

1993 BRASS NEWS-LETTER

Da Fu We Team

The BRASS project made it through its 11th season, marking a major shift from the humble houses to the towering temples. We are now into the big site of **El Pilar**. It was a different season -- beginning with the drive down in Big Blue, meeting **Carol Miller** April 5 at 5pm in Xpujil, clearing structures to open El Pilar, lobbying at Belmopan, fiesta with Mexico's Prez Salinas de Gortí at Zoh Laguna, the BRASS/El Pilar tour with the British High commissioner, dinner in Mexico City with the famous Angelica Vale. Does the excitement ever end?

Well, the field season is finally behind us. It all began with the students arriving and Project Director **Anabel Ford** leaving -- not forever but for the SAA meetings in St. Louis where **Kirsten Olson**, **Lisa Lucero** and Anabel presented papers on completion of the residential unit excavations phase of the BRASS project. Before Anabel's returned, Field Director, **Clarko Wernecke**, had organized unpacking the BRASS gear, helped set up the lab with Lab Manager **Syd Cosselman**, finished most of the flotation samples, and introduced everyone to the use of the transit (something they would all be very familiar with in the end!)

Armed with our *Permit to Search, Explore, and Excavate*, from the Belize Government, we all began to get to know (yes, and love) El Pilar. In the BRASS tradition, we arose before dawn to start working at the site by 6:30am. **French Semper** lead the crew in the mound clearing, but we don't mean vegetation, rather the field crew -- watch for sailing projectiles! Still, some of the crew were willing to take lessons in clearing from Gonzalo, who was able to clear half of *EP7*, no *10**, in the same time the crew -- lead by **Cindy Young** -- cleared a single pathway to *LT14* to see one of **Bob Vitolo's** 3D drawings. This was also the time we were experimenting with **Ken Young's** talking stick, getting El Pilar and BRASS Base (marginally) connected. A system was finally established that seemed to work for us, Syd was a great help here, **COCKROACH!**

Meanwhile, up at *EP7-LT13* **Angela Phenicie** was on her umteeth profile and plan view, perfecting her understanding of scale, when Clark thought he could help. He did touch a funny bone, even he was unable to better that fall despite numerous attempts over the

course of the rest of the season! While the first corner of *EP 10* was known as the-corner-from-hell by **Andrew** (it's all documented on video) **Kinkella**, the second one produced **Robin Taylor's** now famous "balls 'n buns" (she claims that there is a substantial *litterature* on these important Maya artifacts)

While the plaza floor was being identified around Plaza C for *Copal* (naming plazas for plants comes from our botanical specialist - Rosita Arvigo), Lisa was setting up the main traverse with her Red 2 laser transit system, first using it to locate - horizontally and vertically - the drinking water source identified by **David Brennen** about 400m over and 33m down from the road. Some 25 El Pilar data points later, the project had the base line for the El Pilar detailed mapping program. By the time Lisa left, the entire crew could operate the transit system and were all able to -- for better or worse -- get involved in the mapping operations.

Moving on from Plaza *Copal*, we started in Plaza A for *Axcanan* and full scale attention to looter's trenches. Remember that boring *LT3A*, with no floors, rooms, or walls, **Jim "Diego" Kacalieff**? But it was **George Borry** that got us out of *Axcanan* by rescuing French at *EP1*, sometimes it takes a newcomer to finish things up! The wrap-up in *Axcanan* that will most be remembered, is from *EP1 SE Q* where (on 31 May) Andrew wrote:

Today I found the plaza floor,
and maybe a wall but nothing more.
104 was the floor I found in my pit;
preserved well, not lumpy one bit.
The fill I found we'll call 103
It's light grey in color, as you can't see!
Describing the soil
is a task not too tough,
It's the same old grey friable,
loamy like stuff.
The cobbles checked in at least 35,
with pebbles at 20 and loam 45.
The digging went well
except for the roots.
Which I chopped with my clippers
and stomped with my boots.
As for the ceramics, I found only 2.
They're ugly and boring and not very new.

Was that a day like any other day ...

Highlighting our El Pilar structure hunt were the architectural pearls **John Yust** cast before the

* Anabel could never get that straight!

archaeological swine! And we now have a picture for the rabbit warren of the acropolis, or *H'men Na*. Before Clark and Anabel bailed for the Palenque trip (that was significantly eased by the stick shift driving of **Yvonne Harralson**), Kirsten showed up as the substitute Field Director, we suspect the crew enjoyed the change. On the way back from Palenque, we got to visit **Ricardo Bueno** and get a tour of Becan. His consolidation work impressed us all and we hope that Ricardo will be joining the BRASS/El Pilar project in the future.

