Richard Drass and Susan Vehik conducted an OU Archeology Field School at the Little Deer site, 34CU10. This four week session, from June 9 to July 3, was jointly sponsored by the Department of Anthropology (OU) and the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. We had a small but dedicated crew of six students (Brian Andrews, Tony Fields, Josh Guinn, Paul Matchen, Mia Parham, Scott Sanderman). In addition, a few volunteers from the Weatherford area assisted in the excavations.

This is the second excavation at Little Deer. In the fall of 1995, the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, with assistance from the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, tested the main site area. These tests consisted of nine 1x1 meter units; we also exposed a small pit. Most of the artifacts from the site date to the protohistoric period, after about A.D. 1450, although the pit does not. This pit represents a Custer or early Turkey Creek phase occupation, dating around A.D. 1260. The 1997 excavations focused on identifying protohistoric features and recovering more extensive faunal and floral materials associated with this component.

The 1997 field school extended excavations at the site and provided testing of different areas of the terrace. We also noted the effects of extensive rain on the local landscape. Our initial effort to start the field work was met with a very heavy rainfall. Subsequent rain the first week resulted in the rapid rise of Little Deep Creek to a small river. Little Deep Creek makes a right angle bend at the site and the swollen creek started cutting the lower terrace at this bend. We saw 10 to 15 feet of the terrace slough off during one morning. Fortunately, this lasted only a few hours, and it did not cut into the main site area or our nearby camp.

Excavations were conducted in 1x1, 1x2, and 2x2 meter units during the 1997 season. The larger units, 1x2 and 2x2 m, were opened in an attempt to expose features which are sometimes difficult to identify in the sandy soils at Little Deer. The 1997 work unearthed two features and recovered a large collection of materials including pottery fragments, projectile points, flakes, ground stone, bone, and charcoal. Artifacts consist predominantly of protohistoric materials such as smooth, sand-tempered pottery and triangular arrowpoints, primarily Fresnos and Garzas. We noted the presence of a few artifacts associated with the Custer/Turkey Creek phase occupation, but this represents a very minor part of the assemblage. Florence A chert dominates the chipped stone assemblage and Edwards chert is also common. Several large end scrapers typical of the protohistoric period have been recovered and most are made from unheated Florence A.

Features found this year include a very large pit and a hearth. The pit was identified in the southeastern corner of a 2x2 m unit.
near the east edge of the terrace. This pit, Feature 2, is within 10 m of the pit (Feature 1) excavated in 1995. Feature 2, however, is much larger and contains predominantly protohistoric artifacts. Excavations were expanded to encompass an area of almost 4x4 m. The feature is almost 3 m in diameter, extends to 140 cm beneath the current surface, and is roughly cylindrical with a flat bottom. The plow zone is 25 to 30 cm in depth at this site. The pit was identified at 30 to 35 cm in most units and probably originally started somewhere in the plow zone. Cultural deposits outside of features extend to only 40 or 50 cm in this part of the site.

Such large pits are not known from other protohistoric sites in western Oklahoma, although large bell-shaped pits have been excavated at protohistoric Wichita sites in southern Kansas and north-central Oklahoma. Also, large pits are recorded at earlier Custer and Turkey Creek phase sites in western Oklahoma. The pit’s original function is unknown. The site is assumed to be a seasonal camp, possibly occupied in the late summer or fall, and may have served as a center for bison hunting/processing and, possibly, trade. But if this was a seasonal camp, why was so much energy put into the excavation of a large pit?

