

THE DATUM POINT

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org

April 2011

FROM THE PRESIDENT – JOHN KELSEY

Even as you're reading this, another intrepid group of ASV volunteers is returning from Gault. Hopefully, we will have had a chance to learn more about the discoveries at the Friedkin site just down the creek from Gault, which made the national news in March. There will be more on our trip in next month's edition of the *Datum Point*.

There will be no monthly Chapter meeting in April because of the County Spring 2011 Archaeological Symposium on April 16th and the field trip to St. Mary's City on April 30th. Attached is a flyer for the Symposium. **While it doesn't contain specific times, I've been told that Dennis Stanford will deliver the keynote talk at 9 AM.** I've already sent out an email on the field trip and on the Chapter's farewell dinner for Mike Johnson on May 18th. If you would like to attend either or both of these events, please let me know by April 8th.

Another upcoming event that will be of interest to many is the Oregon Ridge Nature Center's Primitive Technology Weekend. This is an annual event that is being held this year on May 7-8. Attached is a flyer for the event.

At the end of this issue is an article taken from the Richmond Chapter's *Plowzone* about Paleoamerican seafaring along the California coast. A lot of interesting archaeology is being done along the West Coast of North America, both terrestrial and underwater. The article is particularly timely because of its relevance to a theory of how the Americas were peopled that's been given a boost by the recent findings in Texas.

John

NO APRIL
WEDNESDAY MEETING!!!!
BUT
CHAPTER TOUR!!!!
APRIL 30TH AT
ST. MARY'S CITY,
MARYLAND



FIELD SCHOOL
SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

By Will Nelson

Everyone is reminded that funds are available to support attendance at field schools and for research projects. The Williams-Mullen Memorial Field Study Scholarship Fund's application deadline was April 1st, and no applications were received. However, future applications will still be considered. More information about the Rubis-Fuller Research Fund is available online at www.nvcasv.org. To apply for support from either of these funds, you have to fill out an application and send it to me for presentation to the Chapter. I can be contacted at: wnelson095@gmail.com. Both application forms are on the Chapter website. Please allow time to receive, publish, and vote on applications at a Chapter meeting.

COLCHESTER UPDATE

By the Colchester Archaeological Research Team

The CART is back from the Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference. We saw some great papers, reunited with old friends and colleagues, and made some new ones. Our poster was very well received (as measured by folks hanging around it for a while and taking brochures). We are recharged archaeologically and back to our usual schedule.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch . . . "This should be quick and easy," Chris Sperling said as MTUs were laid out and started on the east side of site. And so it seemed it would be, until Megan found a buried cultural horizon under what was first thought to be subsoil. "Might not want to close that test quite yet," she said. And, sure enough all the tests kept going and going....



Robin trying to find intact soil



Megan nearly falling into her MTU

A meter of artifact-bearing horizons and it was physically impossible to keep going. What happened at this place. "Quick and easy?" Right.

WESTBROOK UPDATE

By Mike Johnson

As some of you are aware, we recently recovered a large Culpeper net marked sherd. We also recovered another 5-10 smaller sherds. They were all from the same area of the block around the N268E346 STP. We observed no more pottery on

either Friday or Saturday. We had large crews both days and completed all but the last 13 square feet of the block. That does not mean that there were no sherds because, of course, we have not washed and sorted the dry screen residues. Clearly there was no more obvious pottery.



This past week, we completed the southern end of the block, which ended the audit test, in which we bagged the field and lab sorts separately. We set up a new section of Block D in the pitted hornfels area (Isabelle Pease, Beth Larsen and Bill Cole recovered a heavily reworked and discarded Rossville-Piscataway point from a leftover square provenience in Block C). We will also extend Block D to the north, since the large potsherd was recovered from the north edge of the 10x10.

A large number of crew members will be away at Gault from the Weekend of May 26/27 through the weekend of April 2/3. Chris Ramey and Ann Wood will carry on some limited recovery work at the Westbrook site during that period and will let everyone know the dates. Contact them if you'd like to help out.

CALIFORNIA ISLANDS GIVE UP EVIDENCE OF EARLY SEAFARING (FROM THE RICHMOND CHAPTER PLOWZONE)

By Jim Barlow, University of Oregon,
jebarlow@uoregon.edu

Evidence for a diversified sea-based economy among North American inhabitants dating from 12,200 to 11,400 years ago is emerging from three sites on California's Channel Islands. Reporting in

the March 4 issue of Science, a 15-member team led by University of Oregon and Smithsonian Institution scholars describes the discovery of scores of stemmed projectile points and crescents dating to that time period. The artifacts are associated with the remains of shellfish, seals, geese, cormorants and fish. Funded primarily by grants from the National Science Foundation, the team also found thousands of artifacts made from chert, a flint-like rock used to make projectile points and other stone tools.

Some of the intact projectiles are so delicate that their only practical use would have been for hunting on the water, said Jon Erlandson, professor of anthropology and director of the Museum of Natural and Cultural History at the University of Oregon. He has been conducting research on the islands for more than 30 years. "This is among the earliest evidence of seafaring and maritime adaptations in the Americas, and another extension of the diversity of Paleoindian economies," Erlandson said. "The points we are finding are extraordinary, the workmanship amazing. They are ultra thin, serrated and have incredible barbs on them. It's a very sophisticated chipped-stone technology." He also noted that the stemmed points are much different than the iconic fluted points left throughout North America by Clovis and Folsom peoples who hunted big game on land.

