

# **Bunkhouse Archeological Site, Kendall County, Texas**

**May 21, 2020**

**By HCAA**

In spite of the pandemic and some personal medical issues, we remain active and archeology is going on. This is a short report detailing with our activities for the past year at a new HCAA site.

Last summer Dr. John Benedict, Texas Historical Commission Steward, visited the Bunkhouse Site in Kendall County, Texas. He confirmed the presence of an intact cooking midden as evidenced by numerous Fire Cracked Rocks (FCRs) distributed around it, as well as the organically rich black soil. As a result, Steve Stoutamire, another THC Steward, assigned a site number. The midden site is approximately 100' by 100'. The midden itself is 30 feet in diameter and 4 to 5 feet tall. The Bunkhouse Ranch owner has agreed to let us record the site.



*Figure 1. Bunkhouse midden buried under leaves and grass.*

The midden is near several springs which probably served as an attractant for Native American activities here. Around the midden is an extensive field of chert cobbles that were used to quarry chert used for tool making. The quarry area covers most of the Bunkhouse Ranch property as well as some adjacent properties.

The site was heavily infested with Prickly Pear cactus and overgrown with the bane of ranchers, Ashe Juniper, commonly mislabeled as cedar. Before any real investigation could begin the site needs to be cleared of vegetation. The Juniper has been removed, as well as the prickly pear. What artifacts were not covered by the



Juniper and cactus was covered by a dense stand of KR bluestem and 3-4 foot tall cone flowers.



*Figure 3. Spring that had been used for sheep in the distant past. It runs all year around and there is another in a small arroyo nearby. Both are near the Bunkhouse BRM site.*



*Figure 2. The site surface is much more visible after some clearing.*

During that removal numerous artifacts were uncovered. These were left laying where they were found, so that their location could be recorded as they were collected. Next, most of the cactus was removed and then the KR and flowers were mowed down and raked away. This process took nearly six months with weekly visits. Removal of the grass revealed numerous additional artifacts, lying on the surface. Now that these artifacts were exposed there was a great deal of concern for theft. It was recommended these artifacts be removed as a safety precaution.





*Figure 4. Note the pile of brush on the right from clearing.*

A primary datum was established at the apex of the midden, as well as two secondary datums. Surface artifacts were collected in groups from 6'x6' areas, bagged and recorded in a Field Sack Log. Each 6 by 6 was recorded to a datum by tape and compass preserving their locational data. Fifty-nine field sacks were collected. Field sacks containing collectible artifacts were removed from the property for safekeeping. The remaining sacks are being stored at the bunkhouse for future lab curation.



*Figure 5. Field sacks of artifacts collect from the Bunkhouse occupational site.*

At this point it was very obvious this was an occupational work site. Tools of every description have been found. All tools showed extensive wear and usage. Many flakes were intentionally sharpened, again with signs of usage. And the flakes showed extensive usage and wear. Many broken knives and bifaces were also noted. Observation led us to surmise that many of these seem to be made for utilitarian purposes or utilized out of convenience, and consequently, were not carefully crafted.

FCRs were so numerous that moving around the midden was difficult. Given the number of FCR's present, it was decided to remove the FCRs from the surface. An



additional benefit is the area can now be mowed, as chiggers were a real problem last fall. As a result, FCRs were raked into 29 piles.

Five piles have been collected and counted, as well as 3 scorpions (which makes counting interesting). Once the piles have been collected, a preliminary calculation will be made to determine the number of cooking events to generate this amount of FCRs. Each pile was tagged, and its location mapped into a datum by tape and compass.



*Figure 6. Cleaning up the FCR and trash.*



*Figure 7. Counting the FCR scatter from the surface around the midden.*

In raking up these piles the accumulated dead grass was also removed and revealed quite a few additional artifacts. These artifacts were collected and the locational data preserved. It is estimated that well over 500 artifacts have been bagged in 130 Field Sacks awaiting laboratory curation.

An interesting story here. While doing all this heavy preliminary work we wondered if there was anything in the midden. One scrape with a hoe (literally) and up popped a collectible hand knife, a nicely finished thin biface.

The excavation of the midden will begin as soon as the scorpion count is finished!! If anyone would like to visit the site and perhaps help with the count, you can do so and easily keep social distances.



*Figure 8. Nicely finished biface knife found on the surface of the BRM.*