

Alabama Archaeological Society

Associate Editors
Bart Henson
Dorothy Luke



STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

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

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PLANS FOR SUMMER MEETING

The Archaeological Resources Committee, chaired by Charles Moore of Florence, inspected two early man sites on March 13, 1982 in preparation for the Society's summer field activities. One site is in Madison County and the other in Colbert County; both on knolls above spring/lake water sources. According to Charles, the committee will have complete details and recommendations for the April 3, 1982 Board of Directors meeting - where the final decision will be made for the specific program.

Preliminary plans indicate a summer meeting/dig for "hands-on" activity by all Society members on an early man site, plus the possibility of a university credit course through the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alabama for those who would like to pursue the project beyond the Society dig phase. Additional details will appear in the May newsletter, following the Board meeting.

The Editors

CHAPTER NEWS

Coosa Valley Chapter

The Coosa Valley Chapter meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. The meeting place alternates between Jacksonville State University's Brewer Hall and the Anniston Museum of Natural History.

At the March 4 meeting, members enjoyed a slide presentation by Chapter President Dr. Harry Holstein on his archaeology trip to the American southwest. Afterwards, Mr. Tom Mullendore showed his beautiful collection of Indian celts, all of which came from local sites.

The next meeting will be held April 1 at the University

Cullman Chapter

The new Chapter meeting place is Room 209, on the second floor of the County Courthouse. The time remains the same: 7:30 p.m., third Monday night. A monthly discussion period on different artifacts has been initiated; at the March 15 meeting the Decatur point was studied.

April 1982

Huntsville Chapter

Chapter member Roy Blair was the speaker at the March 16 meeting. Roy, a professional archaeologist, discussed field techniques and how they have been applied on several of the excavations in which he has participated.

The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Arts Council Conference Room, Von Braun Civic Center. For more information call Program Chairman Larry Warren at 536-4533.

BOOK REVIEW

"Florida's Prehistoric Stone Technology", by Barbara A. Purdy. Available from University Presses of Florida at Gainesville for \$25.

Dr. Purdy is a well-known and recognized authority on lithic technology, and her knowledge and expertise is well exhibited in this book. The book is well illustrated with drawings and photographs of projectile points and tools. The text is contained in four chapters:

1. Early Florida Stone Implement Makers
2. Stone Tool Typology
3. Stoneworking Technology
4. Technical Analysis To Determine Age and Origin of Florida Chert Implements

She takes the reader through point and tool identification, flaking techniques, heat treatment, etc., including the various scientific methods available for dating.

The book is hardback with good-quality paper and high-resolution illustrations and photographs. The narrative is structured for both the professional and nonprofessional. The last chapter on dating techniques is a little complex for most laymen, but for those that want to study lithic technology, this book is for them. It may be a little expensive, but due to the large number of photos and illustrations, it is well worth the cost. We are a little disappointed that the unique naming conventions for Florida projectile points are continued by the author. It appears to us that "some" of the points fall within previously well-established typology. We recommend this book.

The Editors

ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING

The 35th annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association will be held in Montgomery, Alabama on Friday and Saturday, April 23 and 24, 1982.

A varied program of 22 papers will be presented on Friday and Saturday under the direction of Dr. Leah R. Atkins of Samford University, Program Chairman. The opening feature on Friday morning will be a talk on the White House of the Confederacy by Mrs. John H. Napier III of Montgomery. That evening

Judge C. J. Coley of Alexander City will give the annual banquet address. The presidential address will be given at the Saturday luncheon. A special feature of the meeting will be the breakfast on Saturday morning at the Holiday Inn. Dean H. Lindy Martin, a Cherokee Indian, will be the speaker.

The headquarters for the meeting will be at the Holiday Inn - State Capitol (925 Madison Avenue; Montgomery, Alabama 36104). The registration fee for the meeting will be \$18.50 for members and guests alike. For more information contact Mrs. Aubrey E. Neeley, Chairman, Registration Committee; c/o Landmarks Foundation of Montgomery; 310 North Hull Street; Montgomery, Alabama 36104.