The artifacts were recovered from three sites that date to the end of the Pleistocene epoch on Santa Rosa and San Miguel islands, which in those days were connected as one island off the California coast. Sea levels then were 50 to 60 meters (about 160-200 feet) below modern levels. Rising seas have since flooded the shorelines and coastal lowlands where early populations would have spent most of their time. Erlandson and his colleagues have focused their search on upland features such as springs, caves, and chert outcrops that would have drawn early maritime peoples into the interior. Rising seas also may have submerged evidence of even older human habitation of the islands. The newly released study focuses on the artifacts and animal remains recovered, but the implications for understanding the peopling of the Americas may run deeper.

The technologies involved suggest that these early islanders were not members of the land-based Clovis culture, Erlandson said. No fluted points have been found on the islands. Instead, the points and crescents are similar to artifacts found in the Great Basin and Columbia Plateau areas, including pre-Clovis levels at Paisley Caves in eastern Oregon that are being studied by another UO archaeologist, Dennis Jenkins.



Last year, Charlotte Beck and Tom Jones, archaeologists at New York's Hamilton College who study sites in the Great Basin, argued that stemmed and Clovis point technologies were separate, with the stemmed points originating from Pacific Coast populations and not, as conventional wisdom holds, from the Clovis people who moved westward from the Great Plains. Erlandson and colleagues noted that the Channel Island points are also broadly similar to stemmed points found early sites around the Pacific Rim, from Japan to South America.

Six years ago, Erlandson proposed that Late Pleistocene sea-going people may have followed a "kelp highway" stretching from Japan to Kamchatka, along the south coast of Beringia and Alaska, then southward down the Northwest Coast to California. Kelp forests are rich in seals, sea otters, fish, seabirds, and shellfish such as abalones and sea urchins. "The technology and seafaring

implications of what we've found on the Channel Islands are magnificent," said study co-author Torben C. Rick, curator of North American Archaeology at the Smithsonian Institution. "Some of the paleo-ecological and subsistence implications are also very important. These sites indicate very early and distinct coastal and island subsistence strategies, including harvest of red abalones and other shellfish and fish dependent on kelp forests, but also the exploitation of larger pinnipeds and waterfowl, including an extinct flightless duck.

"This combination of unique hunting technologies found with marine mammal and migratory waterfowl bones provides a very different picture of the Channel Islands than what we know today, and indicates very early and diverse maritime life ways and foraging practices," Rick said. "What is so interesting is that not only do the data we have document some of the earliest marine mammal and bird exploitation in North America, but they show that very early on New World coastal peoples were hunting such animals and birds with sophisticated technologies that appear to have been refined for life in coastal and aquatic habitats." The stemmed points found on the Channel Islands range from tiny to large, probably indicating that they were used for hunting a variety of animals.

"We think the crescents were used as transverse projectile points, probably for hunting birds. Their broad stone tips, when attached to a dart shaft provided a stone age shotgun-approach to hunting birds in flight," Erlandson said. "These are very distinctive artifacts, hundreds of which have been found on the Channel Islands over the years, but rarely in a stratified context, he added. Often considered to be between 8,000 and 10,000 years old in California, "we now have crescents between 11,000 and 12,000 years old, some of them associated with thousands of bird bones." The next challenge, Erlandson and Rick noted, is to find even older archaeological sites on the Channel Islands, which might prove that a coastal migration contributed to the initial peopling of the Americas, now thought to have occurred two to three millennia earlier.

SYMPOSIUM

Sponsored by the Friends Of Fairfax County Archaeology and Cultural Resources (FOFA) and Cultural Resources Management and Protection Br., Fairfax County Park Authority

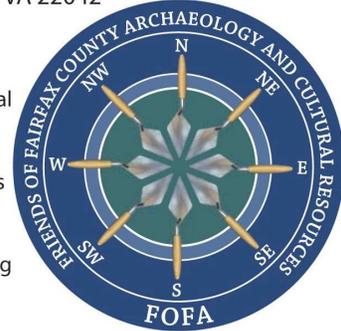


8:30 AM - 12:00 Noon; 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM, April 16, 2011
2nd Floor Auditorium, James Lee Community Center, Falls Church, VA
2855 Annandale Rd, #101, Falls Church, VA 22042



Please join us in presentations of projects receiving current national interest and selected local archaeological undertakings.

Dennis Stanford, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Paleoindian/Paleoecology Program, will speak on current paradigm-shifting very early Paleoindian discoveries in the lower Chesapeake Bay region, including his work with Darrin Lowery.



Dennis Stanford, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Keynote Speaker,
Origins of the First Americans: New discoveries in the Chesapeake Basin.

Mike Johnson, Senior Archaeologist, Fairfax County
Prehistoric Overview of Fairfax County

Ruth Troccoli, Ph.D., City Archaeologist, Washington, D.C.
New Tools of the Trade: GIS and Geoarchaeology in Washington, D.C.

Liz Crowell, Director, Cultural Resources Management & Protection, Fairfax County
Colchester in Context: Project Background and Context

Chris Sperling, Fairfax County Archaeologist
Diggin' Old Colchester: Archaeology of a Virginia Port Town

Maddy McCoy, Fairfax County Historian
Sleuthing History in Northern Virginia

Mary Furlong
Archaeological Investigation at Fort Ward, Alexandria, Virginia

Earnie Porta, Historian and Mayor of Occoquan
Tales of Occoquan

Michael Clem, Loudoun County Archaeologist
Topic To be announced

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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 2nd Wed. 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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