Science will hold its annual meeting on April 28-29, 1978, at Georgia College, Milledgeville, Georgia. Registration will commence at noon on Friday, April 28. The symposium on Friday evening will be "Ethics in Science and Technology".

Marjorie Gay
Standing Rock

ARCHAEOLOGY OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

Have you ordered your copy of AENA, Volume V? Price is now (member) \$6.00, (non-member) \$7.00. If you are a member of the Alabama Archaeological Society, you are also a member of the Eastern States Archaeological Federation and eligible for special members' price.

Another new publication is Volume III of an anthropological Bibliography of the Eastern Seaboard, which is being published jointly by ESAF and American Indian Archaeological Institute. Price \$7.00. Send orders to ESAF; Island Field Museum; RD #2, Box 126; Milford, Delaware 19963.

Marjorie Gay
Standing Rock

BOOK REVIEWS

THE RAPE OF THE NILE, TOMB ROBBERS, TOURISTS AND ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN EGYPT. By Brian Fagan, Scribners, New York, c. 1975, price \$14.95.

This fine book is beautifully illustrated with photos, drawings and maps.

Evidence points to the fact that tomb robbery has been a national pastime. Even from the time of the burials up to the 20th century, the buying and selling of Egypt's antiquities has been carried on.

The looting by Napoleon and his armies in Egypt is given in detail. Then there was the famous Italian, Belzoni, who was in the business of gathering and selling all kinds of antiquities. Later, French, German and British were discovering and sending back Egypt's finest items.

Flanders Petrie and Amelia Edwards were involved in Egypt - Petrie, famous for his excavations; and Edwards, for her extraordinary efforts to conserve.

Margaret Perryman Smith
Atlanta, Ga.

ARCHAEOLOGY BY EXPERIMENT. By John Coles, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1973. 182 pp., \$8.95.

This interesting book, written by a lecturer in archaeology at Cambridge, describes in some detail experiments which have been carried out on archaeological "problems" over the years. Most of the experiments

are fairly recent; some date to the 1830's. Dr. Coles divides his work into sections entitled "Food Production" (forest clearance and crops, plowing, harvesting, storage of food and preparation and consumption of food); "Heavy Industry" (house building and destruction, earthworks and erosion, transport and erection of stones, and boats and voyages); and "Light Industry" (stone working; wood working and weapons; working in bone, antler and shell; working with metals; hides, leathers and textiles; pottery manufacture; painting and paper; and musical instruments).

The author presupposes a certain amount of knowledge of the subject matter on the part of the reader; the book could probably have benefited from the inclusion of a glossary. It is, however, well illustrated, with numerous black-and-white photographs and drawings.

Coles states emphatically and repeatedly that experimental archaeology "cannot and does not pretend to prove anything". Rather, it demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the experimenter, that an object could or could not have been used or made a certain way; that a technique could or could not have been successfully employed by primitive man. He suggests that further experimental work be carried out, especially in the areas of travel, reconstructed archaeological sites, pottery manufacture and cremation of "human or perhaps equivalent bodies". He stresses the importance of future experimenters' building on the experience of their predecessors - "...this is perhaps one of the strongest arguments for the establishment of a central body of data and support for experimental archaeology".

Editor's Note: ARCHAEOLOGY BY EXPERIMENT is available for \$1.98 from Marboro Books with a minimum total order of \$5. Write for their latest catalogue: Marboro Books, Inc., Dept. 708; 205 Moonachie Road; Moonachie, New Jersey 07074.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The initial Directors meeting of the year was held at the Rodeway Inn in Birmingham at noon, January 28, 1978. President Dru McGowen established the operating committees, appointed their chairmen and received Board approval for these appointments.

Mr. David DeJarnette's resignation as editor of the Journal was accepted with regrets and a resolution adopted commending him for his many years of dedicated service to the Society. Mr. Britt Thompson of Birmingham was appointed to serve as interim Journal editor until a new editor is selected.

The program committee revealed additional details of the plans for the Summer Conference on Early Man to be held in Florence. Specialists on early man in Alabama and the Southeast are being scheduled to speak. A large display of early man lithic material is being planned, with provisions for photography by attendees. An authentic "early man meal" for attendees is planned during the day, featuring meats and vegetables which would have been available to early man, prepared as he probably would have prepared them. The program committee assures us, however, that the food facility and service will be "modern man". Additional details on the Summer Meeting will be forthcoming in the next Newsletter.

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(3) Newly elected Directors for three year term of office.

(2) and (1) denote years remaining on each directorship.

*Immediate past president.

THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Following are the objectives stated in our Constitution, slightly modified for emphasis: To promote informed interest in the study of Archaeology in Alabama and neighboring States; to encourage careful scientific archaeological research in such ways as surface scouting, mapping, marking, studying and especially reporting; to promote and support professionally directed excavations and discourage unsupervised "digging"; to promote the conservation of archaeological sites and to favor the passage of laws prescribing such; to oppose the sale of antiquities, and the manufacture and sale of fraudulent artifacts; to encourage and develop a better understanding of archaeology through providing Newsletters, Journals, Chapter and State meetings, helpful associates and good fellowship; to serve as a bond between individual archaeologists in the State, both non-professional and professional; and perhaps most importantly, to give everyone the opportunity to "do something about archaeology" through the accomplishment and enjoyment of these high aims.

The Society needs and welcomes as members, all persons whose ideals are in accord with the objectives set forth above. Active members receive the JOURNAL OF ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGY, devoted to articles on the archaeology of Alabama and nearby States, and also receive the STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER, published monthly, containing news of members and their activities, also State, national and worldwide events of archaeological importance.

The Society is a non-profit corporation and all contributions are deductible when making your income tax return.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION OF ALABAMA, INC.

This Association, an affiliate of our State Society, is a non-profit corporation, whose aim and purpose is to finance archaeological advancement in Alabama, the FIRST State to provide such financial support through popular subscription. All contributions to this association are deductible in making your income tax return (if, of course, you itemize your deductions). Your check should be made payable to the association as shown above.

MAIL TO:

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Journals and Special Publications

Available back issues of the Society's Journal *THE JOURNAL OF ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGY*, and all Special Publications are available from the Journal Editor. Please see back of this page for listing.

Stones and Bones Newsletter

Comments, news items, reviews and other material for inclusion in the Newsletter should be addressed to:

Stones and Bones Editor / Amos J. Wright
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