

# King Bee Briefly Revisited

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This brief report documents minor additional testing of the King Bee site, 9PM815, in Putnam County, Georgia, that took place from June 24-26 of 2002. The 2002 work was undertaken on the Oconee National Forest with the help and cooperation of Jill Kingham, Forest Archaeologist. The field crew for the project was the summer 2002 University of Georgia Archaeology Field School, under the direction of the author and Graduate Student Jared Wood. The crew members were Erin Andrews, Tara Coile, Ryan Duggar, Jacob Estes, James Fitzgerald, Jennifer Funk, Jason Grey, Kate Kruskamp, Nicole Polhill, Christopher Rayle, Emily Reynolds, Phinizy Spaulding, Jr., Bethany Smith, Daye Stewart, and Gail Tomczak. Zack Williams and Leah Williams also volunteered on the project.

In June of 1988 site 9PM815 (Forest Service Number GA08I852) was located in Putnam County, Georgia, by archaeologist Dan Elliott during a reconnaissance level survey of the Oconee National Forest, southwest of Rock Eagle. The site was located in a forest through the use of 10 shovel tests placed in the site by Elliott. He located the small site on a knoll located just west of Little Gladly Creek, a tributary of Little River, and discovered that it contained pottery of the Lamar period (ca. 1350-1550 AD). In one of the shovel tests near the center of the site he encountered a trash pit with black midden soil and broken pottery sherds dating to this period. At the request of the Forest Archaeologist, he then placed a small test excavation around the shovel test in July of 1988 and located the general outlines of a 3-4 meter diameter trash pit (Elliott and Boyko 1989). Using a volunteer crew, Elliott then excavated what he estimated was 1/3 of the trash pit labeled as Test Unit 1 (ibid:3). A total of 543 sherds was located in the test excavation, formed from a minimum of 26 different vessels. Three tobacco smoking pipe fragments were also located. He named the site the King Bee site after a large bee seen there.

Wayne Boyko analyzed the abundant zooarchaeological remains from the feature (427 bones and 626 mollusc fragments). A wide range of animals were present (Elliott and Boyko 1989:22-30). The presence of large amounts of mollusc shell has certainly aided the preservation of other organic remains in this feature. In his report, it became clear that the site was a small farmstead dating to the Dyar phase of the Lamar period (ca. 1500-1550 AD).

Nothing more was done at the King Bee site between 1988 and 2002. A good deal of additional relevant Mississippian period archaeology had taken place in the surrounding area since then, however. Most noteworthy has been the recent work at the Little River mound site (9Mg46) located some 8 miles to the northwest of King Bee (Williams and Shapiro 1990, Williams 2002). Little River is a small mound center associated with the Dyar phase of the Lamar period. It is, in fact, the only known mound site in the Little River valley associated with this period. Indeed, recent reanalysis of the known Lamar period farmsteads in the Little River valley suggests that this 50 year period may be the only period of Mississippian occupation in the entire Little River valley. Where did these people come from and where did they go?

The long-term excavations at the Little River mound site were recently curtailed by the owner before important details of the structures and the plant and animal food remains could be adequately studied. Further, very little is known about the 1000 or more farmsteads probably associated with the mound center. For the near term, additional research at the farmsteads in the valley is a productive line of inquiry. By comparison with what we have learned of similar sites further east in Morgan and Greene Counties, the trash pits on sites such as King Bee were likely first produced as daub processing pits. The mud from the pits were used in the manufacture of the wattle and daub houses occupied by a nuclear family. The open pit created in the yard of

such a site was apparently rapidly filled with garbage of all sorts—probably within a year of the settlement of the farmstead.

The goal of the project conducted here was to complete the careful excavation of the trash pit at the King Bee site that had been tested by Elliott. We hoped this would permit us to gather both additional botanical and zooarchaeological data of importance using fine screening samples, as well as gathering a near complete set of ceramics produced in all likelihood by one or two woman potters.

When we arrived at the site on June 24, 2002, we found the site badly overgrown. I had been one of the volunteer crew for Elliott in 1988, and thought I would be able to relocate the area of his excavation easily. After a couple of hours, we got lucky and found the four large nails that had defined his original 1 by 3 meter excavation unit still in place in the ground! We immediately began to reexcavate his unit, and elected to screen the dirt removed in the process through 1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth. We located six empty Coca Cola bottles, and an empty can of orange spray paint, all buried at the end of the 1988 testing. One of the Cokes had certainly been one that I drank myself! By the end of the first day, we had completely reexcavated Elliott's unit, and cleaned the old profile he had drawn.

