

**North Carolina
Archaeological Society**

Newsletter

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<http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas>

The Birkhead Clovis Point, Watauga County, North Carolina

by Thomas R. Whyte (Appalachian State University) and Larry R. Kimball (Appalachian State University)

In spring 1994, artifact collector, Greg Eason, accompanied by his friend, Margot Birkhead, were searching a plowed field on a second terrace of the South Fork of the New River near Boone, North Carolina. Greg had previously searched this field and many other sites in the area, hoping to find a fluted projectile point from the Pleistocene Epoch. Well, on that day, much to Greg's chagrin, Margot found one. Moving forward two decades, Margot recently contacted us from Florida, hoping that we could accommodate her wish to donate the projectile point to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. With her consent, the artifact was temporarily loaned to Appalachian State University archaeologists for documentation and analysis. Subsequently, it was presented to Mr. Jeremy Hyatt, Tribal Elder of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, at the Cherokee Archaeology Symposium on September 22, 2016 (Figure 1).

The Birkhead Clovis point is made of Knox formation black chert, weighs 5.1 g, and measures 41.36 mm long, 19.81 mm wide, and 5.13 mm thick (Figure 2 on page 3). The lower edges are ground to a distance of 21.42 mm from the base. One face is fluted to a distance of 26.07 mm from the base, while the other face was thinned with a series of long parallel flake removals. Although intact, the point had undergone extensive resharpener.

Provenienced fluted points are very rare in the northwestern counties of North Carolina (Purrinton 1983). One point very similar to the Birkhead Clovis was observed in a private collection and may have been found on what is now the Boone Golf Club. Another fluted point made of rhyolite from the North Carolina Piedmont was allegedly recovered from the surface in the Watauga River valley in western

Watauga County, and several more points were observed in a private collection that originated in the New River valley in Ashe County. Perkinson (1971, 1973) reported several from southwestern counties of the North Carolina mountains, but only a few from Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, and Watauga Counties. A fluted point was recently discovered in a cultural resources survey along the Swannanoa River in Buncombe County (Greenhouse et al. 2012).

Most fluted points found in the Appalachian Summit are isolated discoveries and many may have found their



Figure 1. Thomas Whyte (Appalachian State University) presenting the Birkhead Clovis point to Jeremy Hyatt (Tribal Elder of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians).

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way into the uplands by way of scavenging, reuse, relocation, and discard by later prehistoric stone tool users (Whyte 2014). Some Early Archaic period corner-notched points have been found that were recycled from scavenged fluted points (Jolly 1970). One such point (Figure 3), constructed of North Carolina Piedmont metavolcanic rhyolite, was recovered from a test pit excavated into the plowzone on the Birkhead site by the 2016 Appalachian State University Field School less than five meters from where Margot found her fluted point. Both artifacts were found on the surface of a late Pleistocene to early Holocene terrace. These discoveries suggest that either (1) the site was visited periodically from the late Pleistocene and into the early Holocene, or (2) Early Archaic visitors discarded scavenged and reused tools of earlier manufacture that were found in the lower elevations to the east or west.

Microscopic analysis of the Birkhead Clovis reveals no evidence of variable surface weathering suggestive of a time lapse between its manufacture and final deposition. The microwear analysis does reveal edge grinding (on both the lateral and proximal edges), hafting polish along the edge of the flute, and a micro-impact fracture. No microwear polishes resulting from penetration of hide, meat, or bone were observed.

Examination of the Fluted Kirk Corner-Notched Point (Figure 3) under low-magnification reveals three degrees of patination or modification. The major portion of the point (light grey) is the most patinated and corresponds to the time this was a fluted point. Slightly less patinated (horizontally hatched) surfaces indicate the time that the fluted point was corner-notched and the mid-section of both lateral edges was retouched. Fresh fractures without patination (black shading) at the distal tip and alternately along the lateral edges, as well as one fracture at the base, indicate damage by recent agricultural activities. The former two patterns of patination are very difficult to portray by photography, yet the authors agree that the differences are observable under careful manipulation of light under low-power magnification. Due to the patination of this point, no microwear traces were observed that could be attributable to use or hafting.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Margot Birkhead for sharing her discovery, to Greg Eason for identifying the location of her discovery, and to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, most notably Russell Townsend, for allowing us to study the Birkhead Clovis point. We also are indebted to Brian Zimmer of Appalachian State University's Department of Geology for creating a photogrammetric model of the point and uploading it for public viewing: <https://sketchfab.com/models/e9dee8e97ace49d7aadf5e90257346fc>. Rachel Colby, an archaeology major at Appalachian State University, created the line illustrations in Figures 2 and 3.

