



THE DATUM POINT

Newsletter of the
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org

March 2010

FROM THE PRESIDENT – JOHN KELSEY

First of all, some great news. The possible cut of the senior archaeologist position currently held by Mike Johnson was NOT included in the 2011 budget submission to the Board of Supervisors. Thanks to all of you who wrote and talked to County officials to point out the devastating impact that such a cut would have. Unfortunately, the budget picture for 2012 is still bleak from the County's perspective. We will watch closely as the 2012 budget is being developed in the fall. In the meantime, please don't pass up the opportunity to talk up the office's good work to any and all.

Last month, I mentioned that several of us have talked about doing one or two field trips a year to complement our normal monthly meetings. Diane Schug-O'Neill has set up the first field trip for the 8th of May. It will be an archaeology-focused tour of sites around the historic Brentsville Court House. The plan is also to combine the trip with our annual picnic, and Brentsville has facilities to accommodate that. Hopefully, the snow will be gone by then! We'd like to look at another field trip in the fall, perhaps September. If you have suggestions, please let me know.

I've been sending emails to members on the status of the County budget and upcoming events. If you haven't received these but would like to be on distribution in the future, please send your email address to CK Gailey and me.

See you in the field.

NEXT MONTH'S TALK:

Clark's Branch: An Early Stratified Site in the Eastern Virginia Piedmont, by Paul Inishima.

Paul Inishima was recently invited to serve on the Reader Panel of the prestigious international science journal, *Nature*, for the year 2010.

MARCH PRESENTATION BY STEPHEN ISRAEL

ROCKDALE ROAD ROCKSHELTER A LATE WOODLAND SITE BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD EXCAVATED AND REPORTED ON BY CENTRAL CHAPTER OF ASM



Stephen S. Israel is a retired staff archaeologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District (1976-2003). He received his M.A. in Anthropology from the Univ. of Oklahoma. His research ranges from prehistoric settlement patterns and subsistence systems, ecology, and geoarchaeology to interpreting industrial archaeology and history. Mr. Israel is the past President of the Council for Maryland Archaeology and Chairperson of Central Chapter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.

The **Rockdale Road Rockshelter** is a Late Woodland ephemeral hunting and foraging procurement camp site in northern Baltimore County, Maryland. A shallow hearth pit radiocarbon-uncalibrated-dated at A.D. 1400±50 years. Central Chapter, of the Archeological Society of Maryland, excavated during Maryland Archeology Month in 2007. The rockshelter showed signs of two occupations. Ceramics were tempered with igneous rock, sand, and mica, with minor quantities of crushed quartz and pulverized shell temper occurring. The rockshelter's sparse midden suggests short stays and infrequent use, related to a long-established foraging, hunting and trading of raw resources with other groups in the Piedmont hinterland.

STABLER-LEADBEATER APOTHECARY MUSEUM

On Saturday, March 20, OHA staff member Elizabeth Field will lead a "Behind the Counter" tour at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum at 105 South Fairfax in Alexandria, VA.

The cost is \$25. The tour runs from 9 am-10:30 am and is followed by a light breakfast and reservations are required as space is limited. For reservations please contact Michele at Gadsby's Tavern at 703-746-4242.

FAIRFAX CIRCUIT COURT HISTORICAL RECORDS

Fairfax Circuit Court Historical Records has posted some of our finding aids online. These finding aids include indexes to Deeds from 1742 - 1841; Wills from 1742 - 1866 and Marriages from 1853 - 1957. Please visit the website below for the complete list.

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/courts/circuit/historical-records-finding-aids.htm>

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER (SSB) GEOTRAIL

Alexandria is participating in the Star-Spangled Banner (SSB) GeoTrail.

Be the first to find our cache!!!

Come on a journey to remember and commemorate the dramatic chain of events, people and places that led to the birth of our National Anthem. The story of the Anthem was shaped by events in the Chesapeake region during the War of 1812. From early 1813 until early 1815, the Chesapeake Bay and surrounding shores were the center of fierce struggles between the British and the Americans. From the burning of the White House to the Battle for Baltimore and 'the rockets red glare,' it's all here for the geocaching community to enjoy in the Chesapeake region, an area encompassed by the Chesapeake Bay, coastal Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The SSB trail will have over 35 caches within Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. From Ft. McHenry through MD, DC and Northern VA, to Newport News, and the VA & MD Eastern Shores! A trackable geo coin will be awarded to the first 400 geocachers, while supplies last, for locating at least 20

SSB caches. To be eligible for the coin, geocachers must download a passport from either the SSB Geotrail website or Maryland Geocaching Society website.

