North Carolina
Archaeological Society

Newsletter

109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, N.C. 27601-2807

SUMMER 1996, Volume 6, Number 2

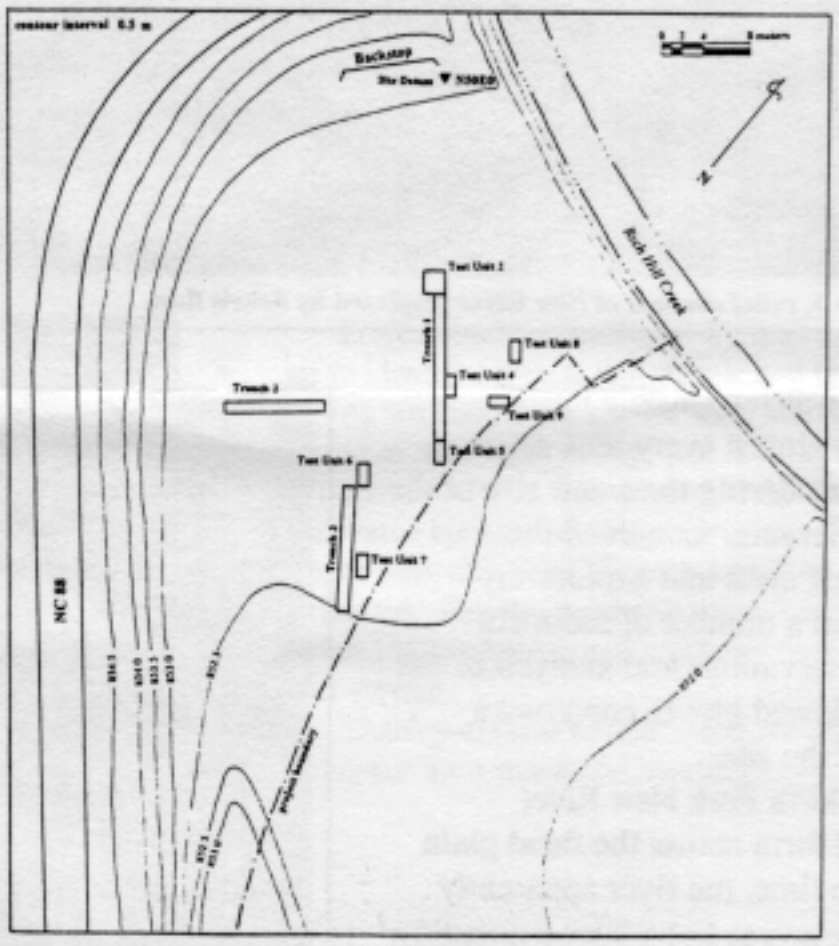
Site Formation Processes at Site 31AH213

