



Sacramento Archeological Society, Inc.

Newsletter

www.sacarcheology.org

May/June - 2012

From the SAS President's Desk:
**"Back From the Anza-Borrego Desert
and Exeter Rocky Hill"**
John Foster



We've just returned from our SAS trip to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (ABDSP) and Exeter Rocky Hill. It involved long drives and some long days hiking, but what fun we had.

The concept of the visit was begun a year ago when I decided to visit ABDSP for their Archaeology Weekend. I was impressed with the lectures, demonstrations, tours and hikes to explore various resources, technologies and sites in this magnificent 600,000 acres state park – the largest in the lower 48. I had a great time and decided to approach my hosts – the Colorado Desert Archaeological Society (CDAS) about an SAS visit in 2012. They were encouraging and promised to help us enjoy the event. That's all we needed – 16 SAS members and guests descended on Borrego Springs this year to take part in the festivities. It was a great time and I want to thank our CDAS hosts who made it so enjoyable.

CDAS is like SAS. Their members love archaeology and enjoy discussing it, supporting students in the discipline, and visiting heritage sites of all kinds. What separates us is geography. CDAS has something we don't: they are surrounded by a plethora of large state parks by which they can engage with the ancient past. Anza-Borrego is immense and has some 6,000 recorded archaeological sites. They include agave roasting pits, prayer circles, trails, habitation sites, hunting blinds, rock shelters, cupules, intaglios, fish traps and rock images. Emigrant trails, ranching outposts, stage stations and mines are among the historic period resources. How could you NOT love that? So they can become stewards, volunteer to design and open interpretive trails, staff the Begole Archaeological Research Center and Visitor Center, and host researchers and scholars. CDAS also has nearby Cuyamaca, Palomar Mountain, Salton Sea and Picacho to love – all of which have fabulous cultural resources. In Sacramento, we don't really have a park to adopt or steward. Some of our members do this individually, but the opportunities are a bit more difficult to find.

I want to thank our CDAS hosts for their friendly and welcoming spirit. Chuck Bennett, Sam and Astrid Webb, and Carol Black (CDAS Chair) were fantastic. We had a chance to meet them and their families -- and share stories about archaeology. Thanks to all the CDAS members who work so hard as volunteers to support ABDSP and its programs. You are a model of dedication and commitment.

On the way home we stopped in Exeter to visit the Rocky Hill pictograph site. The Archaeological Conservancy, who purchased it in 1992 as an archaeological preserve, owns the 23-acre property. It is lovingly looked over by site steward Manuel Andrade. He met our group, escorted us to the site, and led us to fabulous painted images, cupules, bedrock mortars, and midden deposits. The painted imagery appears on exposed granite surfaces and in alcoves and shelters on the hillside. Figures are executed in red, black and white with occasional gold and orange. Some is recognizable: a herd of animals crosses a rock wall, a turtle ascends a rock face, and a human figure stands alone in the cleft of a

boulder. We weren't the only visitors. Taking pictures in the inner recesses of a cave with a six-foot condor painted on the ceiling, I disturbed a rattlesnake resting in the corner, but each went their separate way after announcing their presence!! I've been to this site at least six times over the years and it remains one of the most powerful heritage sites in the state, in my opinion. Our thanks to Manuel Andrade and his friends who kept us safe and showed us the site. Their dedication to preserving this world-class rock art site is an inspiration.

So our spring tour is complete and we returned with a new awareness of the volunteers who commit to preserving California's archaeological heritage. Their work is vital in saving our cultural legacy. We appreciate it very much.

Trip Highlights

ANZA-BORREGO

History

“When Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza's first expedition entered the Borrego Valley from the southeast on March 12, 1774, they had traveled for days through Kumeyaay country and were about to enter the territories of the Cahuilla. After three days of northwesterly travel through Coyote Canyon, they had crossed most of the land of the Cahuilla and were heading toward Mission San Gabriel.

The explorers noted that the Cahuilla and Kumeyaay shared many cultural ways. They lived at mesquite groves and had small settlements at springs. Their artifacts were similar and well-suited for a desert life. They used clay posts and woven baskets, and wore scant clothing. They were people who made similar use of their environments, yet they spoke different languages.

The Indians of the Anza-Borrego Desert lived a semi-nomadic life. In winter, the Kumeyaay wandered from the Laguna Mountains down into Mason Valley, Vallecito, and Canebrake. Likewise, the Cahuilla moved from the Santa Rosa Mountains down into Rockhouse Canyon and Borrego Valley. In spring and summer, they left the desert and south the mountains.

