OKPAN QUARTERLY



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LETTER FROM OKPAN'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



DR.BONNIE PITBLADO

Dear OQ Readers,

Spring is upon us, and as another academic year wraps up, the field season has begun to blossom for Oklahoma archaeologists.

In this spirit of endings and beginnings, we hope you enjoy the spring issue of *OKPAN Quarterly*, which celebrates both the twilight of the spectacular *Spiro and the Art of the Mississippian World* exhibit at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum and the fluorescence of the entertaining and educational *The Dirt* podcast.

In addition, *OQ* writers share thoughts about the Netflix hit movie *The Dig*, which you can (and should!) queue up anytime. The film does a better job of portraying the field of archaeology than the much-loved (but in archaeological circles, also much maligned) *Indiana Jones* series. Not to worry, though, it is still entertaining!

Happy spring and summer to all, and we hope that you can escape your walls and enjoy the beauty of the great outdoors... and maybe even a visit to an archaeological site or two. A trip to Spiro, anyone?

Yours in heritage solidarity,

Bonnie Pitblado

OKPAN Executive Director Robert E. and Virginia Bell Professor of Anthropological Archaeology University of Oklahoma

Spring Events – Calendar –

(Scroll down to see full list of events)

May 11, 10:00AM

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act Workshop (Virtual)

Oklahoma Historical Society

May 11, 1:00PM

Section 106 Consultation Program presented by Lindsey Bilyeu (Virtual)

OKPAN Archaeological Skills Workshop Series: The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Preservation Department

May 12, 10:00AM

Oklahoma Archeological Survey and Section 106 Workshop (Virtual)

Oklahoma Historical Society

May 12, 12:00PM

On the Peak Lecture (Virtual)

Pawnee Bill Ranch and Museum

May 12, 1:00PM

Cultural GIS and Indigenous Archaeology Programs presented by Dr. Kristen Walczesky and David Batton (Virtual)

OKPAN Archaeological Skills Workshop Series: The Choctaw NAtion

The Dirt on Archaeology Outreach By Anna Goldfield

Explaining archaeology, or any science, to the public can be a tricky task. Often, information about sites, cultures, artifacts, or methods are tucked away in academic journals that are written by experts, for experts. These articles use specialized vocabulary that excludes readers who lack the requisite academic background. Researchers those of us who are academiaadjacent) interested in sharing archaeology with a non-specialist audience can write articles for popular consumption, or give public presentations, but those proaches might not have a wide reach. Podcasts, audio shows that can be downloaded or streamed at a listener's convenience, provide a terrific opportunity for science communication.

In 2018, my cohost, Amber Zambelli, and I saw a need for an accessible, fun way to bring archaeology to the public, and so we created *The* Dirt Podcast, a show for all ages and backgrounds about archaeology, anthropology, and our shared human past. Our trajectory and the success of the podcast has shown me that science communication is not only a viable career but my own passion and calling. I'd like to share some of my enthusiasm for science communication in general, and podcasting in particular, by using The Dirt as a case study—with many thanks to the fine folks at the OKPAN Quarterly for allowing this shameless plug of my own content. My hope is that some of you readers will be inspired to consider podcasting as a way to share your own research or archaeological stories with the world.



Anna (top) and Amber (bottom) host a special live event, Episode 126 -The Dirt Caves In.

Amber and I met at Bryn Mawr College, where we were both undergraduates in the archaeology department, and have been close friends since then. Amber specializes in the archaeology of the Arabian Peninsula and the history of archaeology as a discipline and is grounded in theory and critical thinking. My background is in the analysis of animal remains associated with archaeological sites, and I specialize in the evolution and behavior of early Homo sapiens and our close cousins, the Neanderthals. Combined, our expertise is all over the map, which has become a wonderful advantage for two people interested in anything



The Dirt Podcast's trademark designs are created by Anna Goldfield.











Here's what OKPAN's been listening to! -

Please click on the title of the episode to listen.