The pit was filled with trash. We found a complete range of artifacts, from projectile points to pottery sherds and bone tool fragments. Also present were large amounts of charcoal and concentrations of ash, probably the remains of hearths that were cleaned and dumped into the pit. There seemed to be two layers or concentrations of large bone in the pit. One occurred about 50 to 60 cm in depth and consisted of bison, deer, turtle, dog/coyote, and other animal bone. The second was at 110-120 cm, near the bottom of the pit, and included large fragments of bison long bones, part of an articulated bison vertebral column, and deer bone. We also recovered several charred corn kernels and charred walnut shell near the bottom of the pit. Soil samples taken from different levels of the pit should reveal other charred plant remains used by these people. One charcoal sample from level 6 has been submitted for dating and other samples will follow. The artifacts from the pit vary considerably, from a dart point base resembling a Calf Creek to small Garza points. However, the material is predominantly protohistoric in age and we expect the dates to be after A.D. 1450. The absence of early Euroamerican artifacts may indicate an occupation around A.D. 1600 or slightly earlier.

On the last day of excavation, we found several charred logs in the southeastern corner of a square. We quickly exposed a number of these lying in a shallow basin, about 40 cm deep, designated Feature 3. We were only able to expose part of this feature, but it appears to be a basin hearth larger than 70 cm in diameter. This hearth is less than a meter from the southeastern edge of the large pit. Apparently, the east-ern edge of the terrace, toward the Little Deep/Deer Creek junction, was extensively utilized and contains many features. We did not identify the remains of houses in this area, but more extensive excavations may find post molds and other evidence for structures.

The processing of recovered materials is under way. We hope to have dates from the site this fall and to begin analysis by early winter. The students and volunteers are to be commended for their excellent work. We also thank Loren Liebscher and his family for their hospitality. Their interest and cooperation made this a very successful field school.

Richard Drass

Archeologists Attend Bison Conference

Staff archeologists Lee Bement and Kent Buehler recently attended a conference devoted exclusively to the North American bison. The conference, held June 4-7, took place in Bozeman, Montana, and was hosted by the Center for Bison Studies at Montana State University. Nearly 300 people participated, representing such diverse fields as biology, zoology, botany, genetics, ecology, and wildlife management. There were even a few other archeologists in attendance. Some 70 papers were presented, including Lee’s “Growth and Development of the *Bison antiquus* Skeleton: The Cooper Site, Northwest Oklahoma”. The papers were divided into sessions on ecology, management, genetics, physiology, paleontology/history, and disease.
The bison has been a center of controversy for over 150 years, especially concerning arguments for its extermination or its preservation. The debates over the future of this animal continue, and even today, the extermination/preservation battle rages on. Concerns about the possibility of transmission of diseases from bison to cattle have sparked much of the discussion. Many bison herds carry brucellosis, which cattle ranchers fear could be transmitted to cattle. This fear recently led the State of Montana to issue a directive for all bison entering the state from Yellowstone Park to be destroyed. This action in turn caused concerns among such groups as Native Americans, environmentalists, and animal rights activists. I can think of no other animal in North America that has so many widely diverse groups and organizations all wanting a say in its future, nor one where politics play such a large role. So where do archeologists fit into all of this?

Archeologists have commonly borrowed ideas and information from other disciplines as an aid in interpreting the past. Many of you are aware of the research Lee and I have been doing on bison kill sites such as Cooper, Waugh, and Certain in western Oklahoma. One of our goals in working with these sites is to understand how prehistoric Native Americans incorporated bison into their lifeways. Therefore, the more we know about bison and their behavior, such as grazing, breeding and calving habits, the better we are able to relate to how prehistoric hunters could have used this knowledge to their advantage. So just as some Native American groups had a use for nearly every part of the bison, we as archeologists have a use for nearly all aspects of knowledge about this animal.

The flow of information is not just one way. Other disciplines are just as interested in the information archeologists can provide. For example, most people are aware that bison nearly became extinct in the 1880s. The bison that exist today all derived from a few hundred survivors. Bison researchers refer to this event as a “genetic bottleneck”, meaning that much genetic diversity was potentially lost as a result of the huge population reduction. Archeologists can help answer the question as to how much variability was lost by providing ancient specimens of known age from which DNA can potentially be retrieved. Geneticists can compare the ancient DNA with modern forms to judge the effects of the “bottleneck”.