Geocachers must find and log at least 20 SSB finds, record the code word from each cache on your passport and post a picture of yourself at each cache location on the cache page.

We hope to see you all on the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail!

FAIRFAX COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY

By Mike Johnson

Mt. Air Survey - Mt. Air is an archeological park near Ft. Belvoir. The site is on of the main house complexes for the McCarty family and was built in the early 1700s. The house burned down in the 1980s and the property was donated to the Park Authority by a developer. The Park Authority and American University have done archeology on the property in the past and the foundation has been stabilized to accommodate visitors. The County also published a monograph on the site and McCarty family.

Rich Sacchi is planning to do a brief survey of a portion of the site to verify the location of some features that he became aware of through documentary research. He will be there at 10 am on Tuesday (2/2) and is offering it as an opportunity for certification students to earn historic survey hours. It will also be an opportunity for any of you to both do some field survey and see an learn about 18th and 19th century Fairfax County. Those interested can get directions by emailing Rich at (Richard.Sacchi@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Lab - We have completed all of the regular 1/4" mesh artifact data from the Neha site and have begun the tedious task of dealing with the 1/16" mesh samples and features from that site. Unless otherwise announced, lab will still be on Tuesday's and Saturdays, opening at 9 am. Due to the Granddaughter's first birthday party on Saturday (2/13) lab will close at 3 pm that day.

Field - The long range forecast is for the weather to improve after this week. As a result, you may be notified of schedule changes regarding field opportunities. The first will be to test another stone pile near Fountainhead Park. We may also begin testing at the McCue property near Colchester.

FISCAL YEAR 2011 ADVERTISED BUDGET

By Cathy Hudgins

On Tuesday, February 23rd, Fairfax County Executive Tony Griffin presented his Fiscal Year 2011 Advertised Budget at the Board of Supervisors Meeting. His FY 2011 Budget is based on a projected shortfall of 257 million dollars. Mr. Griffin noted that his approach: focused on core programs; considered that his reductions may be permanent; and stressed that County agencies will continue to seek and identify creative ways to do more with less. In doing so, he presented the Board with a very sobering budget that decreases expenditures, recommends an increased tax rate, reduces County positions, and does not reduce school funding at the same level County agencies are facing.

As always it is my hope that the result of this budget will not bring undue hardship on any one segment of the County whether that be to those who receive services, those that pay real estate and other taxes, those the County employs, those who the County educates, or all of us who rely on the County to keep us safe.

As I work with my colleagues, meet with those who receive County funding, talk and meet with residents, I continue to read all of the correspondence that comes to me. In addition to the correspondence, I will be hosting two Community Meetings on the FY 2011 Budget:

- Wednesday, March 3rd, 7-9 p.m., at Reston Community Center - Lake Anne, 1609 - A Washington Plaza, Reston, VA; and
- Wednesday, March 24th, 7-9 p.m., at James Madison High School - Warhawk Hall, 2500 James Madison Drive, Vienna, VA.

I strongly encourage you to attend the Community Meetings so that your concerns echo throughout the community.

Additionally, the Board of Supervisor's Budget Committee will be meeting over the next two months with the Fairfax County Public School Board, the Fairfax County Park Authority, the Library Board, public safety officials, and Human Services Council.

You can find complete FY 2011 Budget information on the County's web page at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/>, including the County Executive's presentation to the Board of Supervisors, the FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan, the Fairfax County budget calendar, and information on how

to register to speak at the April 6-8, 2010 Public Hearings on the FY 2011 Budget.

Again, I thank you for contacting me and participating in the budget process. I will continue to weigh your correspondence as I do all others as part of this difficult Budget process.