The Editors

NEW FOSSILS FOUND IN SOUTH ALABAMA

Ronald Rhoads and I made a couple of sorties to South Alabama. At one spot we found sea snake vertebrae; at another, complete fossil sand dollars; at another complete crab fossils; and at yet another, perfectly preserved clams with both valves. At the clam locality, we also found the first skate teeth known in Alabama, two sea snake vertebrae, a new sawfish tooth, and what is apparently the oldest known mammal tooth from Alabama.

At a little town called Isney, we were treated to an extraordinary fossil site. Here by digging and screening all day, we recovered many new and unusual fossils from a small gravel bar in a stream. This site yielded yet another unknown type of sawfish tooth, manatee ribs, an unusual whale vertebra, shark teeth unknown from the Gosport sand, two Pleistocene mammal teeth and a leg bone, and nine archaic Indian projectile points made from local material. Scientifically, the importance of this site is obvious and exciting.

In December we were given the singular opportunity to work on a site near Mobile with Dr. Frank Whitmore of the U. S. Geological Survey and the Smithsonian Institution. Although Dr. Whitmore kept all the horse, rhinoceros, camel, and beaver fossils, he did give us a bag of turtle bones and let us bring home two boxes of matrix, which have yielded several hundred fish teeth and scales, turtle bones, and perhaps bird bones.

Rhoads reports good news from the whale site! Several more backbones have been recovered and returned to the lab. A few neck vertebrae, as well as many ribs, one section of jaw with teeth, and what are apparently skull bones have also been found. Probably most of the 40-million-year-old skeleton of this *Basilosaurus* will be recovered over the next month.

(From an article by Gordon Bell in "Tracks", quarterly publication of the Red Mountain Museum, Birmingham - Volume IV, Issue 1, March 1982)

The Editors

BOOK REVIEW

"Venus and Sothis, How the Ancient Near East Was Rediscovered", by Wilbur D. Jones. Published by Nelson-Hall, Inc., 111 North Canal Street, Chicago, Illinois 60606. 155 pages, hardback, price \$18.95 cloth, \$8.95 paper.

The pages of this book are filled with the most compact chronological history of the Near East we have seen. Dr. Jones, professor of history at the University of Georgia, has done a superb job of condensing the vast history of the Near East into a relatively small space - yet, it appears little is lost of the chronological history and the Near East characters that played such a prominent role in its developing civilization. He takes the reader through the reign of rulers throughout the Near East, including Egypt, and also vividly gives a running account of the archaeological work that has revealed this history. The archaeological personalities involved over the past 100 years are presented in an objective manner; yet Dr. Jones is able to bring out the differences of opinions and interpretations of the archaeologists from many countries, including the most current thinking on Near East history. Although not many pages, this book is a good reference and interesting reading.

The Editors

PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

"Bibliography of Maryland Archeology" - available from Maryland Geological Survey; Merryman Hall; The Johns Hopkins University; Baltimore, Maryland 21218. Price: \$3.50 (including postage and handling). Make checks payable to MARYLAND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

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The Editors

ANCIENT BUTCHERS

Modern butchers may not realize what a time-honored trade they practice. According to new anthropological evidence, man was using cutlery, albeit very primitive, to butcher ancient beasts - such as hippos and elephants - and presumably eating them as far back as one-and-one-half to two million years ago. The evidence raises new questions in an old debate about the evolution of human diet and the origins of organized human society.

The new fossil evidence, uncovered in several East African archaeological sites and examined by anthropologists Glynn Isaac and Henry Bunn of the University of California at Berkeley and Richard Potts of Yale University, shows animal bones with very fine knicks and grooves. These markings, analyzed by Potts under an electron scanning microscope, are distinguishable from other markings - such as teeth marks - and thus indicate that ancient man used knife-like pieces of stone to remove meat from animal carcasses, the researchers say. There is also evidence that ancient butchers used primitive hammers to fracture animal bones in order to extract the marrow.