Episode 43 - Spilling the Antiqui-Tea: Artifact Tracking and the Antiquities Black Market

This is such an important subject, and Anna and Amber treat it with their trademark blend of spot-on content and good humor. It's a great way to learn more about why the buying and selling of artifacts is so harmful.

-Bonnie Pitblado, Executive Director

Episode 101 - Mythteries and Mythnomers

This episode breaks down common anthropological misconceptions ranging from who built the Egyptian pyramids (spoiler: it's not aliens) to how people perceive the Dark Ages. They tackle misinformation, a tricky topic, with humor and ease. -Delaney Cooley, Editor-in-Chief

Episode 117 - Fish People

I like that this episode showcases a lighter side of archaeology. I learned a lot, even with its very unserious topic, which shows how entertaining and informative *The Dirt* can be. -Ella Crenshaw, Assistant Director

Episode 131 - Race and Biological Anthropology with Dr. Rachel Watkins I enjoyed listening to the interview with Dr. Rachel Watkins, because I find

I enjoyed listening to the interview with Dr. Rachel Watkins, because I find biological anthropology fascinating. In the episode, she explained how she got to where she is today, and for a student, that was cool to listen to!

-Amber Vinson, Intern

Episode 132 - Other People of Size

This episode explored both Western and non-Western documents, artwork, and photographs to show how different cultures at different times idealized male body types in different ways, with varying amounts of fat or muscle being praised. I enjoyed the connections to modern physiological research on athleticism, as well as the plentiful puns that peppered the podcast. -Sarah Luthman, Education Coordinator

Digging for the Truth:

A Review of Netflix's The Dig

By Sarah Luthman and Delaney Cooley



Let's talk about archaeology movies.

Every few years or so, the powers that be in Hollywood decide to introduce another archaeology film into the universe, and who can blame them? Archaeology is an exciting field that has captured the hearts and imaginations of generations. When done well, movies like Indiana Jones and The Mummy have made the discipline more relevant and exciting to people everywhere. However, this popularity comes with a slight cost. While there are kernels of truth in these films, some portray archaeologists as reckless treasure seekers or digging up dinosaurs. Archaeology enthusiasts can identify and even enjoy or laugh at some of these misrepresentations, but the general public may not have the background to make these distinctions. In fact, most of these movies form the foundation for their understanding.

So when Netflix teased the upcoming release of a British archaeology drama at the beginning of the year, The Dig, the trailer's familiar tone and images of shovel work had us cautiously optimistic for a realistic portrayal of the discipline. The movie depicts the 1939 excavation of a ship burial overlooking the River Deben in Suffolk, England. Recognizing the mounds on her property as archaeologically significant, Edith Pretty hired a professional excavator, Basil Brown, to begin working on the site. His small operation uncovered what is



The Dig stars Carey Mulligan as Edith Pretty and Ralph Fiennes as Basil Brown.

undeniably one of most wellknown archaeological sites in the country, Sutton Hoo. The site consists of two early medieval cemeteries dating between the 6th and 7th centuries; however, the film focuses on the excavation of Mound 1, a buried ship containing an elaborate array of offerings. One end held spears and a shield, while the other contained cooking implements and utensils for feasting. At the center of the boat, archaeologists identified the sword, helmet, purse, and clothing of the deceased, likely a prominent leader at the time. The individual was not recovered in the excavations, but soil analyses in the late 1960s suggest the body succumbed to the acidic soil.

With this information in hand, the question then becomes how well did the movie depict archaeology? One Saturday night, we decided to snuggle up with our blankets and



Reconstruction of Burial Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo.



Reconstruction of a helmet found at Sutton Hoo currently on display at the British Museum.