On the second day, we laid out additional 1 by 1 meter units to the east of Elliott's old trench. The units or squares in the Excavation Unit were numbered as presented in Figure 1, where Squares 1-3 represent Elliott's old trench.

1	4	7
2	5	8
3	6	9

Figure 1.



Figure 2. Elliott's Unit Reopened.



Figure 3. Opening Units 4, 5, and 6 Near Elliott's Trench.

We began excavating Units 4-9 down to the level of the natural subsoil surrounding the feature on the edges of Squares 4 and 6. This depth averaged 12 centimeters. The fill from each unit was screened through 1/4 inch hardware cloth for artifact recovery. At the completion of this stage, the overall excavation appeared as shown in Figure 4. The catalog for all the excavations is presented later.

Based upon Elliott's estimate of the size of the rest of the feature presented as Figure 3 in his original

report, we assumed that the feature would extend all the way across Squares 4-6, and perhaps





Figure 4. Excavation Unit after Squares 4-9 were Completed.

even 7-9. He based his estimate of unexcavated feature extent on the assumption that the feature would be a complete circle approximately 3 meters in diameter. We quickly learned on day 2 that Feature 1, was not a circular shaped feature at all. It's shape was oval,

and its extent did not even cover all of Square 5. Clearly this discovery was a big disappointment, and meant that our goal of obtaining a great deal more material culture from the feature was not apt to be possible. Counting the original shovel tests on the eastern edge of his excavation trench, we estimate that Elliott had already excavated 80-90 percent of Feature 1.

Figure 5 shows the relationship of Elliott's original excavation and the complete shape discovered by our excavations. It will be seen that there is a deeper center portion of the feature, and a shallower outer perimeter area of the feature. Our Squares 6-9 did not intersect the feature at all, but we excavated them to the 12 centimeter depth to sterile anyway as part of our full 3 by 3 meter excavation unit. No post molds or other features were observed in the floor of these three 1 by 1 meter units. Figure 6 shows the unit after we had removed the portions of the feature that remained in Squares 4 and 6, with Square 5's remnant still in place. Figure 7 shows

