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Fairfield  Foundation

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Notice something different? We moved our "Donor Thank-you" section to the Winter Issue! The extra space will help us save envelopes and postage.



2008 Volunteer Stats:

- 27 volunteers contributed at least 25 hours
- ten interns worked more than 1300 hours on their projects
- volunteers averaged 377 hours each month
- Andy Kincaid had the highest total for the year at 567 hours
- monthly records were set in six months, including July with over 866 hours.

Volunteers Make Big Contributions in 2008!



As we approach the end of 2008, it is time to think back on this very successful year and look at who helped make this effort possible – our volunteers. In 2008 alone, volunteers logged more than 4500 hours, working in the field and in the lab on an enormous variety of tasks related to our research at Fairfield. Whether helping out on public dig days at Fairfield or joining us in educational programs at Warner Hall (see page 3) or with

our Save Our History grant from the History Channel, students from local high schools and colleges and citizens across southeastern Virginia contribute to our work almost everyday. They have devoted many hundreds of hours to washing and picking artifacts, water-screening old topsoil layers from around the manor house, and labeling thousands of fragments of ceramic and glass that are slowly telling the story of Fairfield and its people over the last four hundred years. But their work extends beyond these tasks to include research projects on artifacts, documents and excavation areas. In the last year we've formed the groundwork for an oral history program, searched for the buried remains of slave quarters and the Fairfield kitchen, pondered the form and function of porches, and examined the cultural significance of colonoware among Fairfield's enslaved population. Since our inception in November 2000, volunteers have contributed almost 17,000 hours. This is a tremendous feat, representing an enormous investment by dozens of individuals. These contributions are absolutely vital to our efforts, and we thank everybody who has given us their time and effort and friendship.



A Look at Colonial Drains

Archaeologists are always finding remarkable features that provide new insight into the colonial world. One type of feature that shows up with some regularity, yet receives very little attention, is the lowly drain. Serving a strictly utilitarian, though often very useful, purpose and intentionally buried upon completion, drains are rarely remembered and generally forgotten. On many plantations they became so far removed from memory that they were invariably interpreted, when portions were still extant, as tunnels used to escape from Indian attacks. This was a fascinating possibility when we first learned the myth as kids, but as we've visited and excavated at more plantations, we have become very familiar with these diminutive "escape tunnels."



The lead-lined drain in Rosewell's northwest corner.

Though we have yet to turn up any evidence for drains at Fairfield (the soil appears to drain well enough to prevent any need for drains), they have appeared at many other plantations and urban sites. The most recent drain we uncovered was one of the large brick drains at Rosewell. These vaulted brick drains, have a dry-laid brick floor, relatively straight mortared walls and a round-arched top. Several sections at Rosewell collapsed over the years and our excavations at one of them in 2000 confirmed their similarity. They appear to match a series of linear anomalies identified during a ground-penetrating radar survey done by Bruce Bevan of Geosight. The unusual feature in the drain we recently uncovered, at the point where it junctures



Profile of arched brick drain at Rosewell.

with the house, is a thick lead lining that appears to have helped shed water away from the northwest corner. This was likely an afterthought, a reaction to unforeseen moisture leaching through the northwest wall, but we won't know for sure until we see similar treatment at the other corners. Drains of this type were built at Corotoman (Robert King Carter's home in Lancaster County), Purton (in Gloucester County), Westover (the Byrd Estate in Charles City County), the Wray site (one of colonial Virginia's first building contractors) in Williamsburg, and at the recently discovered Chew mansion in Maryland. These are only a few of the many examples that could be listed, revealing how widespread this practice was in the 18th-century.