There are no plans to continue the conference as a regular event. We are, therefore, happy to have had the opportunity to attend and to make new friends and contacts. The location wasn’t bad either.

Kent J. Buehler

TEST EXCAVATIONS
AT CURRANT CREEK SITE

In October, 1988, the Oklahoma Archeological Survey was contacted about a lanceolate projectile point found while replacing a broken telephone pole along Currant Creek, south of Cheyenne, Oklahoma. The projectile point is similar to Plainview or Firstview types and is made of Alibates silicified dolomite. Don Wyckoff, Jack Hofman, and Pete Thurmond examined this point, and were given directions to the site. Although the exact location where the point was recovered was unclear, a site was found in the general vicinity and recorded by this team. Until this year, little else was known about the site.

In January, 1997, Lee Bement, Pete Thurmond, and I returned to the site to assess its potential research value and to make plans for additional investigations. The site, situated atop a small knoll at the confluence of Currant Creek and an unnamed tributary, is triangular in shape and approximately 70 x 45 meters (m) in size. It is bordered by a steep bluff along the north, a highly eroded farm road on the southeast, and an abandoned county road on the west. The remains of a historic dug-out are also present near the center of the site. Limited amounts of pre-historic cultural material were observed, mainly in cuts produced by the two roads. Chipped stone materials present were mainly of Ogallala quartzite and Alibates silicified dolomite. In a profile dug along the road cut on the west side of the site, two buried paleosols were identified. The Paleoindian point found here suggested that one or both of these paleosols may date to the early Holocene. However, humate dates on soil samples taken from these paleosols indicate that the upper was formed around 3700 BP and the lower about 6700 BP.

From May 15 - 22, 1997, test excavations were undertaken at the site in conjunction with the Cameron University summer field school held at the Certain site (34BK46). I excavated, with the help of a student, two 1x1 m test units in an attempt to discern the nature of occupations preserved at the site. These units were dug to depths of 2.65 and 1.5 m. About 200 artifacts were recovered from the squares before the deposits became sterile at a depth of 1.3 m. These materials included mainly flakes, but a core, two projectile point fragments, two cord-marked pottery sherds, and a few bison bone and burned rock fragments were also recovered. All of these were found above the upper paleosol and are indicative of Woodland period occupations. I am currently conducting analysis on these materials at the Oklahoma Archeological Survey.

With this additional information, it is unclear how the Paleoindian point came to be found at the site. Either it was carried in by the Woodland occupants or was found somewhere else near the site.

The author thanks Allen Stansbury (student, Cameron University) for his help in site excavations, Pete Thurmond for funding of the humate dates, and Lee Bement for overseeing the work. Without their time and patience, it could not have been completed.

Scott D. Brosowski

OKLAHOMA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPRING DIG AT DOAKSVILLE

Between May 31 and June 8, the Oklahoma Anthropological Society (OAS) 1997 Spring Dig and Field School was held at Doaksville, the site of the Choctaw’s first capitol near Ft.
Towson. This was the third and final year of planned excavations, headed by Dr. William Lees, Oklahoma Historical Society and Adjunct Assistant Professor at OU’s Department of Anthropology. Funding was through an ISTEA grant from the Department of Transportation. Several Survey staff and students attended either the OAS dig or OU Field School which followed. Dave Morgan, the Survey’s “permanent” volunteer, chaired the OAS Dig Committee which coordinated planning with Dr. Lees. A seminar, “General Excavation Techniques”, was taught on Saturday, May 31, by staff archeologist Lois Albert, OAS Certification Council chair. During the dig, 51 members who attended completed six 2x2 m squares, and another 15 were in progress. The area where OAS teams excavated was thought to be a hotel. Members from all parts of Oklahoma, as well as Kansas, New Mexico, and Texas attended.