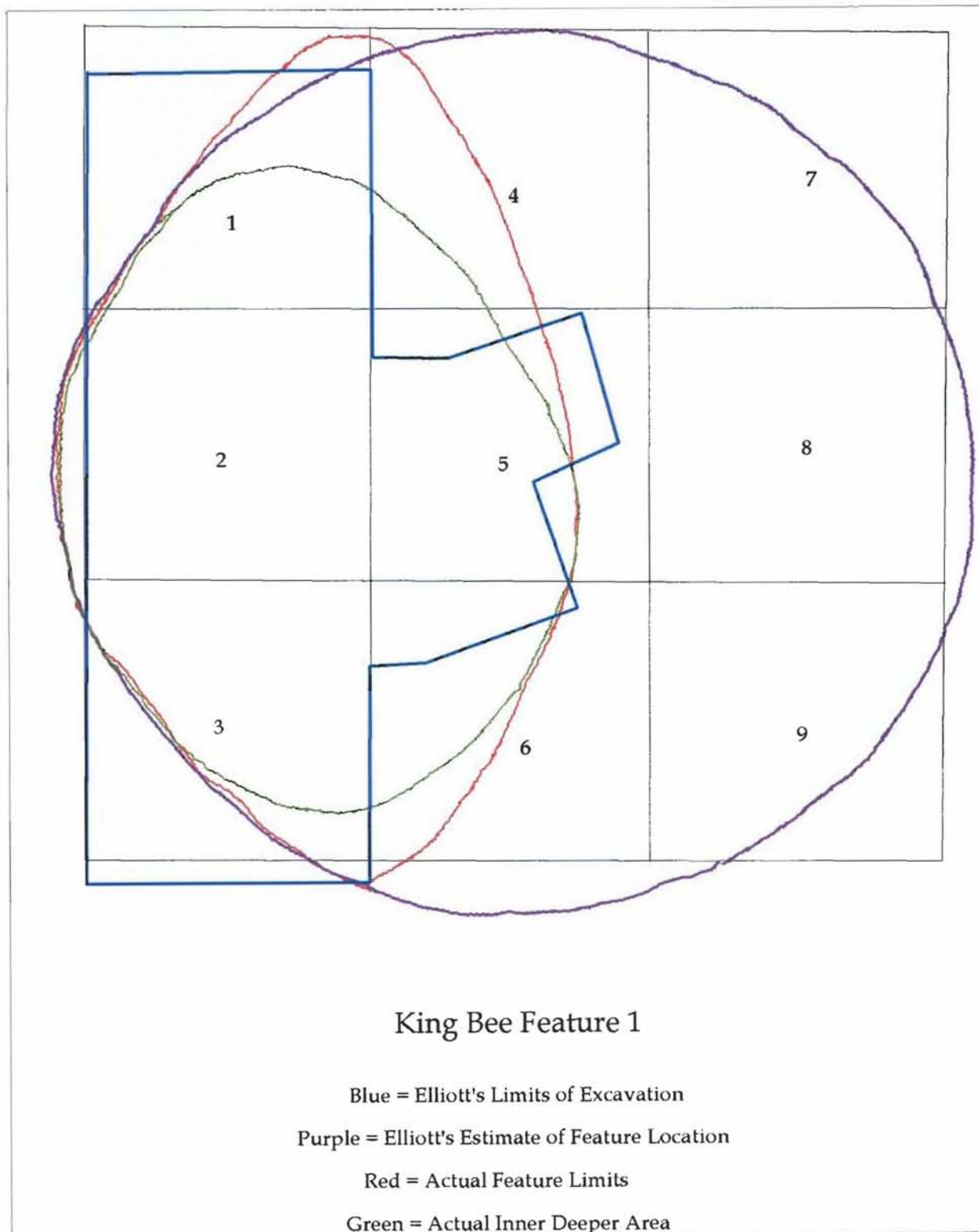


Figure 5. Feature 1





Figure 6. Excavation Unit with Square 5 remaining in Feature.



Figure 7. Completed Excavation Unit.

the entire unit after the excavation of the feature had been completed.

There were four moderate sized rocks on the floor of the feature after excavation was completed. These were all in the deeper center part of the feature, and one is visible in Figure 6. It seems likely that they

were placed there by the Indians. If the assumption that the hole was originally created to make mud or daub for the house that must be located nearby, then perhaps the rocks were for standing in the midst of the wet daub as it was being processed.



## Artifacts

Given that the amount of excavation undertaken at King Bee was limited and that the feature Elliott had located was already 80 plus percent excavated by him, instead of the 30 percent he thought, the quantity of artifacts recovered from the new excavations reported here was quite small. Indeed, only 48 sherds were added to this data set from the fill of the feature below the plow zone.

The data from the site are presented in a series of tables that follow. Table 1 presents the catalog of proveniences and lots assigned for the site. All the surface collected material was assigned to Provenience 1, and all the material from the excavation was assigned to Provenience 2. As can be seen from the table, only Lots 8, 9, and 10 in Provenience 2 were from the remaining feature fill, with the others being from the plow zone material from Excavation Unit 1, or from Elliott's old back fill.

Provenience	Lot	Description	Date
1	1	General Surface Collection	6-24-2002
1	2	Surface Collection Near Feature	6-24-2002
1	3	Surface Collection Near Feature	6-25-2002
1	4	Quartz Rock Sample from Outcrop	6-25-2002
2	1	Excavation Unit 1, Opening Old 3 by 1 Meter Trench	6-24-2002
2	2	Excavation Unit 1, Square 4, 0-12 Centimeters	6-25-2002
2	3	Excavation Unit 1, Square 5, 0-12 Centimeters	6-25-2002
2	4	Excavation Unit 1, Square 6, 0-12 Centimeters	6-25-2002
2	5	Excavation Unit 1, Square 7, 0-12 Centimeters	6-25-2002
2	6	Excavation Unit 1, Square 8, 0-12 Centimeters	6-25-2002
2	7	Excavation Unit 1, Square 9, 0-12 Centimeters	6-25-2002
2	8	Excavation Unit 1, Square 4, Feature Fill	6-25-2002
2	9	Excavation Unit 1, Square 6, Feature Fill	6-25-2002
2	10	Excavation Unit 1, Square 5, Feature Fill	6-26-2002