One of the most remarkable features of these drains is the enormous amount of energy devoted to their installation, involving the manufacture of thousands of bricks, tons of lime mortar, and involving the digging and refilling of sometimes hundreds of yards of ditches that the drains occupied. All of this work provided the luxury of removing excess water from the roof and yard areas—a great concern among wealthy landowners who place the aesthetics of their core plantation landscapes under great scrutiny. These property owners possessed a basic knowledge of engineering, familiarity with English drain design and books on the subject, and a vast labor force of enslaved Africans who made these projects possible. With little comparative research in colonial Virginia, it is difficult to know if the size, length, and date of these drains change over time, when they became fashionable, and if the role slave labor made the project possible, or simply easier. It is fascinating how these drains, which originated in an urban context, show up on major plantations in the Tidewater. Did their usefulness justify the cost, or were they much more of an aesthetic requirement?



Brick and slate drain at Tudor Place.

Simpler drains identified at Tudor Place, constructed in Georgetown between the 1790s and 1810s, seem to indicate a much more efficient use of time and materials. They were formed by laying down flat pieces of slate, placing bricks on top to create a small channel, and then covering the channel with another piece of slate. Though probably not as effective as the large drains at Rosewell, they would have taken much less effort and material to install. We will continue to update you on additional findings that shed more light on these fascinating features.



Archaeologists at the Chew site in Maryland uncovered a brick drain similar to Rosewell's. The top was plowed away.



Andy Kincaid: Certified

Andy Kincaid, one of our most dedicated volunteers, recently completed the Archaeological Certification program sponsored by the Archeological Society of Virginia (ASV), the Department of Historic Resources, and the Council of Virginia Archaeologists. The certification program is an intensive introduction to a broad range of field and laboratory tasks, archaeological readings, and documentation techniques. Andy completed many of the requirements through his volunteer work with Fairfield. He received his certificate at the ASV's annual meeting in Martinsville. Not resting on his laurels though, Andy continues to excavate along the front façade of Fairfield and research artifacts recovered from our excavations, inspiring and helping mentor five new certification program members working with the Middle Peninsula Branch of the ASV.

Battle of the Hook a success!

On October 18th and 19th a reenactment of the Revolutionary War Battle of the Hook took place at Warner Hall, the historic plantation of the Warner and Lewis families in Gloucester County. Replicating one of the most important cavalry engagements of the war, this battle helped ensure Lord Cornwallis' defeat in 1781. The resulting British surrender at Yorktown and Gloucester Point effectively brought the war to a close.

The event was well attended by reenactors and the general public and brought attention to the importance of Gloucester's role in the American Revolution. As part of the effort, the Fairfield Foundation hosted an exhibit and small excavation in the yard to the east of the house. We excavated two test units with the help of several volunteers and dozens of very excited children. We found quite a few artifacts relating to the 19th-century history of Warner Hall and were able to talk to over one hundred visitors, distributing Fairfield posters and pamphlets. It was great to see the huge turnout and the enthusiasm everyone had for celebrating history.



Mark Maloy, ordinary farmer and supporter of the revolution, looks over the excavations at Warner Hall.



Fairfield Membership

Not a member of Fairfield yet– or you have a friend with a keen interest in archaeology and preservation? Become a member today. Gifts of any size are welcome, and are fully tax deductible. Thank you! Send to:

Fairfield Foundation, P.O. Box 157, White Marsh VA 23183

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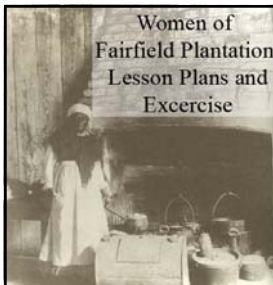
Lewis Burwell Society: \$2500+

The *newly revised* Fairfield Plantation Interactive Site Tour and the Women of

Fairfield Plantation CDs are both available for purchase. Each CD is \$15 plus \$2 shipping and handling. Orders of 3 or more are only \$12 each.

Ordering Info: fairfield@inna.net

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Visit us on the web at: www.fairfieldfoundation.org

The Fairfield Foundation is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to the archaeological study of the Burwell plantation in Gloucester County, known as Fairfield/Carter's Creek. The foundation has launched an extended investigation into all aspects of this colonial plantation, with the goal of studying, preserving, and presenting this new knowledge to the public.

The Fairfield Foundation

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