



THE DATUM POINT

October/November 2016

Newsletter of the
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER (NVC) OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org



FROM THE PRESIDENT DIANE SCHUG-O'NEILL

Hello, everyone! I trust you've been enjoying the more seasonal temperatures. We had about a 40% turn out to the ASV Annual meeting. That is great, especially when you realize that most of us had to travel 3+ hours to get to Williamsburg, to attend. Let's remember that we have members as far afield as Maryland and North Carolina. It was at this meeting that I was truly humbled by receiving the 2016 ASV Avocational Archeologist of the Year award. WOW - Thanks, to whomever nominated me. I was blown away.

We've been doing a lot of work in Arlington at the Ball Sellers House. We hope to continue to work with the Arlington Historical Society into the Winter and possibly Spring to catalog and analyze the artifacts. Keep in touch with Patrick, if you need Certification time in an historic lab.

Speaking of Certification... Congratulations to Isabel Tonkavitch! She's our newest graduate. This is a wonderful program to help you to get grounded, if you're new to archaeology and a great way to re-engage a newly retired mind. It's always nice to know your brain can still motor along, even after you've earned the right to stop the engines.

This is another two for one month on the newsletters- I'm sorry that we've fallen down on this. It's not for lack of information to share as much as it's a lack of time to "put pen to paper."

With that on the table I must remind everyone that December is fast upon us and is our election period. Please look deep into your schedule and see if you can step forward to help the organization that has helped you meet new people, keep active (mentally and physically), **Cont'd on page 2**

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Weds, November 9, 2016, 7:30PM

“HARD TIMES: VIRGINIANS IN UNION PRISONS DURING THE CIVIL WAR”

BY JON VRANA



Jon Vrana is a 40-year veteran of the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service), and holds a Master's Degree in Information Technology from George Washington University and a Bachelor's Degree in Agronomy with a Specialty in Soils. He holds a Federal Certification as a Chief Information Officer.

Jon has a vast interest and experience in museums and history, particularly Antebellum and Civil War history, and merges these interests with his professional knowledge and experience in agriculture and natural history, maps and geographic information systems, to bring a unique look at history of the 19th century.

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and provide you with quality entertainment. It is with a heavy heart that I must announce that I cannot continue as President in 2017. Please consider stepping forward - but, have no fear...you will not be cornered at the annual election/party in December. For any new people - that's not how we roll. We do not draft people. We are a 100% volunteer organization. We will post a slate of candidates in the December newsletter. Please contact an officer if you're interested in helping out in any capacity or if you have an idea who would make a good candidate. You never know, the person may just need to be asked. If someone calls upon you, understand that you can say "no, thanks" or "not now."

MIDDLE EASTERN MYSTERIES AT KHIRBET EL-MAQATIR by Merry Beth Policastro

What do mosaic floors, underground tunnels, coins dating back thousands of years, grain silos and ancient city gate sockets have in common? All are signposts indicating that you may have taken your archaeological excavation outside of the State of Virginia.

Exciting as our local digs are, two ASV members journeyed to Israel's West Bank where the search for Biblical Ai was well under way. My 19-year-old son, Anatoly, and I, recent Certification graduates, traveled to a dusty, windswept khirbet (a field of ruins), about nine miles north of Jerusalem, not far from Ramallah. We arrived in Israel on other business and the Associates for Biblical Research, under Excavation Director Dr. Scott Stripling and Director Emeritus Dr. Bryant Wood, were kind enough to invite us to participate as they are completing their last year at Khirbet el-Maqatir.

ABR approached the site with the scientific hypothesis that ancient authors knew something about what they were writing. In contrast to minimalist scholars reducing the Biblical record to supposedly-mythical tales listing imaginary places and people, this group treated the source as reliable in its topographical descriptions and markers, many of which have not changed to this day. These

indicated where certain cities might be located, with writers anchoring the sites firmly in time and place.

Previous archaeologists had placed Ai, one of the first cities reported to be conquered by Joshua entering the land of Canaan, in the location of Et-Tell, while simultaneously asserting that the accounts found in the books of Joshua and Judges did not entirely fit that site. ABR posed the research question asking if perhaps Et-Tell was the wrong site.

Dr. Wood explained that Khirbet el-Maqatir offered at least sixteen distinguishing characteristics to pinpoint the ruins as Ai, from its strategic, hilltop location, possibly between the ancient southern and the northern city states at the time of the Conquest, to its straight view to Jerusalem located to the south. He also reminded us that the situation, overlooking Wadi el-Gayeh, should be close to Beth-Aven and east of Bethel, according to Joshua chapter 7. The fact that Ai's gate was described to be to the north, that it was a fortified settlement, destroyed by fire, with a pile of stones in the gateway where the defeated king of Ai's body was covered, again fairly mirrored the archaeological record. (See Bryant G. Wood, "The Search for Joshua's Ai: Excavations at Kh. el-Maqatir," *Bible and Spade*, Winter 1999.)

