

Archaeologists discovering rare glimpse into prehistoric times

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University of Alabama archaeologists are discovering artifacts that will help them piece together the lives of people who lived thousands of years ago.

UA's Office of Archaeological Research was contracted by the City of Trussville last year to perform an [archaeological investigation](#) of the Hewitt-Trussville Stadium site, which is located at the Trussville Civic Center on the banks of the Cahaba River and west of Hewitt-Trussville High School.

Since excavation began in June, archaeologists have found evidence of occupations that date back 10,000 years ago, and provide a rare glimpse into two very interesting times in prehistory, said Matt Gage, OAR Director.

The first occurs at the end of the Late Archaic Period, when populations were transitioning from the earlier nomadic [hunter gatherers](#) to a more [sedentary lifestyle](#). Pottery technology replaced stone vessels and other containers, and people were storing food items at different locations for use throughout the year. Horticulture was becoming more prevalent and the need for territorial control appears to have become more important.

"We're finding fragments of early pottery and lithic tools that are from approximately 2,000 to 2,500 years ago that will help to answer some of the questions surrounding this shift in lifeways," Gage said.

The second has to do with populations moving across landscapes. It is known that the West Jefferson phase occupants of the Black Warrior Valley began moving eastward into the Cahaba and Coosa Valleys about 1,200 years ago. They brought new pottery vessel technology, subsistence strategies and lithic tools, some of which were made of raw materials from the Black Warrior Valley that they likely brought with them or traded for, Gage said.

"The impetus for this migration and its effect on the people who were already living in that area are unclear," he said. "By looking through the remains of their daily life (their trash), we can gain a better understanding of what they were eating, who they were interacting with and how their technology influenced surrounding populations."

Field work on the project began last summer and has progressed through the various phases of identifying the site, testing the site to help determine its significance and now mitigation or data collection. OAR has worked closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Alabama Historical Commission's State Historic Preservation Officer, the State Archaeologist and the City of Trussville. In addition, OAR has worked closely with Trussville City Schools and Trussville students and teachers have had an opportunity to take part in the dig.

Gage estimated the field work to be complete by the end of the month, and then analysis and report preparation will begin. During this phase, the artifacts and other recovered samples will be returned to the laboratory for processing and analysis. Specialized samples will be sent off for dating, botanical analysis and geoarchaeological studies, and that information will be included in the final report.

Provided by University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa

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