Coastal Carolina Research

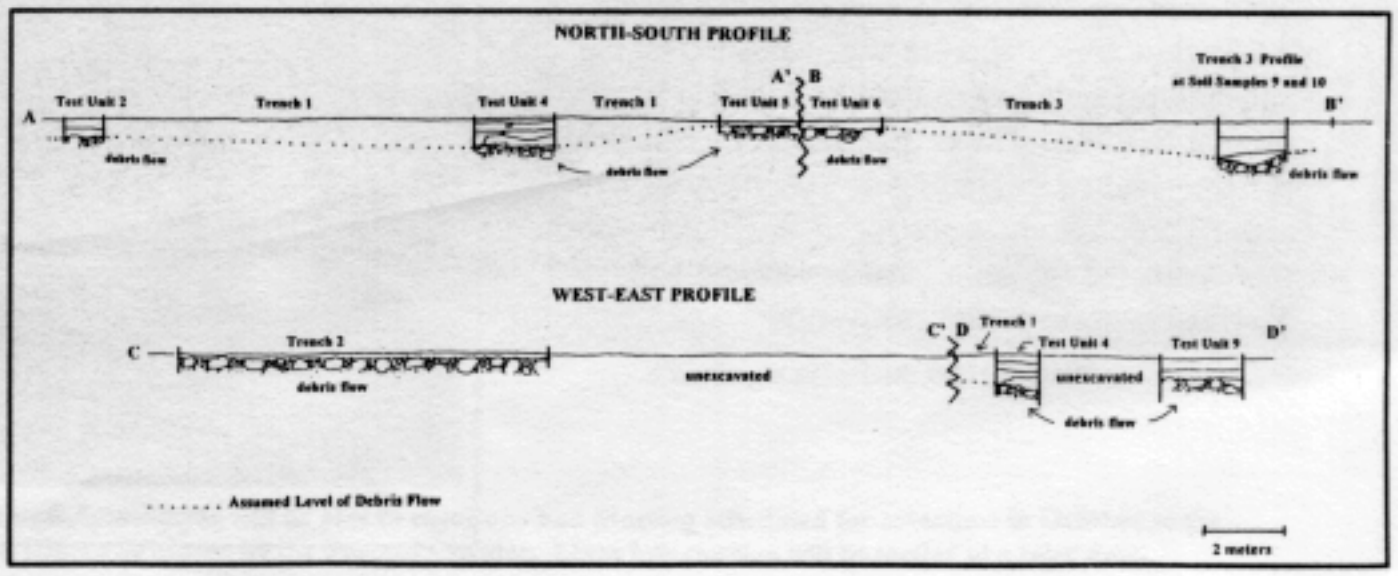
Coastal Carolina Research (CCR), under the direction of Loretta Lautzenheiser, recently completed field work at site 31AH213 in Ashe County, North Carolina. The site is located near the confluence of Rich Hill Creek and the North Fork New River. This project was conducted for the North Carolina Department of Transportation in preparation for the replacement of Bridge No. 34 over Rich Hill Creek. Jane M. Eastman served as field director, and Rob Jones, Lindsey Winstead, and Jesse Rouse formed the field crew. Ken Robinson and Tom Padgett of NCDOT assisted at the site, and Keith Seramur of Geonetics Corporation conducted the geomorphological analysis.

Site 31AH213 is a multicomponent site containing lithic and ceramic artifacts dating from the early Archaic (8000 B.C.) through the Late Prehistoric (A.D. 1500) periods. During testing of the site by Ken Robinson in 1992, buried deposits were located in the southeastern portion of the site. These deposits were at least 0.6 meters deep and yielded steatite bowl sherds, burned nutshells, and cultural features, possibly dating to the Late Archaic period. Little is known about this time period in the Appalachian Highlands of northwestern North Carolina, and it was hoped that further investigation would indicate that these cultural deposits were preserved intact or only minimally disturbed.

The site is located on the grounds of the former Rich Hill School, and the portion of the site investigated by CCR was covered by a baseball field that had been constructed by grading and filling.



The first major goal of the fieldwork was to determine which parts of the site were relatively intact. If intact deposits were located, the second goal of the project was to conduct intensive excavations of the site. Two of the test units excavated in 1994 were reopened and five additional 1-x-2-meter tests were excavated within the site (Figure 1). Three test trenches, totaling 35 meters in length, were excavated with a backhoe in order to reveal long stratigraphic profiles that would show the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the cultural zones.