A survey team from the Israel Antiquities Authority visited deserted Khirbet el-Maqatir in 1982, spotting pottery from Joshua's era. This discovery, along with many physical features mentioned in the Bible, led ABR to apply for permits and, starting in 1995, spend the next fourteen seasons excavating at Khirbet el-Maqatir, with a break from 2000-2008 during the second intifada. It was their candidate not only for Ai from the Hebrew Bible, but also for the New Testament site of Ephraim. (See John 11:54). They were not disappointed.

As often happens in archaeological excavations, features and artifacts from numerous eras surfaced as multiple squares were opened. KeM displayed four settlement patterns: a Fortress Phase dating from Middle Bronze III-Late Bronze I (Joshua's Ai, 1500-1406 BC), an Iron Age I Israelite Village (1200 to 1000 BC), a First-Century Israelite City (New Testament Ephraim, AD 1-69), and a Byzantine Church (Mid Fourth-Sixth Century AD).

Each proffered its noteworthy finds, along with over 1,000 coins excavated this season alone, a stamped pottery handle which could be significant, and a number of slingstones.

During ABR's spring, three-week foray to the field, the Fortress Phase revealed Late Bronze gate sockets, about 150ø apart, most likely belonging to the outer gate entrance and analogous to the pair located in 1995 and 1996 near the inner gate area. At the same time, much flint from a workshop for small tools came to light, while not far away, megalithic stones almost 7ø in length were excavated, possibly from an ancient, fallen tower.

In the Iron Age I Israelite Village, a typical house with packed earthen floor sheltered a pithos storage jar. The dwelling had been built into the ruined fortress wall of the earlier occupation level from centuries previous. ABR bore in mind that, while there was no historical mention of Benjaminites living in this area, the archaeological record might have tales of its own to tell.

Close to two Roman-Era silos that had been uncovered in the First-Century Israelite City, one team dug through bedrock to reveal staircases at either end of subterranean passageways and a couple of tunnels, intersecting. Hopefully, the purpose behind these mysterious, underground features may be solved during December's final expedition to KeM. Meanwhile, another square's group followed a city wall and tower, said to be one of the largest towers (52ø x 98ø) ever excavated in Israel and possibly three or four stories high. The cistern, where I observed our square supervisor descend over her head to dig, at least six feet in depth, included a pipe and a shallow basin leading to it. At the base, a flat and random-pattern, mosaic floor at last appeared with a small depression in the middle and circular in shape, touching the tank's walls. This was looking more like a winepress!

In the Byzantine church, the single-apse building foundation gave evidence of possible destruction during the earthquake of AD 383. The flooring of a later rebuilt, three-apse church, presented sealed loci holding coins which would aid in more definitive dating of the earlier structure.

The ABR team spent three intensive weeks of excavation, spanning from late May to mid-June. Temperatures rose to 106 degrees Fahrenheit when we were there and much of the dry screening was done in the kneeling position in an attempt to keep the dust at bay under windy conditions.

Still, Khirbet el-Maqatir enjoyed the designation of one of the most well-staffed excavations in Israel. Volunteers ranged from teens to late seventies, all enthusiastic and hard-working, many of them students arriving with professors. The experience was fascinating in terms of methodology, camaraderie, and the breadth of knowledge/professionalism displayed.

After a full day in the field, the group returned to their Jerusalem hotel headquarters, where pottery was washed in an outdoor courtyard and slices of watermelon revived us. Then the directors and their Ph.D. associates examined sherds at the pottery reading, calling out "Iron", "Fortress", "First Century" and other dating designations over each rim, base, and handle. Some pieces, destined for the dustbin, were given to us to study pottery typology at our leisure.

Best souvenirs ever.

[Read more about the Associates for Biblical Outreach expeditions at www.biblearchaeology.org](http://www.biblearchaeology.org)



Anatoly and Merry Beth Policastro in situ



Pre-dawn arrival at Khirbet el-Maqatir



First Century cistern/winepress



First Century AD storage jar



One KeM square's team in action at cistern - don't let go!



Late Bronze gate socket



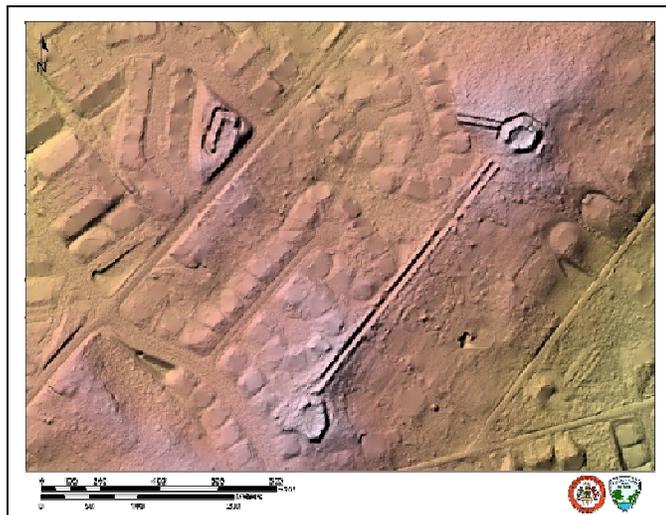
Dr. S/Dr. W photo - Pottery Reading with Dr. Scott Stripling and Dr. Bryant Wood