The Indians hunted deer, bighorn sheep, and jackrabbits, but the great variety of desert plants provided most of their diet. Agave, mesquite, pinyon, and oak were the most important sources of food. In the desert, the agave was harvested in spring and mesquite beans were collected in early summer. Autumn signaled the time to gather pinyon nuts and acorns. The mesquite beans and the pinyon nuts could be stored, pounded into flour or eaten raw, but the agave and the acorns required special preparations.

Women prepared most of the food for the families, but harvesting the agave was delegated to the men. With a digging stick, sharpened and fire-hardened at its tip, the agave was dug up and the base and the stalk were placed in a pit with heated rocks and slowly cooked for about two days. The baked agave was carried to the villages in nets made of yucca or agave fibers.

Rock art in the Anza-Borrego Desert is of two types: petroglyphs that are pecked or abraded on the surfaces of rocks, and pictographs that are painted or drawn.

Rock art has different meanings to different people. For some, these pecked or painted designs are scribbles or doodles; but to the Native Americans they were made for a purpose and often have sacred meaning. Some may represent powerful magical images created by the shaman-artist who was inspired by dreams or séances with the spirits.

The interpretation of rock art is tenuous, but ethnographic information reveals that some rock art was made in connection with puberty rites of both boys and girls. Rock art may also have been a way to record historical events. It was certainly used to mark such important natural happenings such as the solstices and equinoxes. Much of it was perhaps sacred and secret, and when the artist died the special meaning was lost.”

“Native Americans” by Manfred Knaak, Anza-Borrego Desert National History Association, 1987

Cahuille Site in Clark Valley



Chuck Bennett describing site



Site Petroglyphs



The SAS group

On Friday, April 13th members of the Sacramento Archeological Society, the Colorado Desert Archaeology Society, the Society for California Archaeology, and guests gathered, hunted and pecked their way to a small but very interesting petroglyph site in Anza-Borrego State Park. Our tour guide, Chuck Bennett, so ably kept us all moving on the approximately three-mile round-trip tour to see the rock art and other features including possible grinding rocks. Chuck's knowledge of the area and his stories and comments added so much to the tour. The petroglyphs are located on the east side of Clark Dry Lake at the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains in northeastern San Diego County. Access to the site was a dirt road (to the north off of state highway 22) that meandered through Clark Valley and towards Rockhouse and Butler Canyons.

Our happy hikers filled several vehicles, passed much biota including mesquite, barrel cactus, and Ocotillo (known for beautiful red flowers), Chicory, Monkey Flower, Creosote, and Desert Lavender to name just a few. We hiked across the valley floor through numerous stream cuts/washes (dry for our trek), so everyone enjoyed walking up and down and up and down and...! At the site, the older rock art dates to some 500 years and has been interpreted as an early Cahuilla style pecked into boulders at the base of the mountains. The desert patina was reddish brown. The dozen or two rock art images were created at various times as the vividness of the images, or lack of it, indicates different ages of the art. The more faint images are probably older because the desert "varnish" has repainted the worked surfaces comprising the images in varying degrees thus reducing the image clarity. Other age differences can be seen when an image or set of images lies on top of other older images. Petroglyphs are typically pecked, incised, scratched etc. into the rock surface; and differ from pictographs which are typically painted onto rock surfaces.

To be sure, desert temperatures in this area could have been in triple digits even during this time of year (April). They weren't!! Our trekking weather was wonderful so we were quite thankful for the climate that day. It was a very fun way to view rock art that has meaning to those who created it but may forever hold the precise meanings as secrets. Thanks to all who made it such a pleasant trip.

Roger and Lydia Peake

Mine Canyon Road - Kumeyaay site



John Foster explaining site



Bedrock milling



Cupules: Dimpled granite boulders

On April 13th at the Kumeyaay winter village site up the Mine Canyon Road during the rain John Foster who had excavated the site years ago showed additional features of the life of Kumeyaay people. We saw grinding rocks and cupules. The cupules formed as indentations in granite are common to many sites. They may have had sacred or utilitarian function for the creators.

Morteros Interpretive Trail – Kumeyaay site

The Morteros Interpretive Trail in Little Blair Valley Cultural Preserve provided an excellent opportunity to experience the environment of the Kumeyaay people. On April 15, 2012 we were privileged to be present at the dedication of this trail. It was the culmination of hard work by the Colorado Desert Archaeological Society (CDAS) and we appreciated the tour led by the site steward, Sam Webb. Along the trail you are introduced to the Kumeyaay way of life: (1) an agave roasting pit, (2) juniper berries, (4) cupules, (5) bedrock milling, (7) pictographs, (8) rock shelter, and (3 and 9) the pristine landscape enjoyed by this native people.