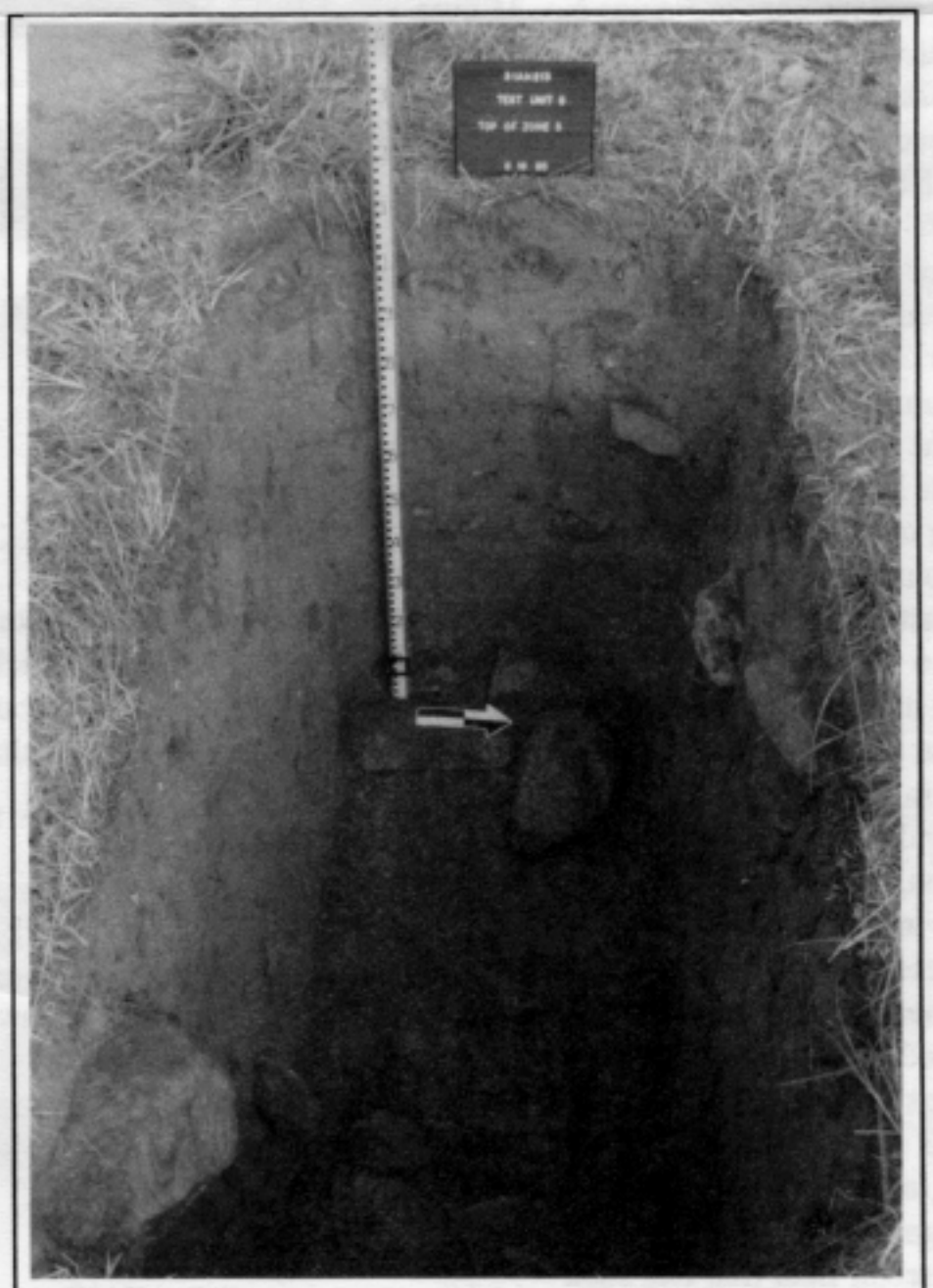


The stratigraphy of the various excavations units demonstrated a remarkable lack of continuity across the site. It appeared that a different combination of formation processes was responsible for the deposition of soils in almost every unit. This was unusual considering the small size of the project area. Keith Seramur examined the stratigraphy of the test units and exploratory trenches and collected a number of sediment samples. Keith's observations and analysis of the sediment samples allowed him to construct a geological history of the site.

In the past, the North Fork New River meandered back and forth across the flood plain near the site. At one time, the river apparently flowed through the site area but a later debris flow caused by flooding of Rich Hill Creek may have redirected the river to the east. This flood deposit was later buried by debris flowing off the hills to the southwest of the site. These geological events--debris flows--scoured the site and displaced any early deposits. Finally, it appears that a third debris flow from the creek was deposited on the site, and possibly redirect the river bed to its present location. The construction of a ball field on the site resulted in grading and filling of the site area. These activities destroyed any intact deposits that postdated the geological events and had survived historic period cultivation.

Trench 3, relief channel of New River displaced by debris flow.

Keith's input has provided valuable information about pre- and postdepositional mixing of artifacts recovered from the site. An examination of the distribution of diagnostic artifacts reinforced the interpretation that this mixing had occurred and that spatial and temporal analysis of the materials would be meaningless. CCR recommended that, due to the disturbed nature of the cultural deposits, that no additional excavations be undertaken. Representatives of NCDOT, FHWA, and the SHPO agreed that further investigation was not likely to produce any additional information. The initial sampling phase has provided significant information, however, particularly on how the geomorphological processes in this area of the Appalachians have affected archaeological sites.