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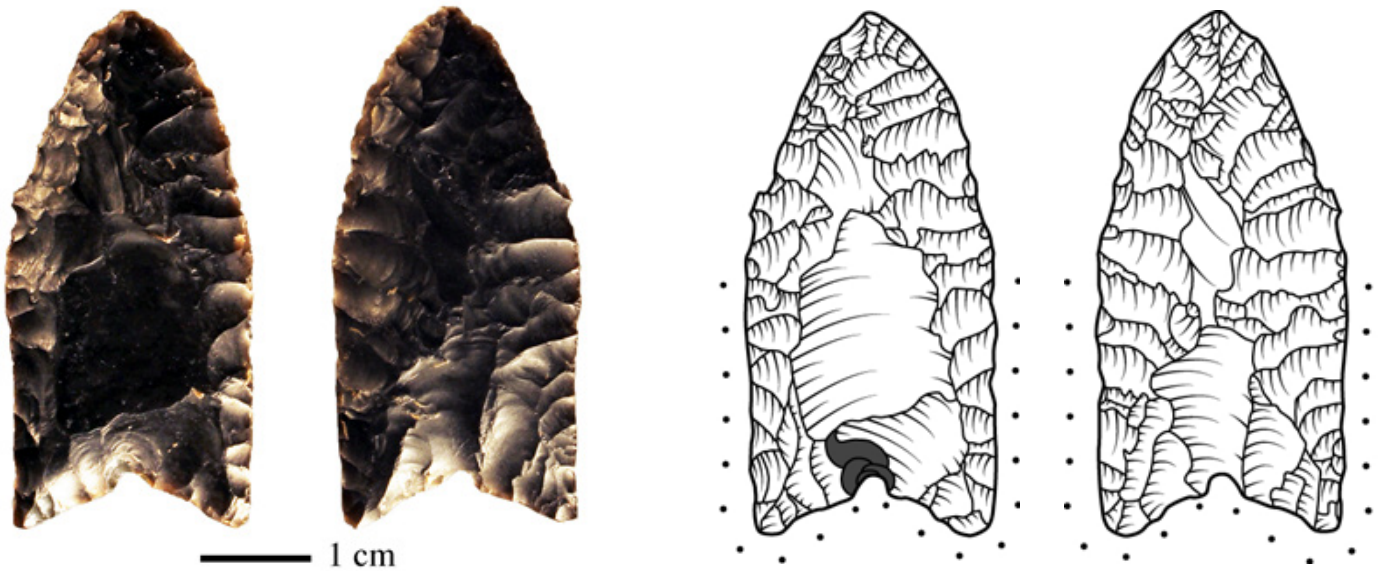


Figure 2. The Birckhead Clovis point, Watauga County, North Carolina.

