The Madaba Plains Project (MPP) concluded its fifth season of research on July 28. 85 archaeologists, students, and specialists worked for about six weeks on what has become one of Jordan’s oldest and largest archaeological teams. From its outset, the MPP has been sponsored by the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR) and the Madaba Plains Project consortium of colleges and universities in the US and Canada. The MPP is currently composed of three related projects: the Tell el-‘Umeiri excavation, the Hinterland survey, and the Tell Jalul excavation.

At Tell el-‘Umeiri, impressive remains of the site’s Iron Age defenses were excavated under the direction of Larry G. Herr. In these excavations, a casemate wall was found protected by an earthen rampart and held in place above a dry moat by a retaining wall. Dramatic evidence of a fiery destruction during the Iron I period was uncovered at the casemate and elsewhere. Within the walled summit, a number of large, monumental houses were found (together with their typical assemblages of clay pots, stone implements, and other artifacts). On the southern slope of the mound, excavation continued in the Early Bronze IV/early Middle Bronze structures.

The project’s Hinterland survey under the supervision of Øystein S. LaBianca investigated cycles of intensification in landuse and settlement. Methods included an environmental survey which focused on reconstructing changes over time in the physical landscape. Ethnoarchaeological research examined the processes of sedentarization and nomadization at both the household and village level. The archaeological survey aimed at documenting changes over time in settlement and landuse.

Two of the most interesting aspects of the survey included excavation of a typical Early Bronze IV/early Middle Bronze tomb. The tomb produced several large ceramic pots and metal implements. At Khirbet Rufeisah (near Yadudah), a cave was discovered with an unusual inscription. The inscription (1.5 m high and 16 m long) contains some 1000 alphabetic letters, tribal marks, and pictures (mostly in the early Arabic dialects of Thamudic and Safaitic). This find promises to be important for the study of Jordan’s early Arab tribes (see additional story page 4).

This season marks the first season of excavation at Tell Jalul. The tell is the largest and most centrally located site in the Madaba Plains area. It promises to be a key in better understanding the socio-historical development of central Jordan. The team there was under the direction of Randall W. Younker.

For hundreds of years, Tell Jalul has been used by local residents as a burial site. A total of 19 Turkish graves were excavated in the process of seeking earlier strata. In addition, team members identified eight field phases. Of greatest interest were two superimposed Iron II period pavements. These pavements consisted of large flagstones, possibly part of a paved approach ramp to the city gate. Retaining walls are preserved upslope. Abundant ash suggests a massive destruction of the late Iron I settlement, but definite occupational levels from this important site await excavation. The next field season for the MPP is planned for 1994. (Lawrence T. Geraty)
1993 is the 25th Anniversary of the first season of excavation at Tell Hesban. Few of our readers may have participated in that very first season, but many readers partici-

1968-1976 TELL HESBAN EXPEDITION PARTICIPANTS (Alphabetically)


Plan now to be on the campus of
pated in one or more subsequent seasons. How many people can you recognize from the following season photographs? (The list of expedition personnel may be helpful.)

MORE 1968-1976 TELL HESBAN EXPEDITION PARTICIPANTS

Pre-Islamic Graffiti Found

A South Arabic inscription dating from the first to fourth century AD came to light recently in an abandoned cistern south of Amman, at Khirbet Rufeisah (near Yadudah). This is the largest of its kind ever found. The announcement comes from the archaeological survey team headed by Øystein S. LaBianca of Andrews University, and Gary Christopherson, a graduate student at the University of Arizona.

The cistern containing the unique inscription was first entered by survey members Hana Azer of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and Dorothy Irvin, an ethnologist with the Madaba Plains Project. Both were astounded at the size and type of this monumental Old South Arabic inscription, and at its location, much farther west than is common for the Safitic and Thamudic scripts.

Generally, such inscriptions are quite short, 2-to-5 words in length and contain 6-to-12 characters, while this inscription contains an estimated 1,000 or more characters. In addition to alphabetic characters, the inscription also contains a number of artistic scenes, including an armed horseman.

"It's causing us to re-evaluate the nature of Palestinian society at the time of Christ."

- LaBianca

The inscription has not yet been read. The cave is being excavated by the Department of Antiquities. Scholars from Jordan, Europe and the United States are being invited to study the inscriptions. (Jordan Times July 30-31, 1992). [Editor's note: LaBianca will give an updated report on this inscription and the cave during a Horn Museum Lecture on Feb 8, 1993.]
In a recent letter thanking the institute for its support of the Tel Miqne-Ekron 1992 field season, co-director Seymour Gitin included a brief report of the summer’s finds.

Staff and volunteers numbering 119 from 9 countries participated in the continuing excavation of Tel Miqne. This site has been identified as "Ekron," one of the five major Philistine cities mentioned in the Bible.