VDHR NEWS FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY

Mount Vernon: Officials plan research library: The caretakers of George Washington's home announced plans for a research library on the grounds of his estate, which would be built with \$38 million donated by the Las Vegas-based Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. The library will house originals and copies of close to 500 of Washington's books, letters, surveys and other documents, as well as up to 90 volumes of records being assembled at the University of Virginia and 1,500 books from the founding era, curators said. The 45,000-square-foot building is to be built on a wooded campus within walking distance of the popular mansion. <http://www.lvrj.com/news/reynolds-foundation-donates-38-million-for-george-washington-library-84789917.html>

Fairfax Regional Library: African American history and genealogy: The Virginia Room in the City of Fairfax Regional Library is preparing to make available an invaluable tool for researching African-American history and genealogy. The library expects a new and extensive annotated bibliography of the library's regional and general African-American materials will be fully available in the spring and accessible online via the Fairfax County Public Library's Web site. <http://www.fairfaxtimes.com/cms/story.php?id=1088>

Salona Park, Fairfax Co.: County Park Authority kicks off new plans for property: Under the terms of a 2005 easement, much of the 50-acre park is to be used for passive recreation, but two rectangular sports fields, a playground, a picnic area, an agricultural education area and 100 parking spaces are being proposed for the northern portion of the parcel. From the early 1700s to the early 1800s, the land was part of the Lee family holdings. The Maffitts acquired the property in 1812 and built Salona House. When the British burned Washington, D.C. in 1814, James Madison stayed at the house while escaping. <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/article.asp?article=337610&paper=68&cat=104>

Loudoun Co.: Easements up 5% in 2009: The Piedmont Environmental Council said the addition of 2,354 acres last year brought permanently conserved land in Loudoun to 46,164 acres. In the nine-county Piedmont

region, 18,065 acres were protected through easements last year, increasing the number of conserved acres to 325,530, an area larger than Shenandoah National Park <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/05/AR2010020503958.html>

Manassas Museum: Exhibit "Sites and Stories: African American History in Virginia": The exhibit illuminates the often little-known stories told in roadside historical markers. "People sometimes don't get a sense of all that Virginia history has to offer from one marker," said Lauranet Lee of Virginia Historical Society. "Showing multiple markers with a similar theme side by side in an exhibition like this gives people the opportunity to see how diverse Virginia history is -- and focusing on African-American history allows us all to see just how much of that history there is out there." http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/news/local_other/article/HIST10_20100209-204404/323197/

HOW A HOBBIT IS REWRITING THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE

To see this story with its related links on the guardian.co.uk site, go to <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/feb/21/hobbit-rewriting-history-human-race>

The discovery of the bones of tiny primitive people on an Indonesian island six years ago stunned scientists. Now, further research suggests that the little apemen, not Homo erectus, were the first to leave Africa and colonise other parts of the world, reports Robin McKie.

Robin McKie, Sunday February 21 2010, *The Observer*

It remains one of the greatest human fossil discoveries of all time. The bones of a race of tiny primitive people, who used stone tools to hunt pony-sized elephants and battle huge Komodo dragons, were discovered on the Indonesian island of Flores in 2004.

The team of Australian researchers had been working in a vast limestone cavern, called Liang Bua, in one of the island's remotest areas, when one scientist ran his trowel against a piece of bone. Carefully the group began scraping away the brown clay in which pieces of a tiny skull, and a little lower jaw, were embedded.

This was not any old skull, they quickly realised. Although small, it had special characteristics. In particular, it had adult teeth. "This was no child, but a tiny adult; in fact, one of the smallest adult hominids

ever found in the fossil record," says Mike Morwood, of Australia's University of Wollongong and a leader of the original Flores expedition team.

The pieces of bone were carefully wrapped in newspaper, packed in cardboard boxes and then cradled on the laps of scientists on their journey, by ferry and plane, back to Jakarta. Then the pieces of skull, as well as bones from other skeletons found in Liang Bua, were put together.

The end result caused consternation. These remains came from a species that turned out to be only three feet tall and had the brain the size of an orange. Yet it used quite sophisticated stone tools. And that was a real puzzle. How on earth could such individuals have made complex implements and survived for aeons on this remote part of the Malay archipelago?

Some simply dismissed the bones as the remains of deformed modern humans with diseases that had caused them to shrink: to them, they were just pathological oddities, it was alleged. Most researchers disagreed, however. The hobbits were the descendants of a race of far larger, ancient humans who had thrived around a million years ago. These people, known as Homo erectus, had become stranded on the island and then had shrunk in an evolutionary response to the island's limited resources.

That is odd enough. However, new evidence suggests the little folk of Flores may be even stranger in origin. According to a growing number of scientists, Homo floresiensis is probably a direct descendant of some of the first apemen to evolve on the African savannah three million years ago. These primitive hominids somehow travelled half a world from their probable birthplace in the Rift Valley to make their homes among the orangutans, giant turtles and rare birds of Indonesia before eventually reaching Flores.

