MORE RESULTS FROM THE CERTAIN SITE, A LATE ARCHAIC BISON KILL IN WESTERN OKLAHOMA

The Certain site, 34BK46, is a late Archaic bison kill site in northern Beckham County. The site was recorded in 1970, tested in 1992, and has been the location of field school excavations in 1993, 1995, and again this past summer. This latest work at the site involved students from the University of Oklahoma and Cameron University in Lawton. Under the joint supervision of Dr. Leland Bement, Sharon Methvin, and Kent Buehler, this summer’s work concentrated on the Trench C and Trench F areas of the site. Both trenches contain bison bonebeds resulting from the use of the site as arroyo traps by Late Archaic hunters. Recent heavy rains and the digging by a
Students working in Trench H beneath the ‘cliff’

coyote uncovered another bison bone deposit, this time on the south bank of the canyon. This area, labeled Trench H, consists of a small bonebed remnant. The deposit is located at the base of a six meter high sandstone cliff. Although no artifacts have been found with the bones, it is possible that these bison were killed by being forced over the cliff. Such a situation is fairly common in the northern plains, but is rarely seen in the south. Most of the Trench H deposit has washed away. So far, at least three bison have been identified in the small area excavated. More work in this area next summer will hopefully shed light on this new find. We will pursue dating this deposit to see if it is older than or more recent than the rest of the site.

The presence of a possible bison jump site is particularly important for our understanding of bison hunting. The late Archaic kills have all been arroyo traps where bison herds were driven into dead end gullies and killed by being speared by hunters positioned along the gully rim. The sandstone cliff in the canyon was buried at the time of the use of the gullies. It would only have been available earlier, before the canyon filled with sand, or later, after the canyon once again began to erode to bedrock. Investigations in other canyons of central Oklahoma indicate that these canyons have filled with sediments and then been flushed out several times over the past 10,000 years. Today, most of these canyons are undergoing the erosion or flushing portion of this cycle.

Leland Bement

Recipient of “Faculty Fellowship of the Big 12” Visits Survey

Dr. Eileen Johnson, Texas Tech Museum, received a fellowship to come to the Survey to collaborate in the analysis of bison bone. The fellowship allowed her and her students to spend two weeks with Lee Bement in the analysis of the Folsom-age bison bone from the Cooper site. Dr. Johnson is a specialist in the identification and verification of cutmarks and other telltale signs of prehistoric butchering practices. She has worked with numerous bison remains from the Lubbock Lake site as well as other sites on the Southern Plains. Her research includes large animal procurement in South America, so she gave a presentation on her work in Argentina. Concerning Cooper, she was surprised at the condition of the

Bonebed exposed in Trench F.

Cutmarks across a rib.
bones and quality of preservation of the few cutmarks. Cutmarks were found on ribs and vertebral spines of the hump area. Other butchering marks included dents found on vertebrae where a round-tipped bone or wood tool was used to loosen the muscle from the bone. Two weeks was too short to inspect more than a dozen of the 78 or so animals found at Cooper. We can expect to see Dr. Johnson again; after all, once bitten by Cooper, you just can’t get enough of it. More and more archeologists are becoming aware of the importance of the Cooper site, and it will continue to draw attention for additional “cooper”-ative analyses.

Leland Bement

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of the Survey:

This letter is to ask for your assistance in the building of a new program at the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. It is called Stewardship for Oklahoma’s Past. As you are probably aware, the Survey has struggled for years in the development of a means of supporting our archeological research efforts while attempting to bring staff salaries into parity with other professional/faculty lines on campus. With our recent reallocation and President Boren’s successful initiative to improve staff salaries, we can now focus our attention on how to best address the Survey’s research needs. The Archeological Survey’s maintenance and operations budget is woefully inadequate for the support of graduate and undergraduate students, for funding extended field research efforts (lodging and per diem cost, among other things), for the many special analyses that are needed in our work (radioarbon dates, residue studies, chemical analysis), and for renewed publication of our research series (Archeological Resource Survey Reports and Studies in Oklahoma’s Past). This is where we need your support. Through the Stewardship for Oklahoma’s Past program, you can provide financial assistance in these critical areas. With your help, we can expand our research efforts, fund students to learn while doing archeology, and very importantly, publish on our work.

The Survey has recently gained the opportunity to substantially increase the value of our modest fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. Between October 1 and December 29, 1997, Mr. John E. Kirkpatrick will provide a dollar-for-dollar match up to $10,000. The Community Foundation provides excellent returns on its investments, which hopefully means we can build our donations base to the level that we can fund needed projects without using the principal. We greatly appreciate your interest in preserving and learning more about Oklahoma’s cultural heritage, and hope that you will join us in developing this new program. Contributions should be sent to the Community Foundation and specified for the Oklahoma Archeological Survey (#30044500). Their address is:

Oklahoma City Community Foundation
1300 North Broadway Drive
Oklahoma City OK 73103
Phone: (405) 235-5603

Robert L. Brooks

CAP Student Employees, 1997-98

Each year at the beginning of the Fall semester, the Survey employs several Anthropology graduate students to learn and work in the Community Assistance Program (CAP). This program, funded by the National Park Service through the State Historic Preservation Officer, provides opportunities to students interested in archaeology and cultural resource management. Students learn how to review projects and make recommendations regarding the preservation of Oklahoma’s archaeological resources. This year we are fortunate to have Bob Stokes and Jennifer Nisengard return to work with us another year. Bob has worked for us the past two years and Jennifer is beginning her second year here. We also have two new students in the CAP area, Kae Neustadt and Jennifer Gordon.

Bob Stokes and Jennifer Nisengard are working on their doctorates; Jennifer Gordon is finishing her master’s degree this semester, and Kae is beginning her masters work. Stokes’ and Nisengard’s dissertation research focuses on...
different aspects of the Mogollon region of southwestern New Mexico. Stokes is examining community development, resource control, and territoriality during the pit-house and pueblo periods (A.D. 550 - 1150). Nisengard is evaluating the use of communal structures and their impacts upon social developments in the region. Gordon has a sociocultural focus and her thesis analyzes the use of media in the Lakota identity system. Neustadt is just beginning her graduate work and wants to concentrate on museum studies.

1997 OAS Fall Activity

From November 7 through 9, several Survey staff archaeologists will work with members of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society to conduct an archeological survey at Pontotoc Ridge. This area is a relatively new property of the Nature Conservancy, located south of Ada in Pontotoc County. Directing the survey will be Larry Neal, a Survey staff archeologist, and Dave Morgan, OAS Dig Committee chair and Survey volunteer. On Saturday, November 8, Lois Albert will present a Certification Program seminar, General Survey Techniques. OAS members from throughout the state will join in this Fall Activity. Our camping area will be at Camp Simpson, a Boy Scout facility south of Pontotoc Ridge.

If you are interested in attending this OAS activity, information may be obtained by emailing wmneal@ou.edu or lealbert@ou.edu. You may also send a letter to the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, 111 E. Chesapeake, Norman OK 73019-0575, or call (405) 325-7211. You must be an Oklahoma Anthropological Society member in order to join in the survey; membership information can also be obtained from the address above. The basic cost of membership is $15 for an individual; family members can join as associate members. You may also join the Society at the Fall Activity. The registration fee for the Fall Activity is $5 per person. Camping at Camp Simpson is free.