Table 1. Artifact Catalog

Table 2 presents the weights of all the ceramics from the site, broken down by sherds greater than and less than ½ inch. Although all the sherds were recovered using 1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth, only those sherds greater than ½ inch were analyzed as to type in the following tables. Interestingly, The percentage of sherds from the six plow zone units (Lots 2-7) that were under ½ inch in size was 17.0 percent, while the percent from the feature itself (Lots 8-10) were only 4.0 percent. Plowing does break sherds into smaller pieces! The total weight of sherds recovered from the site in this brief project was 2695 grams, or just under 6 pounds.

Provenience	Lot	Sherds <1/2 Inch	Sherds > 1/2 Inch	All Sherds
1	1	0.0	134.0	134.0
1	2	5.0	157.0	162.0
1	3	0.0	5.0	5.0
1	4	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	1	51.0	119.0	170.0
2	2	54.0	262.0	316.0
2	3	16.0	181.0	197.0
2	4	48.0	193.0	241.0
2	5	45.0	258.0	303.0
2	6	31.0	204.0	235.0
2	7	41.0	214.0	255.0
2	8	4.0	17.0	21.0
2	9	10.0	599.0	609.0
2	10	12.0	35.0	47.0
<b>Totals</b>		317.0	2378.0	2695.0

Table 2. Sherd Weights in Grams

Table 3 presents the sherds that were analyzed as to pottery type. Even though the total number of analyzed sherds was 389, only 48 were from the actual undisturbed fill of the remainder of the feature, as pointed out above. All the pottery recovered was, not surprisingly, from the Lamar period. The Lamar Plain type accounted for 72.5 percent of the pottery, while

Lamar Complicated Stamped amounted to 11.6 percent. The various widths of Lamar Incised pottery amounted to 16.3 percent total. The single fine incised sherd was a bit unexpected, since this site undoubtedly dates to the Dyar phase of the Lamar period in the overall Oconee Valley.

Provenience	Lot	Lamar Plain	Lamar Complicated Stamped	Lamar Bold Incised	Lamar Medium Incised	Lamar Fine Incised	Totals
1	1	8	9	0	0	0	17
1	2	14	6	2	2	0	24
1	3	1	0	0	0	0	1
1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	26	3	2	3	0	34
2	2	39	1	7	8	0	55
2	3	20	5	3	0	0	28
2	4	26	4	5	1	0	36
2	5	41	4	2	4	1	51
2	6	45	4	5	5	0	59
2	7	30	1	4	1	0	36
2	8	4	0	1	0	0	5
2	9	20	8	4	1	0	33
2	10	8	0	1	1	0	10
<b>Totals</b>		282	45	36	26	1	389
<b>Percent</b>		72.5	11.6	9.3	6.7	0.3	

Table 3. All Sherds by Type

Table 4 shows the 45 rim sherds recovered from the excavation at King Bee. They are about equally split between simple rims (plain and incised) associated with bowls, and the various folded rims associated with jar form vessels. They collectively form 11.5 percent of the sherds recovered from the site.

The flaked stone artifacts from the site are listed in Table 5. Fifteen pieces of Coastal Plain chert were included in this list. All the rest (768 pieces) were of local quartz. Of these 141 were of relatively high quality crystal quartz, and the rest were of normal white quartz. The presence of so much quartz debitage at King Bee is mildly confusing. It is clear from survey and excavation at sites throughout the Oconee Valley that lithics were not an important part of Lamar period occupations. Indeed, it is absent completely from many such sites (Williams and Jones

Provenience	Lot	Simple, Plain	Simple, Incised	Simple, Stamped	Folded Pinched, Stamped	Folded Pinched, Plain	Folded Pinched, Incised	Vason, Notched, Plain	Totals
1	1	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	6
1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
2	2	1	1	0	0	3	0	1	6
2	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
2	4	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	6
2	5	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	5
2	6	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	5
2	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
2	8	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
2	9	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	5
2	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>		12	10	1	5	15	1	1	45

Table 4. Rim Sherds

2001).