Dedication of Morteros Trail



Agave roasting site



Bedrock milling



Pictographs

Pictographs in Little Blair Valley

A more extensive viewing of pictographs was the reward for going on the **Pictograph Hike** led by archaeologist, **Sue Wade** on April 15th. Not only did we find a lovely panel of rock art but Sue showed us numerous smooth grinding depressions in the otherwise rough granite and roasting pits. We thank you Sue.



Pictographs at Little Blair Valley



More pictographs



Group looking for agave roasting sites

EXETER ROCKY HILL



Cupules at Rocky Hill



Acorn milling bedrock

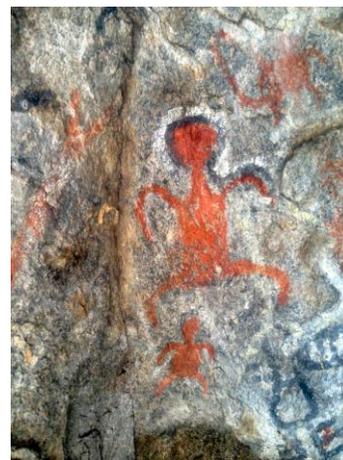


Pictograph figure

“Exeter Rocky Hill, located fourteen miles southeast of Visalia, California, is a mountain of granite boulders and sheer rock walls covering more than one and a half square miles. The 23-acre Rocky Hill archaeological site, one of California's most important complexes of **Native American paintings**, lies at the southeastern base of the hill in a sheltered grassy alcove. Buried in a mound containing the record of cultures spanning 2,000 years, the ancient village site is nestled against huge boulders that tumbled long ago from the hill's steep slopes.

At the base of the hill, one of these large granite boulders is marked with “cupules,” shallow repeated indentations in the rock, carved long ago. Tinges of dried pigment still adhere to the weathered monolith, just above the village mound; scores of mortar holes are ground deep into the surface rock, where villagers once pulverized acorn and grass seeds into meal. Natural springs well onto the slope, and one forms a tiny pool in a cleft of rock. Animal tracks are pressed firmly into the surrounding moist soil. Elusive wildlife trails wind erratically up the sides of the hill, through thickets of oak trees, over, under and around the massive boulders. Unexpectedly, painted patterns relieve the grey of the rock.

Pictographs, hundreds of paintings in red, black and white, are hidden among the caves and alcoves of Exeter Rocky Hill. Some are recognizable: a herd of animals crosses a rocky wall, a turtle swims up a sheer granite face, and a human figure stands isolated in a cleft of rock. The meaning of many other paintings is unclear. People struggle to assimilate the richness and complexity of the pictographs.



1. A white mountain lion surrounded by other figures at Exeter Rocky Hill
2. Exeter Rocky Hill features some of the best examples of Southern Sierra style paintings in California: Red and white pictograph
3. Woman and child highlighted in red. Other figures are fainter.

The close proximity of prolific rock painting to a large village mound is very rare in California. Association between pictograph and habitation sites occurs at other locations, but vandalism, quarrying, and development have destroyed much of their integrity.

Since the mid-1950's, researchers have interviewed local people and studied the painted panels at Rocky Hill. They believe that the hunter gatherers lived in villages most of the year except during seasonal foraging expeditions. Their spirituality, social organization, and ethics reflected their acceptance of the natural world as they perceived it. The pictographs represent features of the spiritual world, nature, and everyday life, which were closely meshed.

The pristine condition of the Rocky Hill paintings, the close physical association of the village mound and rock art, and the claim of local native people to remember their grandparents' accounts of life on the hill, offer archaeologists an unusual opportunity to reconstruct a prehistoric culture.

For Californians, Exeter Rocky Hill provides a chance to dream, to learn, and to wonder about the past. Few of us know very much about the people who inhabited this land before us. But we don't have to travel very far to find remnants of an ancient civilization. We are fortunate that a few such vestiges still remain.

Twenty acres of the Exeter Rocky Hill site were purchased by The Archaeological Conservancy in 1992 and have been set aside as a permanent archaeological preserve.”

Archaeological Conservancy Brochure, **WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE, 1217 23RD STREET, SACRAMENTO CA 95816-4917**



1. Manuel Andrade pointing out features of pictographs
2. Design represented in several caves that may be eagle feathers (Does anyone know for sure?)
3. A six-foot condor and eagle images painted on the roof of a shallow cavern at Exeter Rocky Hill.

