Great Finds!

Members were treated to a behind-the-scenes look at the conservation labs of Historic Jamestowne. Conversations were held about the logistics of working with varied and sensitive materials found on the island, including human remains.

Rare example of “Jack of plates” Armor in Virginia
Image c/o of Elizabeth Robson
Letter From the President

Kate Ridgway, VCA President

I’m not sure about other folks, but I have trouble saying no to professional opportunities. I also want to help out if I can and I actively try for things, such as grants, when I have a chance. In my head, I don’t expect everything to pan out, so I try for more things than I can handle, knowing that only some of them will happen. Every now and then, the Universe thinks it is hilarious to give you everything you asked for. Then if some little thing goes sideways, such as your boss and your colleague retiring at the same time or a family member getting cancer, you are quickly overwhelmed by a tidal wave of stress and commitments.

This is what happened to me this past year, and it has meant that I have not been doing my best work in 2019. I have realized two things. First, the value of saying “no” to things, even if they sound like fantastic opportunities. It is better to concentrate on what you can actually get done and allow some things to pass you by for the sake of your sanity and a job well done, no matter how interesting a project seems.

The second realization is the amazing help colleagues and friends can provide in a time of need. I would like to thank the VCA Board for helping me with my work this past year. They have been amazing and are extremely dedicated and generous with their time. We are all volunteers, trying to make VCA happen and they have been doing a fantastic job while I am treading water.

All of this is to say, that as some of my commitments are winding down, life is becoming calmer, and I am learning the power of “no”, I am hoping to refocus on VCA. I am looking forward to this coming year of discussions and improvements to this organization that we all love so much. Happy holidays everyone!
2020 Meeting Schedule

**Wednesday, January 15th; 6:00 pm**
Members Discussion on the VCA  
(no program planned)
*Main Street Library*
*110 Main Street*
*Newport News, VA 23601*

**Thursday, March 19th; 6:00 pm**
Under the Microscope
Susan Buck – Conservator and Paint Analyst
*Location: TBD (Williamsburg)*

**Thursday, May 21th; 6:00 pm**
Recent Painting Treatment at Richmond Conservation Studio
Lorraine Brevig – Richmond Conservation Studio
*Location: TBD (Richmond)*
Please join us on January 15 for the first of multiple meetings to discuss the future structure of the VCA.

Bring yourself and your ideas, the goal is to have productive discussion. This is only the first of more meetings to come, so if you cannot attend this meeting there will be other opportunities. Members are also welcome to come to more than one meeting if they so desire.
November Meeting at Jamestown:
Written by Elizabeth Robson

The November meeting of the VCA took place at Historic Jamestowne, in the building that the Jamestown Rediscovery team shares with the National Park Service. Attendees were given tours of the conservation lab and storage vault, led by Dan Gamble and Leah Stricker. This was followed by some delicious Indian food in the café, provided by Tom Snyder. It was a very informative peek into the work accomplished by 2 full-time conservators, as well as 2 interns and several volunteers, who care for over 3 million artifacts!

Dan showed members through the various rooms of the conservation lab, where artifacts are processed, including the digital x-ray machine and new ventless fume hood. He discussed the delicate nature of working with human remains, both literally and logistically. For example, volunteers are not allowed in the lab when such items are being worked on, only staff members. The bones themselves are also very fragile, especially the ancient DNA profiles embedded in them. Important genetic information can be extracted from the remains, so the staff wear gloves, masks, and often full Tyvek suits when handling them. Scientists are currently working to identify the recently excavated bones of a man who was buried in a wide grave near the original churchyard. They believe it could be the first governor of the site, George Yeardley, but a descendant’s DNA is needed to compare it to in order to confirm this theory. There are still many burials left to excavate, perhaps hundreds on the entire island, over 70 of which are below the Archaearium. The team makes use of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) technology to locate burials and decide which of them may be uncovered next dig season. Over 4,400 sites, not all of them burials, have been excavated at Jamestown over the last 25 years!