It sounds improbable but the basic physical similarity between the two species is striking. Consider Lucy, the 3.2 million-year-old member of Australopithecus afarensis. She had a very small brain, primitive wrists, feet and teeth and was only one metre tall, but was still declared "the grandmother of humanity" after her discovery in Ethiopia in 1974.

Crucially, analysis of Lucy's skeleton shows it has great similarities with the bones of H. floresiensis, although her species died out millions of years ago while the hobbits hung on in Flores until about 17,000 years ago. This latter figure is staggeringly close in terms of recent human evolution and indicates that long after the

Neanderthals, our closest evolutionary relatives, had disappeared from the face of the Earth around 35,000 years ago, these tiny, distant relatives of Homo sapiens were still living on remote Flores.

The crucial point about this interpretation is that it explains why the Flores people had such minuscule proportions. They didn't shrink but were small from the start ? because they came from a very ancient lineage of little apemen. They acquired no diseased deformities, nor did they evolve a smaller stature over time. They were, in essence, an anthropological relic and Flores was an evolutionary time capsule. In research that provides further support for this idea, scientists have recently dated some stone tools on Flores as being around 1.1 million years old, far older than had been previously supposed.

The possibility that a very primitive member of the genus Homo left Africa, roughly two million years ago, and that a descendant population persisted until only several thousand years ago, is one of the more provocative hypotheses to have emerged in anthropology during the past few years," David Strait of the University of Albany told Scientific American recently. This view is backed by Professor Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum, London. "We are still grappling with what this discovery has done for our thinking and our conventional scenarios."

In addition, Mike Morwood says he has now uncovered stone tools on nearby Sulawesi. These could be almost two million years old, he believes, which suggests the whole region was populated by very ancient humans for a startlingly long part of human prehistory. "This is going to put the cat among the pigeons," Morwood says.

However, it is the hobbits' similarity to ancient African apemen that provides the most compelling evidence for their ancient origins. In the Journal of Human Evolution, a team led by Debbie Argue of the Australian National University, recently reported that analysis of H. floresiensis shows they most closely resemble apelike human ancestors that first appeared around 2.3 million years ago in Africa. In other words, their stock may be not quite as old as Lucy's but probably comes from a hominid, known as Homo habilis, that appeared on the evolutionary scene not long after Lucy's species disappeared. Homo habilis's features now seem to match, most closely, those of H. floresiensis.

Consider those hobbit feet, for example. The skeleton unearthed on Flores had a foot that was 20cm in length. This produces a ratio of 70 per cent when compared with the length of the hobbit's thigh bone. By contrast, men

and women today have foot-to-thigh bone ratios of 55 per cent. The little folk of Flores had singularly short legs and long, flapper feet, very similar to those of African apemen, even though limbs like these would have made their long march from Africa to Flores a painful business.

Similarly, the hands of H. floresiensis were more like apes than those of evolved humans, their wrists possessing trapezoid bones that would have made the delicate art of stone tool-making very difficult. Their teeth show primitive traits while their brains were little bigger than those of chimpanzees, though CT scans of skull interiors suggest they may have had cognitive skills not possessed by apes.

Nevertheless, this little apeman, with poor physique, a chimp-sized brain and only a limited ability to make tools, now appears to have left Africa, travelled thousands of miles and somehow colonised part, if not all, of south-east Asia two million years ago.

Scientists had previously assumed only a far more advanced human ancestor, such as Homo erectus, was capable of undertaking that task and only managed to do so about a million years ago when our predecessors had evolved powerful physiques, a good gait and the beginnings of intellect. Without these, we would have got nowhere, it was implied.

Then along came little H. floresiensis which, quite simply, has "no business being there," says Morwood. And you can see what he means. Apart from the sheer improbability of a jumped-up ape travelling from Africa to Indonesia, there is the particular puzzle of how it got to Flores.

Primitive hominids were almost certainly incapable of sailing. So how did it arrive on the island in the first place? It is a puzzle, although Stringer believes the region's intense tectonic activity is significant. "After the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, people were found far out at sea clinging to rafts of vegetation. Things like that could have happened regularly in the past and people could have been swept out to sea and washed ashore on Flores. Alternatively, there could have been short-lived connections between now separate islands."

Thus, ancient African apemen travelled half the world, made homes across Indonesia and, in one case, were washed out to sea to end up colonising a remote island that was already populated with pygmy elephants, called stegadons, and giant Komodo dragons, which are still found on the island. It is a truly fantastic tale, worthy of

Rider Haggard, and it has turned the study of human evolution on its head.