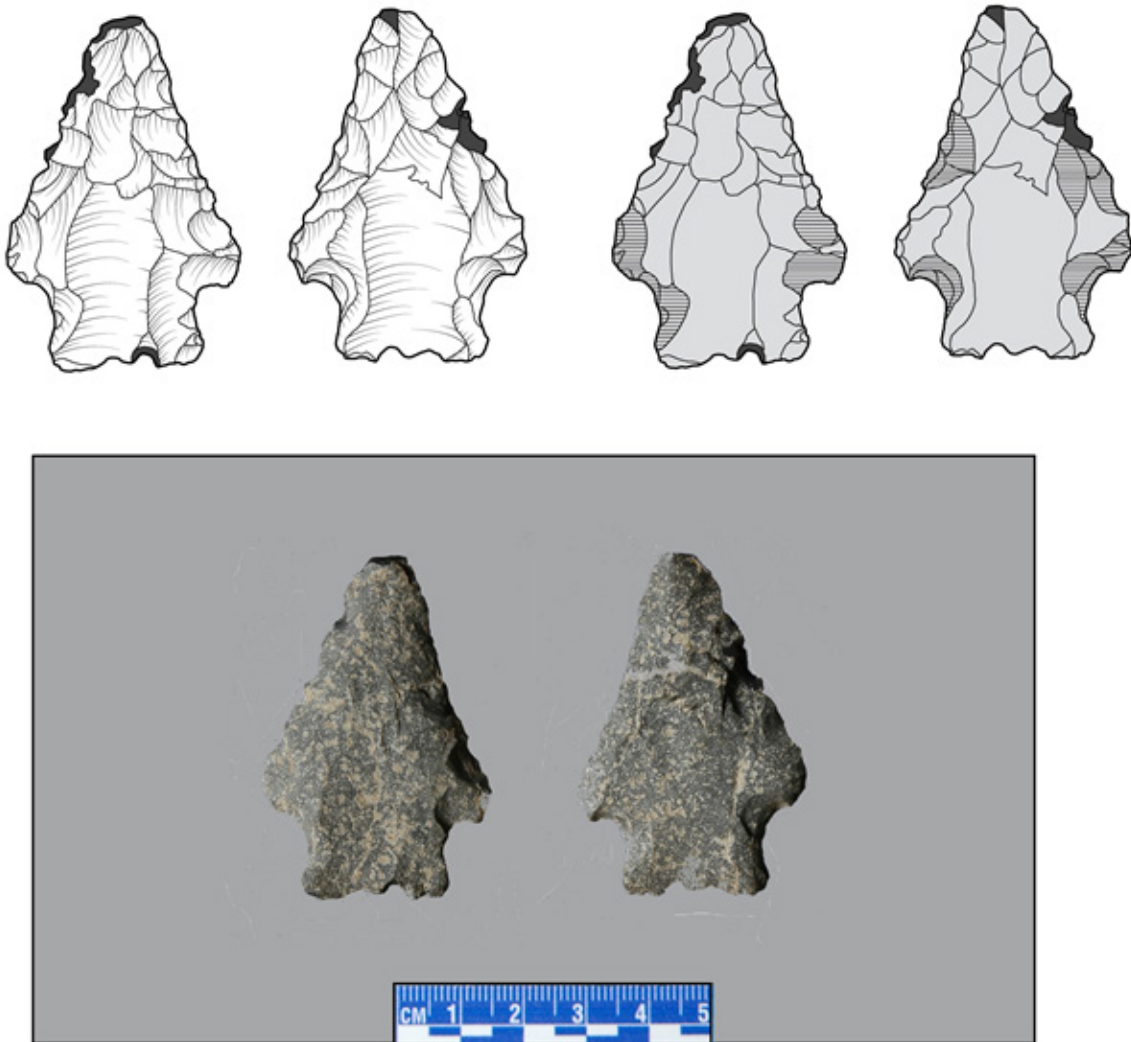


Figure 3. Fluted Kirk Corner-Notched point recovered from the Birckhead site, Watauga County, North Carolina.

Successful NCAS Fall Meeting and Site Tour

Another successful NCAS Fall Meeting was held on October 14 at Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site. This year our meeting coincided with International Archaeology Day and Town Creek staff and volunteers provided a number of excellent events including atlatl throwing, flint knapping, and the traveling North Carolina Digs exhibit. The highlight of the day was our guided van tour of Morrow Mountain State Park, the Hardaway site, and Town Creek Indian Mound. Thanks to the 40+ NCAS members and guests who joined us to make this day another great NCAS outing to remember! A special “Thank You” to our tour guides, Dr. Randy Daniel (East Carolina University) and Rich Thompson (Town Creek), and to Dale Ward, David Sumerlin, Tommy Gibson, and the Alcoa Corporation for facilitating our visit to the Hardaway site. Below: A view from Morrow Mountain (top) and tour guide Randy with NCAS members (center left). Rich explaining the significance of Town Creek (center right) and a view of the main mound (bottom). Images courtesy of Clifton Dowell (center) and John Scarry (top and bottom).