Edith Pretty's home near Woodbridge, Suffolk. Pretty and her husband purchased the estate to preserve and research the mounds.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: SPIRO AND THE ART OF THE MISSISSIPPIAN WORLD

By Delaney Cooley

With contributions by Amber Vinson and Savannah Miller

For many of us, a trip to a heritage museum is an ideal way to spend an afternoon. Exploring rooms and getting up close and personal with objects from the past engages our senses and invokes our curiosity and imagination. However, few of us take the time to consider the process behind the scenes. Putting together an exhibit can be a multiyear commitment where museum staff must simultaneously coordinate with academics, descendant communities, artifact repositories, and artists. To tell a story well and do right by the communities they represent, museums must be thorough and considerate in their actions. The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum's recently released exhibit on the Spiro site in Oklahoma and broader Mississippian landscape is a testament

to this process.

Located along the Arkansas River in LeFlore County, Spiro was once a well-established cultural and religious center. The site began as a small farming village but later expanded as broader social changes led to an increase in sedentism. mound building, and distinctive iconography. At its peak, Spiro consisted of 12 mounds, ceremonial areas, and a support city for elites. The site and associated region are described as Caddoan, communities that shared belief systems, iconography, and social ties with Mississippian culture. Spiro began to decline in power around AD 1400 when widespread environmental changes led to subsequent cultural changes, and the site remained largely untouched until the 20th century.

A short introduction to the exhibit currently on display at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.





Digital recreation of the Spiro archaeological site in southeastern Oklahoma.



Displays highlighting five Mississippian ceremonial centers in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, and Oklahoma.



"Everything Belongs" by Erin Shaw (Chickasaw) is currently on display in the exhibit.



Chase Earles (Caddo) and Starr Hardridge (Muscogee) collaborated on the "Everlasting Fire Plate," acrylic and plaster on ceramic.



A special thank you and congratulations to Barry Albrecht, our Spring issue cover photo contest winner!

Barry served as CEO of economic development corporations for over 20 years. He has been directly involved in national committees and local organizations that served in protecting military installations and expanding missions that serve military families. His photography hobby began at the age of 12, and as a published photographer, he donates his art to support nonprofit organizations. He currently resides near Lawton where this photograph was taken.

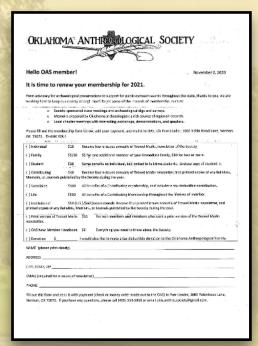


THE OKLAHOMA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWS AND EVENTS

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Need a little more culture in your life? The Oklahoma Anthropological Society welcomes anyone with a passion for Oklahoma history and heritage.



Please click on the flyer to enlarge and click again to minimize.

Contact <u>okla.anthro.society@gmail.com</u>
with any questions about your
membership!

OKPAN FACES

Meet some of the folks on OKPAN's advisory board! We're pleased to introduce you to the talented crew that helps inform the work we do at OKPAN.



BOBPICKERING

Dr. Robert B. Pickering is the founding director of the Museum Science and Management program at the University of Tulsa. In 1984, he received a PhD in Physical Anthropology from Northwestern University after earning his BA and MA degrees in Anthropology from Southern Illinois University- Carbondale. Pickering has severed as an educator, curator, and administrator in major American museums over the last 30 years. Dr. Pickering's professional career has combined anthropological research educational with the broader goals museums.



RANDYUTT

Randy Utt is a veteran teacher of 35 years. She is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and holds a M.Ed. from Arizona State University. She currently teaches Gifted and Talented education with Putnam City Schools. In 2015, she traveled to Montana and was trained as a Project Archaeology Master Teacher. She has taught the curriculum to both colleagues and students. Randy is a life-long learner, enjoys traveling, hiking, and all things archaeology!

The Oklahoma Public Archaeology Network's Mission Statement:

Bridging communities with a passion for the past through public education and outreach, research and teaching partnerships, and professional development opportunities.



OKPAN Quarterly Staff: Delaney Cooley - Editor-in-Chief

~ Letters to the editor may be sent to ~ okpanquarterly@gm<mark>ail.com</mark>

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