This season’s excavations were highlighted by the discovery of a cache of 77 silver pieces weighing a total of 2 pounds. The silver, hidden in a jug which was itself nestled inside another vessel, may have been cached just prior to the Babylonian siege in 603 BC.

Dating from the same period, a separate discovery from a different place on the site included 31 pieces of jewelry hidden in the hole of a perforated stone weight. The jewelry included a ring inscribed with hieroglyphics, and a silver medallion with a religious scene.

Following the initial prosperity of Ekron about 1200 BC, the city fell into decline around 1000 BC. It experienced growth in the 7th century BC, but was never resettled after its destruction by the Babylonians in 603 BC.

Andrews University, through the institute, is now a "supporting" organization for the Tel Miqne-Ekron project. By associating with a number of other institutes and foundations, AU now has the opportunity to provide archaeological field experience for students who might be unable to participate in the Madaba Plains Project. (S. Gitin)

On Sept 22, Lawrence T. Geraty presented the "1992 Madaba Plains Project Field Season" report to about 80 community and campus listeners. During his illustrated lecture, Geraty covered the MPP’s Tell Hesban expedition "roots" and detailed the archaeological process using slides taken this past summer at Tell el-ė-Umeiri, Tell Jalul, and the Hinterland survey. Following the lecture, a reception hosted by David and Stephanie Merling provided an opportunity to meet with Dr. Geraty informally. During his two-day visit on the AU campus, MPP Senior Director Geraty conducted dig business, and presented both classroom and public lectures.

(Ralph Hendrix)

AL-MAKṬĀBA
THE BOOKSTORE

Tell Hesban

□ Hesban 1: Sedentarization and Nomadization (LaBianca, 1991; 373 pp., cloth) at $49.95 each (plus s/h).
□ Hesban 2: Environmental Foundations (LaBianca and Lacelle, 1990; 184 pp., cloth) at $49.95 each (plus s/h).
□ Hesban 3: Historical Foundations (Geraty and Running, 1989; 107 pp., cloth) at $49.95 each (plus s/h).
□ Hesban 5: Archaeological Survey (Ibach, 1987; 314 pp., cloth) at $49.95 each (plus s/h).

Tell el-ė-Umeiri

□ MPP 1: The 1987 Season at Tell el-ė-Umeiri (Geraty, et al, 1989; 630 pp., cloth) REDUCED TO $49.95 each (plus s/h).
□ MPP 2: The 1989 Season at Tell el-ė-Umeiri (Herr, et al, 1991; 633 pp., cloth) at $49.95 each (plus s/h).

Museum Items

□ Mural Slide Set (57 slides) tells the Bible story with HAM objects in the paintings! Includes booklet. Just $50.00 each (plus s/h).
□ I want to subscribe to the Newsletter at just $7.50 per year.
□ No, I haven’t forgotten the Institute of Archaeology Endowed Scholarship Fund.

Here is my address: __________________________________________________________

(Shipping and Handling will be billed at actual cost)
MUSEUM Reopens for Academic Year

The Horn Museum will resume regular service hours Sept 29.

Hours:
Mon-Thurs: 8:30-12:00/1:00-5:00
Friday: 8:30-12:00
(Closed Academic Holidays)

Museum Tours
Group and individual tours may be scheduled for Tues-Wed-Thurs of each week. Arrangements for a tour may be made by contacting the museum office during business hours.

Write:
Horn Museum
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI
49104-0990

Or call:
616/471-3273

Curatorial assistant Chang-ho Ji continues busily accessioning about 200 excavated objects allocated to the museum by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities following the 1989 dig season.

NOVEMBER MEETINGS.
Institute personnel, university faculty, and archaeology/biblical studies/anthropology professionals from around the world will convene in San Francisco, Nov. 18-24. Hundreds of scholarly papers and reports will be given during the week of meetings. Scores of societies annually hold their meetings in conjunction with the Society of Biblical Literature/American Academy of Religions (SBL/AAR) which sponsors the convention. Of particular interest are the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) meetings. The Madaba Plains Project personnel also gather together to conduct project business. Many personnel will read scholarly papers and participate in panel discussions. The findings of the recent MPP field season will be announced during several reports on various phases on the project. Look for a brief report of the convention in the next newsletter.

Doctoral student Zeljko Gregor continues work on the organization of the Horn Library. Library of Congress (LC) labels are currently being placed on the books by the first of the year. About 50% of the books will be so identified. This will greatly facilitate the use of the library.

The Paul Ray, Jr. family has returned to AU after teaching several years at Bugemla College in Uganda. Paul, Barbara, and their son (Zachy), welcomed the recent birth of daughter, Rebecca, earlier in August. Paul will continue doctoral studies in Old Testament/Archaeology and will help out at the museum.