The fossil evidence is the first solid data to emerge in an area of much speculation and debate. Two anthropological schools have argued, respectively, that either male hunting or female gathering played the central role in primeval diet and social evolution. Although most anthropologists are convinced that a vegetable diet was the mainstay of ancient human life, the evidence of meat eating suggests that primitive societies were making choices about food. It suggests further that meat had become more important for early humans than it was for other primates, and therefore that man had moved past the individualistic feeding characteristic of apes to a more cooperative form of food gathering. "Collective acquisition of food", Isaac says, "may in turn have stimulated the development of language ability and of intricate social patterns".

What is still unknown, Isaac says, is how often early humans fed on meat - whether weekly, yearly, or, perhaps, only once in a lifetime. The number of bones bearing the characteristic butchery marks suggests, however, that meat eating probably occurred with some regularity. Because the earliest known stone tools are at least two million years old, the researchers believe that their fossil evidence comes from a time when humans were just developing the habit of butchering animals for food. In addition, Isaac notes, the findings come not only from identifiable campsites but also from isolated areas, suggesting that ancient butchers were carrying their cutlery around with them.

The fossils under examination come from the Olduvai and Koobi Fora sites in East Africa and date back to a time when at least two early human species - Homo habilis and Australopithecus boisei - coexisted.

(From SCIENCE NEWS, Vol. 121 - January 16, 1982)

The Editors

SCIENTISTS UNRAVEL THE SECRET OF DAMASCUS STEEL

Researchers at Stanford University, working on "superplastic metals" that can be stretched significantly when heated while retaining their cold strength, have serendipitously hit upon the centuries-old secret of Damascus steel.

In the process, materials scientists Oleg D. Sherby and Jeffrey Wadsworth have produced a form of the steel that is even stronger than the original.

Damascus steel itself was generally misunderstood through the centuries. It was not made in Damascus, for example, but in India. Europeans gave it its name because they first came across it in the Syrian city. Its technology was scarcely new at the time of that "discovery" in the middle ages, for Alexander the Great is believed to have carried weapons made of the steel in about 320 B.C.

Nevertheless, the technology of Damascus steel completely mystified European forgers who tried to reproduce it. When they tried to work it in the castings known as wootz, it simply crumbled. Even later efforts failed to create the strong, tough texture that is characteristic of Damascus steel. Michael Faraday, among others, was baffled by his inability to produce the fine surface pattern of the noble steel.

Now, Sherby and Wadsworth have discovered why those efforts at reproduction were unavailing. The texture, they found in their studies of superplastic metals, consists of tiny particles of iron carbide, brought out by the forging process.

"All metal is granular", explained Wadsworth, who now works for the Lockheed Corp., in Palo Alto, California. Initially, the carbon in Damascus steel formed into coarse particles along the edges of the grains, which were relatively large. The clustering made the steel weak. However, forgers worked the steel very hard to break up the particles, and in doing so they created extremely fine distribution of carbides which reduced the weakening effect and created the familiar texture of Damascus steel.

European efforts to reproduce Damascus steel failed in two critical areas, according to Wadsworth. First, they operated at too high a temperature for the high carbon (about 1%) alloy. While Europeans worked the metal at about 2900°F (1590°C), the patient Indians kept their furnaces in the range 1290 to 1650°F (700 to 900°C), thus preventing shattering of the wootz. And whereas the casual Indians reportedly quenched their blades by plunging them, red-hot, into the belly of a slave, the more refined Europeans resorted to urine and other less satisfactory quenching media.

The Stanford researchers have developed a method of working a 1.3% carbon steel into a superplastic metal that closely matches Damascus steel. Indeed, because the Stanford version contains a finer texture, the steel is actually stronger than the Damascus variety.

(From INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT - December 1981)

The Editors

1982 COMMITTEES OF THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Tom Hutto	2	Route 18, Box 352, Birmingham, AL 35210	956-1895
Charles Moore	2	887 Riverview Drive, Florence, AL 35630	766-1940
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Brittain Thompson	1	3609 Montrose Road, Birmingham, AL 35213	871-0698

* Journal Editor a member of Publications Committee by virtue of his office.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of <i>Journal of Alabama Archaeology</i> Vol. 13-18	\$1.00 pp
Vol. 20-24 (\$2.50 to Members)	\$4.00 pp
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