Everyone can remember that our wrap-up was touch and go. **Amy Holt** was very anxious to finish her last unit in Plaza I for *Ixim*. That was so until she hit that beautiful corner; then she wanted to GO DOWN -- who knows how long that could have taken. *Chrai fi mek she andatán áfta aal we ku tel she da di still bobbed! Kyann yu andatán dis?* After all our hard work clearing temples, finding round corners, identifying rooms, and verifying doorways, what really impressed the visitors was the El Pilar sign and rail fence -- the eye-wash so expertly designed by **Mike Mortara**.

Well, all that was left was the back filling, and what a job that was. **Christopher "CJ" Frailish** commandeered the "wheelbarrow competition", this was reportedly between CJ, Mike and Jim, but the potential winner was *the rains* fast upon their heels. While this competition was happening on the ground, Anabel got a chance to see El Pilar from the air. **Don and Wilma Stratman** and their Cessna 172 provided this fantastic opportunity!

The 1993 project could not end without a peak at the always-alluded-to *West Pilar*. This was most exciting to discover and was amazingly positioned with the Full-Station HP system (donated by **Bryan and Murphy's** Mike Helms who "bought us antiquarians into the 80's). **Chris Forester** was the transit operator and it was an early foggy, but not rainy, morning; the handy talkies were on, but where was that tall tree on the horizon? Clark flashed his Brunton mirror, and Chris moved the Full-Station 'till it read "*acquired*". In minutes we had the distance and elevation of the main temple of West Pilar! A shot of 1068m at 239° 30' 30" and a elevation of 247.4 m. The miracles of modern technology!

On the BRASS Santa Barbara front, things were far from idle. **Sydney Ciener** continued with the diagnostic ceramic analysis and has nearly completed all of the residential unit collections. From there she plans to move on to artistic ventures for the project. She has been a tremendous help is getting the lab in

order and all the collections organized in retrievable drawers correctly labeled and where they ought to be! All the materials from 1993 are in the storage and awaiting attention. **Jenn Kirker** ('90, '92) worked with the artifact context project she first devised in 1990 with her fateful question about middens and fill. Her Senior Honors thesis is her first examination of distinctions, and we know she learned a lot! **Greg Morre** ('91), conducting the basic chert tool analysis, finished his Senior Honors thesis comparing household chert assemblages from the BRASS area demonstrating patterns by the different land form zones.

The coming year has a number of projects that are underway. Robin is planning to finish up the lithic analysis and examine all the residential units as a whole. She has already begun to set up the work. French should be able to run the ceramic analysis and give us the low down on the distribution of Terminal Classic pottery around El Pilar based on the '93 sherds. Chris has helped in orienting Pilar West, positioned at the end of the 950m long causeway and adding some 7 more plazas to the map. Joe Murphy ('83, '84, '86), who is at least half responsible for the accuracy of the original El Pilar Map, has volunteered to draw up the notes we collected this year and prepare the new 1993 version of El Pilar. This will be a tremendous help!

Our nascent plans for 1994 are hardly firm at this point, but we must finish the detailed examination of El Pilar before we can move into the full scale excavations. Most likely arrangements will follow past example with a spring occupation of the fabulous facilities of the Santa Familia Monastery under the watchful eye of Fr. Richard. Maria is still happy as our cook -- thank goodness; what would life be without her? For two fun-filled weeks on the BRASS/El Pilar project that are fully tax deductible, we are asking for a contribution of \$1850. Field work will include the widest range of field and laboratory methods and techniques, and the crew will help to completing a detailed map and final construction history of the major Maya center, El Pilar. When you join up for the 1994 season, we can send you the details of our goals based on proposals we have sent out to funding agencies.

Besides writing proposal, Anabel and Scott Fedick are going to finish the book on the BRASS settlement survey -- or what we were all doing in the 1980s! The work is all outlined and the different chapters are divided between the duo. All that we need to do is finish the writing. It always seems so easy to say, but

this important study must see the light of day and very soon.

In the meantime, keep in touch with us and include us in your plans for 1994. Mark your calendars for the 25th of September for the BRASS BASH -- a pot luck at the Cliff house of UCSB. Look at the enclosed invitation!

In Belizean Creole...

Wat da we wan di du nou? Fos, we du di map fi Pilar. Dis won be íizi. An seem taim, we gwaan da du di rok n sherd. Fi dat, we niid téknikal skil. Neks, we mus ekspléén dífran schrókchaz to andatán di big pícha. Yu wan hep?