Attendees were also brought into the storage area, which includes an upstairs portion with rolling archival shelves, and a “dry room” for iron artifacts, which is kept at a particularly low RH. It also houses the reference collection, which has been recently rehoused to make it more accessible for researchers. Visitors were able to handle a length of iron chain which had been found at the bottom of a well, in order to experience one of the sounds heard by early settlers. Many international objects have been found in wells at Jamestown, including a cast iron skillet from England, Chinese porcelain, and ceramics from Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands! (Continued on Page X)
November Meeting at Jamestown:
Written by Elizabeth Robson

However, plenty of evidence revealing the hard lives of the earliest settlers has also been found. The skull of a girl known as Jane, who it is believed was a victim of “survival cannibalism”, was discovered in a cellar here. The bones of a young boy with an arrow embedded deep in his leg were also found in a grave inside the fort. He has been tentatively identified as Richard Mutton, a boy who was part of the original group of settlers and is known to have been killed in the first skirmish with Virginia natives. Leah showed the group facial replicas that have been created based on these exhumed skulls. She explained that though these are not always 100% accurate, they help give a face to the people that lived at Jamestown hundreds of years ago, and make their stories come to life. Leah also shared other fascinating details that can be discovered from these remains. For example, the nitrogen content can tell us how much meat the person ate during their life, and low lead content indicates they likely did not eat from pewter dishes and were therefore more likely a servant than a higher-class citizen.

Leah also discussed the new research being conducted into the presence of native and African peoples living at Jamestown. Evidence of the creation of shell beads was found in wells at the site, pointing to the presence of native women inside the fort within the first few years of its construction. We also know that the first Africans were brought to Jamestown in 1619, and new exhibitions are being constructed around a slave woman named Angela, who belonged to the Pierce family. The team hopes to help shed more light on the experiences of these people and their interactions with the settlers.

Please contact Dan Gamble, Senior Conservator, with any questions: dgamble@preservationvirginia.org

You can also visit the Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation/Historic Jamestowne website at https://historicjamestowne.org/
Understanding Unconscious Bias: Fostering Diversity and Inclusion at Your Museum  
*Monday, February 10*  
*Virginia Museum of History and Culture*  
*Richmond, VA*  

As the demographics in our workplaces and in our communities grow increasingly diverse, it becomes more and more important that museums become inclusive spaces for everyone. That begins with you and your fellow staff members. Designed for all museum staff, regardless of position, this workshop will help participants better understand unconscious bias and how to create empathy and understanding for the visitors and communities you serve.

Enhance your diversity awareness and bias reduction. Learn to respect and appreciate differences and how to create a work environment in which everyone feels they belong and can be productive. You will come away with an understanding of individual actions you can take to foster inclusion, practical tips and approaches you can implement to help eliminate bias and prejudice at your museum and the motivation and skills to continue working on these issues.

This workshop is presented by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC). The guest speaker is Charm Bullard, Director of Programs for VCIC.

For more further details and registration info visit the url below: https://www.vamuseums.org/events/workshop-understanding-unconscious-bias  
Workshop hosted by Virginia Association of Museums
# 2019 – 2020 Board Members

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The Virginia Conservation Association
Membership Application & Dues Payment

*Required

*Date: ___________ , 20_______                                    * ______

New     *______Renewing

(Name as you would like for it to appear in the Directory-Please indicate if you do not want to be included in the Directory)

*First____________________________________________           *Last_______________________________________________

*Address:________________________________________________________*

*City___________________________________

*State__________________ *ZIP_________________ *Telephone:  (    _______ ) __________________________________

*Email:____________________________________________________   Title:_______________________________________

Organization(s):__________________________________

Website:__________________________________________

I Identify As:

_____ Administrator          _____ Conservator          _____ Librarian

_____ Appraiser            _____ Conservation Technician   _____ Post Graduate-Intern/Fellow

_____ Collector            _____ Curator              _____ Supporter

_____ Collection Mgr./Registrar  _____ Framer/Preparator   _____ Student

_____ Other (Specify)________________________________

Areas of Conservation Expertise:

_____ Objects            _____ Furniture            _____ Paintings

_____ Ethnographic Objects _____ Frames/Gilded Objects  _____ Painted Surfaces

_____ Archaeological Objects _____ Textiles                _____ Conservation Science

_____ Architecture        _____ Books and Paper      _____ Preventive Conservation

_____ Sculpture           _____ Photographic Materials _____ Accept Private Contracts

 _____ Other (Specify)________________________________

Are you willing to be a Disaster Response Volunteer in the event of an emergency? _____
Are you willing to serve as a Mentor?_____                Would you like to have a Mentor?_____
Are you interested in serving on the VCA board in the future? (see website for details) _____

Practicing Conservator/Consultant Conservators Only:

Would you like your contact information included in our website’s VCA Services Directory?_____


The Virginia Conservation Association is open to all interested individuals. To become a member, complete this form and return it with your check made payable to VCA for $30 (Regular) or $15 (Student: Enclose a copy of a valid student ID) to the address below. To join online, visit www.virginiaconservationassociation.org/wp/.

Application and dues payment must be received by October 15th to ensure inclusion in the VCA Directory.

The Virginia Conservation Association
P. O. Box 7023
Richmond, Virginia  23221