Reflections on Our Accomplishments over the Past Two Years

by Tom Beaman (Previous NCAS President)

It has been my great pleasure to have served you—the membership of the NCAS—as President for the past two years. This short tenure, which ended at the NCAS Fall Meeting on October 14 at Town Creek Indian Mound, has been extremely busy for the NCAS. Working with the current Board of Directors, a group of fine and dedicated individuals, much has been accomplished that I hope will better serve you, as an NCAS member. For this I am very proud. For the first time in the Society's history, we are now able to offer the following new services and merchandise:

- Electronic payment via PayPal of membership dues through the NCAS website;
- All-weather NCAS logo stickers for vehicle windows and bumpers; and
- NCAS t-shirts in women's shirt styles and new colors.

We also decided on new t-shirt and hat designs (including a blaze orange hat for fall and winter fieldwork) that will be available for Society members to purchase in the near future. In addition, over the past two years, we accomplished the following:

- We completed a physical move of the NCAS business operations from the Office of State Archaeology to the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;
- We revised and simplified the NCAS guidelines for local chapters and extended opportunities to other organizations to affiliate with us;
- We helped sponsor the 6th annual Southeastern Conference on Historic Sites Archaeology;
- We organized two bus tours for our members, one to Cherokee sites in the Appalachian Mountains and the other to Morrow Mountain, Hardaway, and Town Creek Indian Mound in the Piedmont. A bus tour of archaeological sites in the eastern part of the state is being discussed for the near future;
- We maintained the quality of North Carolina Archaeology and the NCAS Newsletter. Both publications contain more content per issue;
- We created an official position for the Newsletter Editor on the Board of Directors;
- We began to design a new brochure for the Society; and
- We continued to maintain visibility and promote ethical archaeology in North Carolina.

I thank Shane Peterson and Eric Deetz, who ended their terms on the NCAS Board of Directors, and long-standing Treasurer, Bill Conen, who stepped down from this position after 25 years of service. In their place, I welcome Mary Beth Fitts as our newly-elected Treasurer along with Catie Bailey and Angela McArdle as our new Board members. We also welcome back Shane Peterson as President-Elect.

While my tenure as President is past, and I now get to relax in the Past Presidents' Lounge (if I can find it), I have full confidence that our new President Hannah Smith, the other Officers, and Board members will continue to serve the interests and activities of the NCAS and its membership to the best of their abilities.



Upcoming Annual Meetings

Society for Historical Archaeology • New Orleans, Louisiana • January 3-6, 2018

Society for American Archaeology • Washington, DC • April 11-15, 2018

Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference • Virginia Beach, Virginia • March 16-18, 2018

Establish an NCAS Chapter

The NCAS supports and is supported by several independent groups across the state, including formal Chapters. Chapters hold meetings and organize activities for their members. The NCAS recently revised its guidelines to make it easier to establish a chapter. For information about forming a chapter in your area, visit <http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas/Chapters/>.

2018 Membership Dues

The end of the year is almost here. Renew your membership today to stay current with the Society's latest news. Please submit your dues payment to: NCAS c/o Mary Beth Fitts, Office of State Archaeology, 4619 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4619. Or, you can renew your membership online via PayPal at <http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas/Join/PayPal.html>.

Your current (paid) membership year is indicated in the top right corner of the mailing label. Membership types include: Student (\$10) • Regular (\$15) • Family (\$20) • Sustaining (\$25) • Institution (\$25) • Life (\$250).

NCAS Officers

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NCAS Newsletter

Publication Schedule

Members should submit articles and news items to Heather Lapham (hlapham@unc.edu) for inclusion in the Newsletter. Please use the following dates as deadlines for your submissions:

Winter Issue – January 31 Summer Issue – July 31
Spring Issue – April 3 Fall Issue – October 31

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