Conservancy Site Steward, Manuel Andrade approaches his work with the Rocky Hill site with enthusiasm and reverence. He has made a point of working with local Yokuts to learn as much as he can about the meaning of the site to their ancestors. One of the high points of the visit was the opportunity to experience first-hand a tiny one-person healing cave. “Slide in on your back,” Manuel told us, “and keep your eyes closed until you feel the back of the cave.” Once I opened my eyes, brilliant red and white paintings welcomed me from all around, symbolic paintings whose meaning is not fully understood in our time of space travel and Internet and instant gratification. But there was a clear sense of calm, of both energy and timelessness. And sliding back out, I realized that the granite of the cave had been as smooth as glass – there have probably been thousands of people experiencing the energy of this tiny cave. Many thanks go to Manuel Andrade and to the Conservancy for sharing this experience.

Ruth McElhinney

ANZA-BORREGO 9TH ANNUAL ARCHAEOLOGY WEEKEND LECTURES

“Archaeology Underwater: Explorations Beyond the Shores of Time”, by John Foster, SAS President, retired Senior Archaeologist, California Park Service

Speaking to a full house on Saturday, April 14th the lead off speaker at the weekend lecture series was **John Foster**. In this desert environment John brought a dimension that has been limited here for several centuries, water. John reviewed underwater projects in which he had been involved. These included: Emerald Bay underwater park, Old Sacramento ships especially the Sterling, SS Pomona lost off the coast near Fort Ross, Union Oil Company Tanker sunk by the Japanese in 1941, investigation of stone fish traps in Ahjumouri Lava Springs, search for Manila Galleon in Baja, and John’s “silver glob find” in the shores off the Dominican Republic. The stories were gripping and any of these adventures could be the subject for talks in the Sacramento area.

“Kumeyaay Ethnobotany” by Mike Wilken

Mike Wilken spoke of his efforts to understand plants used by Kumeyaay people by interviewing Native Americans in Northern Baja. By learning the Kumeyaay language he was able to gather valuable information from the Native American. He identified Kumeyaay plant names and gained an appreciation for their significance and use in daily life. Some of the plants that he identified and discussed their use included: coastal live oak for food, desert agave for food and fiber, basket rush for coil basketry, Chaparral Yucca for food and fiber and prickly pear for food. From his presentation it was clear that the Kumeyaay people effectively used the available vegetation.

At the Anza-Borrego lectures we were happy to note that other organizations are promoting archaeology by offering grants. Recipients of these grants are asked to present their findings in presentations to the public. Three of the presentations discussed the research funded by the Colorado Desert Archaeological Society (CDAS).

“Living on the Edge - The Sage Canyon Project in the West Mojave Southern Sierra Ecozone” by Dr. Mark W. Allen – Professor of Anthropology, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Cal Poly Pomona

Dr. Mark Allen investigated sites the Mojave Desert included the Boulder Springs site in Sage Canyon. He found that Sage Canyon was more heavily used after the onset of MCA (1000 BP)

“Organization & Elaboration of Mortuary Spaces within Hunter-Gatherer Settlement Systems in the Western Colorado Desert” by Mariam Dahdul

Mariam Dahdul, graduate student at UC Santa Barbara, reviewed data from technical reports on mortuary practices in the Anza-Borrego area, ancient Lake Cahuilla from 70 AD to 1600. She looked at feature locations, burial treatment, age and sex etc. Mariam observed some clustering in the NW corner of Lake Cahuilla and concentrated on two sites – CA-RIV 3012 shoreline- clustered and CA-RIV 55217 – distributed. She compared the sites on the types of artifacts, ornaments, animal remain and tools found in each and identified some differences. She concluded that cemeteries did not emerge as one might have expected if this was a highly productive environment.

“Optical Stimulated Luminescence Dating” by Joan Schneider

Dr. Joan Schneider, retired Associate State Archeologist at the Colorado Desert District discussed her use of a new method to date various ceremonial sites and rock cairns. These sites consisted of just rocks lying on the desert floor. As a result, older dating methods, such as radiocarbon dating, electron spin resonance spectroscopy, and uranium series dating, would not work.