A highlight of the dig for the OAS members was a new game devised by Dr. Lees, called Archeological Bingo. Each day, cards were made up with artifacts listed in each square. All of the people working at a square were a team. If your team found a particular artifact shown, you got to “ex-out” that square on the card. If your team was the first to complete a row, you yelled “Bingo”. After the artifacts were checked to make sure that they had been properly identified, your team won a prize. This was a great incentive for people to learn how to correctly identify the artifacts! Lois E. Albert

CAMERON UNIVERSITY CLASS TESTS 34ML83

An Introduction to Archaeology class from Cameron University in Lawton, with their instructor Dr. Sharon Methven, came to site 34ML83 for some practical field experience over the weekend of April 5-6. Twenty-five students and helpers joined Larry Neal to continue test excavation at this Middle Archaic age site (Calf Creek complex). Additional bits left by this 5000-6000-year-old culture were mapped and collected, including point fragments and scrapers. The students learned the basics of excavation, maintaining levels, mapping, and filling out the paperwork necessary to preserving the information observed and recovered. They also presented us with a surprise by recover-ing the first recorded evidence for later occupation at the site, a Washita style arrowpoint and a small Gary-style dart point in the upper levels. The Calf Creek materials were found deeper, thus suggesting the possibility of stratified deposits in at least some of the site. The participants also worked on features similar to the structural supports of a prehistoric house when two holes remaining from a replaced modern fence line were located and excavated.

Larry Neal

ADDITIONAL TALKS GIVEN

The list of talks in the last issue of this newsletter did not include those given by Dr. Robert L. Brooks, State Archeologist and Director of the Archeological Survey. Bob presented 23 talks and programs between September 11, 1996 and May 23, 1997. These included nine sessions of Oklahoma’s First General Store: September 20, St. Luke’s Methodist Church, Oklahoma City; October 7, Cleveland-Bailey Elementary, Midwest City; October 28, Apache Rotary, Apache; November 19, Phillips University History Club, Enid; January 19, Pioneer Regional Library, Norman; February 14, Oliver Middle School, Tulsa; February 19, Alva Lions’ Club, Alva; March 5, Wiley Post Elementary, Oklahoma City; April 25, Coweta Intermediate, Coweta; two presentations of New Directions, the Archeological Survey; October 10, Kay County Chapter, OAS; November 7, Central Chapter OAS, Oklahoma City; two presentations of The Question of Sedentism and Agricultural Intensity for Late Prehistoric Plains Villagers: April 14, Department of Anthropology Colloquium Series, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; May 8, Archeological Association of South Central Kansas, Wichita. Other talks were The Archaeology of Northeastern Oklahoma: Five Civilized Tribes Heritage Resource Technicians Training Sessions, Tahlequah; Whither the Archeological Survey?: October 5, OAS Fall Meeting, Cheyenne; Archeology and Odyssey of the Mind, November 15, Edmond Public Schools; The Archeological Survey and Introduction to Archeology: University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond; Archeological Recording: December 18, Natural Resource Conservation Service Region 4, Lawton Vo-Tech; Legal Requirements of Water Resources and Archeology: February 20, Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Oklahoma City; The History and Prehistory of the Wichita: Red River Leadership Coalition, Waurika; Natural Resources and Native Americans: Sequoyah County Outdoor Classroom, Sallisaw; and Archeology as a Career: May 1, Highland West Jr. High, Moore.

SURVEY RECEIVES GRANTS FOR FY1998

The Archeological Survey was recently awarded grants from the National Park Service/Oklahoma Historical Society for studies of playa lakes in the Oklahoma panhandle and for continuing research along the Washita River in south-central Oklahoma. Cooperative agreements were also successfully negotiated with the National Park Service/Oklahoma Historical Society, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. The total amount for these projects is $277,290. Funds from these awards will continue the employment and training of graduate and undergraduate students at the Survey.

Robert L. Brooks