And then there is the report that dates the stone tools found on Flores as being 1.1 million years old. "That is utterly remarkable on its own," adds Morwood. "Until we found these dates, the longest period of island isolation that we knew about occurred on Tasmania where the aboriginal people were cut off from mainland Australia 11,000 years ago. We thought that was an amazing length of time. But now we have found an island where early humans were cut off from the rest of evolution for more than a million years." In addition, there are those completed digs carried out by Morwood which suggest that some type of human being was making stone implements up to two million years ago.

A crucial aspect to this remarkable story is the region's geography, Morwood believes. The ocean currents and the remoteness of Flores make the island difficult to get to, so once a species does get there, it will remain well protected on it, he argues. "Flores seems to protect species that are long past their use-by dates. There were those pygmy elephants, and the Komodo dragon, for example. And now we have *Homo floresiensis*. It may be that only a few animals get there but when they do arrive they tend to survive for a long time, which has been science's good fortune."

That is putting it mildly. Had not the original Australian team, led by Morwood, uncovered those hobbit remains in 2004, the story of humanity's African exodus would have been considered a fairly simple affair.

According to this version of events, *Homo erectus* evolved from apemen predecessors, such as *Australopithecus africanus*, in Africa and then headed off around the Old World more than a million years ago, armed with a great physique and a modest intellect.

These allowed it to settle across Africa, Asia and Europe. This diaspora was then followed by a second wave of humans ? our own species, *Homo sapiens* ? which emerged from Africa 100,000 years ago and took over the planet, replacing all pockets of its predecessors it encountered.

Now a far more complex picture is emerging. Ancient apemen, who might have been thought to lack the nous for global conquest, appear to have done the trick almost a million years earlier. One of the major tenets of human evolution, the story of our world conquest, is now urgently in need of revision.

As to the fate of *H. floresiensis*, that is unclear. The species disappears abruptly from the archaeological record 17,000 years ago. But why? They had apparently survived quite happily on the island for more than a million years. So what did for them in the end?

There are two competing answers. The first suggests that the species, after all the good fortune that had helped it endure the vicissitudes of life in the Malay Archipelago, ran out of luck. "There is a thick layer of ash in the Liang Bua cave above the most recent hobbit remains," says Stringer.

"We now know this was caused by a major volcanic eruption which occurred about 17,000 years ago. So it may be that they were just unlucky with the local geology." According to this vision, the little folk of Flores were wiped out by choking plumes of volcanic ash or died of starvation on an island denuded of vegetation.

It would have been a pretty terrible way to go. Yet neither Stringer nor Morwood is convinced that was what happened, despite the tight link between dates of eruptions on the island and the disappearance of the species from the fossil record. Instead, they suspect a very different agent: the bloody hand of modern humans. "Look at our track record," says Morwood.

When *Homo sapiens* entered Europe 40,000 years ago, on its route out of Africa, they would have encountered the continent's original inhabitants, the Neanderthals. Within a few millennia, the Neanderthals had been rendered extinct.

Stringer agrees. *Homo sapiens* left Africa about 100,000 years ago and by the time hobbits became extinct on Flores, modern humans were all over south-east Asia. "I cannot see *Homo floresiensis* keeping modern humans off the island.

There must have been encounters between them and us. It is wonderful to speculate what might have happened when they met up, but I suspect that those moderns used up the resources that the hobbit needed to survive."

Robin McKie is the science editor of *The Observer*



Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial

City of Alexandria's Contrabands & Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial Informational Meeting



Thursday, March 11
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.



Charles Houston Recreation Center
901 Wythe St, Alexandria VA

The City of Alexandria's Department of Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES) invites residents, stakeholders, and members of the public to attend the Contrabands & Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial informational meeting on Thursday, March 11. This meeting will be an opportunity to give public feedback and input regarding the proposed design.

For more information please visit:
www.alexandriava.gov/freedmens
or contact Emily Baker at 703.746.4045.

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Alexandria Museum	Pam Cressey	pamela.cressey@alexandriava.gov 703-838-4399 (information)

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Return to:
NVC/Archeological Society of Virginia
2855 Annandale Rd.
Falls Church, VA 22042

Chapter members should join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia.
asv-archeology.org

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at the James Lee Center at the above address.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!

THE DATUM POINT

Northern Virginia Chapter
Archeological Society of Virginia
2855 Annandale Rd.
Falls Church, VA 22042

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