Instead, Joan used a relatively new method called **optically stimulated luminescence (OSL)** dating. This method “... measures the time since grains of either **quartz** or **feldspar** were exposed to light. The equipment measures the energy of electrons trapped in the grain's crystal lattices. ... OSL is able to date the actual sediments in which archaeological materials are found. ... OSL can be used to date the sediments themselves, in caves or now-buried open-air sites, back to at least **200,000 years ago**. And a series of OSL dates can reveal whether sediments at a site have been mixed or perturbed. ... The quartz grains serve as natural clocks, because the longer they are buried the more natural radiation they absorb from their surroundings. The energy of this radiation is stored in electrons in the quartz crystals and released again in the form of a detectable light signal when a **laser shines on the grains**.” Now single grains of quartz can be dated. “[T]he single-grain technique not only gives an age for a site but also reveals the degree to which its sediments are potentially mixed, which in many ways is just as important.” (New Light on Ancient Samples, Science Vol. 332, May 6, 2011, M.B., pages 658-659.)

The dating was performed by **Shannon Mahan**, Research Geologist, and Director of the USGS Luminescence Dating Lab in Denver, Colorado. Shannon collected the quartz and feldspar grains while covered by a black photo blanket so only her red light would strike the grains, since, if any sunlight hit them, the electrons would be reset to “zero.”

The preliminary results are as follows: “The age associated with **Ceremonial Site #1** on Yaqui Ridge is 216 years (± 33 years) or **1794 A.D.** in calendar terms (calculated from 2010 A.D.). The age from the **Ceremonial Site #2** is 420 (± 53 years) or **1590 A.D.** in calendar years. And finally, the age from the **Rock Cairn #2** site is 585 years (± 46 years) or **1425 A.D.** in calendar years.” (Shannon Mahan, “Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) data and ages from Rock Cairn #2 (IMP 10792), Ceremonial Site #1 (Yaqui Ridge), and Ceremonial Site #2 (Yaqui Ridge) of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, CA” dated April 14, 2012, p. 9)

Scholarship Corner

SAS 2012 Scholarship

Applications are due May 1, 2012

Refer to www.sacarcheology.org for more information. See the next newsletter for a discussion of recipients.

Membership

New Members

Welcome Connie McGough and Al Stripler as new members of the Society. Their association with the State Indian Museum is another plus for the Society.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CASSP Training

May 5-6, 2012

If you know anyone who loves archaeology or just the history of California and has some time to volunteer, the first CASSP training will be held on May 5 and 6 in Oroville. When you finish the course you will be eligible to monitor an archeological site in many California State Parks under the direction of a state archeologist.

To learn about the program refer to <http://www.cassp.org/>

The training consists of one day class room and then one day in the field with state archeologists usually at some significant site. It is a wonderful experience. There is a \$25 registration fee which covers class materials and a one year membership into the Society for California Archeology.

You often get access to areas that are normally not available to the general public and you are doing a great service helping protect California's archeological resources.

If you are interested in attending the May 5 and 6 training, please contact **Beth Padon** by **April 30**. Her contact information is as follows: **Beth Padon** (bpadon@discoveryworks.com), or **Beth Padon, Discovery Works, Inc., 1428 E. 33rd St. Signal Hill, CA 90755** telephone: **562-427-3474**

Fort Ross Bicentennial

May 17, 18, or 19

Retired State Parks Ranger Dan Murley will be sharing his stories on the natural influences made during the Russian American Company era. Northern California is a lively area for notable scientists and ethnographers. You can join Dan as he highlights this era, giving special attention to the sea otter, with images, hands on opportunities, and stories of this fascinating time in California. Here is his schedule.

May 17 - Dan Murley at the Golden Gate Club, Presidio, San Francisco from 7 to 8 p.m.

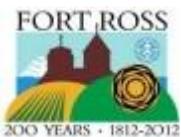
May 18 - Dan Murley at the Sonoma County Museum, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. SCM members \$8;

non-SCM members \$10

May 19 - Dan Murley at Fort Ross from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For information on other bicentennial events refer

to <http://fortrossinterpretive.org/events/>



Climate Change – Coast Line Mapping

Michael Newland, Sonoma State, is leading a project to assess the effects of a potential rise of the ocean on archaeological sites near the California coast line as a result of global warming. Coastal Marin County is targeted to be the first area to survey. Teams of four volunteers each will perform coast line mapping to identify sites that may be in jeopardy. The Sacramento Archeological Society is signed up to provide volunteers. Stay tuned for more information. The mapping may likely occur this year in September or October. Mark your calendar.

Mark Your Calendars

May 1, 2012 – Scholarship applications due

May 5-6, 2012 – CASSP training, Oroville

May 17, 18 or 19, 2012 – “Fort Ross – Russian American Company Era”, Dan Murley

September or October – Coastal Marin County Line Mapping