OLD COLCHESTER

By CART

Colleen B. joined the newly re-designated **County** Archaeological Research Team (CART) in late September. She graduated from Mary Washington University earlier in the year, and participated in a field school at Strafford Hall. Her knowledge of colonial Virginia artifacts will be a great asset to CART and the many sites around Fairfax County. Kayla is once again in our lab, but this time as Assistant Lab Director! Erica still stops by most Fridays to help with the transition, work with volunteers and interns, and keep projects on track. We are extremely happy to have Kayla back on the east coast and in JLC. You can check out more information about the CART staff on our website [Meet the Staff](#).

At the annual ASV conference Chris S. presented on the corduroy road finds and the great collaboration between the County GIS, our staff, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. With modern technology of LiDAR and GIS, old maps can be overlaid onto modern ones, and with the ground surface characteristics visible in LiDAR, camps and other features associated with the Civil War are still visible throughout Fairfax County. As shown in the image, remnants of a Civil War fort are visible with LiDAR imaging, but in an aerial image all the features are not visible in the trees and undergrowth.



CART would like to give a big congratulations to Diane Schug-O'Neill, who as volunteered with us in the past, for her award at the ASV conference for outstanding avocational archaeologist.

In the lab, we are still processing artifacts from current projects while wrapping up the back log. Much of the focus in the cooler fall weather consists of waterscreen window screen picking and artifact labeling. We have been able to use our database system to help us with artifact labeling with a simple press of a button. First we run a query to identify the diagnostics that we want to label. Then thanks to a bit of handy code from Chip and thanks to all the people who enter information into our artifact database, all we need to do is press a button to generate the labels that will get affixed to individual artifacts. The volunteer effort not only over the summer but also throughout the years has allowed the backlog of artifacts from earlier CART excavations to be finally fully processed through the AAM guidelines including, but not at all limited to labeling.



Warm and dry fall weather has allowed volunteers and staff to continue excavation at the current park

project. Artifacts ranging from window glass to ironstone and grey bodied stoneware fragments have been recovered, which highlight the domestic activities at the site.

Shown in the image are our volunteer Chris H. and CART staff member Colleen B. excavating a unit in the nice fall weather.

Please email cart.volunteers@live.com if you would like to come out to volunteer in the field and cartarchlab@live.com for volunteer opportunities in the lab.

Keep an eye on our blog: cartarchaeology.wordpress.com for information on local events and recent finds by CART.

NVC 50TH ANNIVERSARY PICNIC

In September, the NVC celebrated their 50th anniversary with a picnic at Gunston Hall. The day coincided with Archaeology Days at Gunston, in which the chapter had a table with brochures and our trifold display, showing our many accomplishments over 50 years! FOFA also had a table, as did CART and Gunston Hall, itself. Mike Johnson had a flint knapping demonstration.





Presidents of the Northern Virginia Chapter showing how many terms they served: L-R: Jack Hranicky, Martha Williams, Mike Johnson, Jim Reid, Diane Schug-O'Neill, Patrick O'Neill, Ann Wood, John Kelsey



Jack Hranicky and Patrick O'Neill are the only state ASV Past Presidents from the NVC!

NVC MEMBERS RECOGNIZED AT STATE LEVEL!

Three NVC members were recognized at the ASV Annual Meeting in October. CD Cox, for reaching 100 years old, making him the oldest living ASV Member ever! Isabelle Tonkavitch received her certificate and graduated the Archaeological Certification Program! Diane Schug-O'Neill received the Avocational Archaeologist of the Year Award for 2016, the highest honor the ASV bestows upon an individual. She has been volunteering in Virginia for almost 30 years!

As you can see, the chapter was well represented!!



Fairfax County's 12th Annual History Conference

Dedicated to the Memories of Fairfax County Historians, C. K. Gailey & Jack L. Hiller



Fairfax County's Founding Fathers

Part II ~ "The Masons Are Coming! The Masons Are Coming!"

As you can see from the above image, this year's Fairfax History Conference is dedicated to the memories of C.K. Gailey and Jack L. Hiller! Quite an honor, and very deserving!

This past week, on November 4th, also marked the graveside service for Lt. COL. C.K. Gailey at Arlington National Cemetery. We were all very honored to have been allowed to say a final farewell to our fallen archaeology soldier. His wife Jane was able to hold the American flag from the repatriation of the Centreville Six soldiers in Massachusetts over CK's urn before he was placed in his grave.



2016 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

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NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Phone: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Individual (\$15) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Family (\$17) _____

Return to:

Isabella Tonkavitch, Treasurer, NVC/ASV

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

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2nd Wed. of each month at the James Lee Center, 2855-A Annandale Road, Falls Church, VA.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!