Test Unit 8, base of excavations.

Warren Wilson Meeting--A Great Success

The North Carolina Archaeological Society (NCAS) held its 1996 Annual Spring meeting, hosted by the Otarre Chapter, at Warren Wilson College on Saturday, May 18. We had a turn out of more than 100 people attending from all over the state and even some from out-of-state.

There was a wide variety of exhibits displayed in the Library including a series of nine exhibits prepared by North Carolina archaeologists for display at the Society of American Archaeology National Meeting in New Orleans in April. Topics from across the state were featured. Also included were exhibits prepared by the Western Office of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Asheville.

The morning started with registration and the NCAS business meeting followed by a lecture by Bennie Keel, the author of *Cherokee Archaeology*. Then we moved on over to Cannon Lounge where lunch was served. The afternoon schedule included the following demonstrators and games:

Hawk Hurst
Hawk is from Boone, North Carolina, and is a veteran educator and practitioner of primitive technologies. He is also an accomplished story-teller. He holds workshops to teach these skills to young and old alike. He demonstrated fire-making, gourd implements, cords, and flutes.

Driver Pheasant
Driver is from Cherokee, North Carolina, where he is employed as a public outreach specialist by the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. He demonstrated story-telling, flute making, dancing, and his blow-gun expertise.

Ann Tippitt
Ann is from Gastonia, North Carolina, where she is Curator of Collections at the Schiele Museum of Natural History. Ann is a professional archaeologist and is a committed flint-knapper who loves to share her secrets of biface manufacture as she demonstrated at the meeting.

Darry Wood
Darry is from Hayesville, North Carolina, and is renowned for his re-creations of Native American clothing. He demonstrated a wide variety of native technologies including how to make blow-guns.

Blowgun
John Newman, Otarre Chapter volunteer from Sylva, hosted this event for children and adults of all ages. Prizes were awarded in different age groups. Everyone had a lot of fun.

Chunkee
Scott Ashcraft, archaeologist with the US Forest Service and NCAS board member, hosted the first games of chunkee played on the Warren Wilson Site in nearly 500 years. Scott made the chunkee stones himself.

Professional archaeologist from around the state were set up to identify artifacts that people had brought to the meeting.

As we visited the site we were able to see the general layout of the Pisgah village (ca. A.D. 1400) at the Warren Wilson site. Posts were placed in the locations of several of the excavated houses and along a portion of the outer palisades. There were also small flags that marked additional houses and palisades. Finally, there was a small area of open excavation (from 1993) where actual postholes from one of the palisades was viewed.

Thank you Dave Moore, Scott Ashcraft, and Rodney Snedeker for a wonderful meeting.

Charlie, as promised, DAH & DHN

If you were unable to attend our Spring Meeting, hopefully you will be able to enjoy our Fall Meeting scheduled for sometime in October at the Research Labs of Anthropology, UNC-Chapel Hill, to be hosted by the Tarheel Chapter. More information will be mailed at a later date.

NCAS Newsletter Publication Schedule

All NCAS members are encouraged to submit articles and news items to Dee Nelms, Associate Editor, for inclusion in the *Newsletter*. Please use the following cut-off dates as guides for your submissions:

Spring Issue	March 31	Fall Issue	September 30
Summer Issue	June 30	Winter Issue	December 31

NCAS Officers

President: William D. Moxley, Jr., 2307 Hodges Road, Kinston, NC 28501.
Vice-president: Bob Graham, 2140 Woodland Avenue, Burlington, NC 27215.
Treasurer: E. William Conen, 804 Kingswood Drive, Cary, NC 27513.
Secretary: Vincas P. Steponaitis, Research Laboratories of Anthropology, CB# 3120 Alumni Building, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599.
Editor: R.P. Stephen Davis, Jr., Research Laboratories of Anthropology, CB# 3120 Alumni Building, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599.
Associate Editor: Dee H. Nelms, Office of State Archaeology, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2807.
Executive Board Members: Scott Ashcraft, Charles Ewen, Mark McCravey, Anne Poole, Margo Price, Larry Rose

North Carolina Archaeological Society
109 East Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2807

PRESORTED FIRST CLASS

RALEIGH JUL-9'96 NC

U.S. POSTAGE 0.295 H METER 2554740