At King Bee, however, there is a clear explanation for the presence of so much quartz debitage. This is the presence of a large outcrop of high quality quartz boulders forming the entire eastern edge of the site. This is one of the finest outcrops of high-quality quartz exposed in the entire region. This is illustrated here in Figures 8 and 9. Although we did not find any projectile points in our brief work at King Bee, it is also possible that much of the quartz debitage there represents Archaic period occupation rather than Lamar occupation.

The final table, Table 6, presents the weight of the small amounts of additional material recovered from the site, including charcoal, animal bone, shell, and daub. The amounts here, particularly from the small portions of the intact feature (Lots 8-10 of Provenience 2), were very small and do not alter the perspectives of Lamar food ways presented by Elliott and Boyko at all (Elliott and Boyko 1988).



Provenience	Lot	CP S	CP S HT	CP T	CP T HT	CQ T	CQ Shatter	OQ T	OQ Shatter	OQ FT	OQ Core	Totals
1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	0	1	8
1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	0	0	0	1	12	1	104	18	0	1	137
2	2	0	0	2	1	13	4	48	22	1	2	93
2	3	0	0	1	0	8	3	31	17	1	0	61
2	4	0	1	0	0	9	0	49	26	0	2	87
2	5	0	0	2	0	12	6	52	38	0	1	111
2	6	0	0	2	0	16	7	29	20	0	2	76
2	7	0	0	1	1	19	5	45	12	0	3	86
2	8	0	0	0	0	5	0	7	4	0	0	16
2	9	1	0	1	0	6	0	24	9	0	0	41
2	10	0	0	0	1	14	0	45	0	0	0	60
<b>Totals</b>		1	1	9	4	115	26	446	167	2	12	783

Table 5. Lithics.

CP=Coastal Plain, CQ=Crystal Quartz, OQ=Other Quartz, S=Secondary, T=Tertiary, HT=Heat Treated, FT=Flake Tool



Figure 8. Quartz Boulders on Edge of Site.



Figure 9. Quartz Boulder.

Provenience	Lot	Charcoal	Bone	Shell	Daub
1	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1	2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1	3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1	4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	1	0.0	15.0	2.0	28.0
2	2	0.0	3.0	0.0	88.0
2	3	0.0	1.0	1.0	15.0
2	4	1.0	1.0	0.0	18.0
2	5	0.0	1.0	0.0	15.0
2	6	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
2	7	0.0	2.0	0.0	33.0
2	8	0.0	4.0	0.0	0.0
2	9	2.0	38.0	2.0	8.0
2	10	1.0	5.0	3.0	9.0
<b>Totals</b>		4.0	71.0	8.0	214.0

Table 6. Miscellaneous Weights

## Conclusion

We were successful in relocating the feature partially excavated by Elliott in 1988, and completing its excavation. Sadly, there had only been a tiny part of the feature that had not been excavated at the time of the original excavation. The amount of additional artifacts recovered was, therefore, only quite small. Rather than declare the project a successful failure, however, I would point out at least one or two bits of new information about Lamar period farmsteads that have derived from this new work. First, it is beginning to appear that daub processing pits at Dyar phase sites in the Little River valley (for that surely is what the origins of this feature was) are not always or even ever round, but oval shaped. We recently discovered that the daub processing feature at the Leah-Zack site (9PM1182) about 4 miles away to the northwest was also oval shaped. These shapes are different from most of the other known ones from the Oconee Valley proper to the northeast of the research area discussed here. Clearly more

examples must be found, but the oval feature pattern is one to look for in the future. What such a pattern might mean I have no idea.

It is also interesting that there were several large rocks in the floor of the feature. I believe these must have had something to do with daub processing—perhaps as digging tools, crushing tools, or as simple foot steps / footholds used when the mud was being prepared for the walls of the house that would have been located quite close to this pit.

In any event, the King Bee site will hold more of its secrets for future excavators. What we now know is that this simple site is but one of hundreds if not thousands of such site in the Little River Valley of the central Georgia Piedmont that date between about 1500 and 1550 AD.

All the artifacts and field notes are curated at the Laboratory of Archaeology of the University of Georgia in Athens, and we completely backfilled Excavation Unit 1 upon the completion of this brief project.

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