

THE ROCKS IN OUR HEADS

# Interlude X *Christmas Hams*

Williamsburg, Virginia (with Mary and Ed)  
December, 2011



## A Word on the Trip Diaries and Their Odd Titles

Loie has always taken notes on our trips; I used to struggle with a lot of gear and took pictures. At some point she got a small camera and took over the photography. Before digital photography and personal computers, Loie and I used to make picture albums for our trips. Now we've gone digital!

As you may have read in the Introduction document and the diary for *Driving Yo*, we've been taking trips we call Driving the Stone Age. That's a long story, but we've both been interested in old stuff for a long time, so we took one trip in 1999, to the Scottish Highlands and out islands, looking for what we thought would be a good introduction to the beginnings of Western Civilization in the Neolithic monuments so prevalent there. We decided we weren't seeing the *beginning*, but that it was fun nonetheless. (See *The Rocks in our Heads, Driving the Stone Age I: Highlands and Islands*.) And we got the Europe bug, so went to Italy and France, sometimes on trips that were mainly Driving the Stone Age, sometimes not.

So as the trip diaries and albums accumulated, and when we created a Life List of prehistoric sites, I started to name the trips. We had *DtSAs*, and *Interludes*: trips with few or no prehistoric sites.

Then, I started to write an essay based on our thoughts garnered driving the Stone Age, and a whole lot of reading. Loie didn't like the working title, so I changed it to *The Rocks in Our Heads*. When the Trip Diaries went digital, I decided to munge the two projects by including a serial version of the essay at the ends of the diaries.

So now we have *The Rocks in Our Heads: DtSAs* and *The Rocks in Our Heads: Interludes*, both of which may end with an essay installment.

## Documentation Notes

In the beginning, Loie wrote out her Trip Diaries in longhand in notebooks. For our trip "Driving the Stone Age X, *The Oldest Stones*" she bought a netbook computer and began to write her diaries with it. That made formatting the diaries a lot easier!

But there were a few trips since that one where lugging the netbook was less than congenial, and she went back to hand-written notes.

Her handwriting is beautiful, and I wanted to preserve some aspects of it. In the Trip Diaries it has a few short-hand style shortcuts. So, when you see  $\&$  meaning "and," or @ meaning "at," or "w/" meaning "with" you will know that I have transcribed a hand-written diary.

## Navigation Tips

These interactive PDFs include...

- a Bookmarks List for Days and their individual events, use the Bookmarks; we hope your device will make that easy;
- a clickable/tappable Table of Contents, and;
- various hyperlinks.

You may also just page through by...

- scrolling, clicking Page Down buttons, or;
- right side tapping/right left swiping;
- depending on your viewing device.

► Zoom the pictures to examine details.

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Cold

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## *Preparation*

I was realizing that after years of having my Christmas in thrall to wreath making this year would be different. So I said to Loie, “Let’s go to Colonial Williamsburg and see the decorations for Christmas.” (I could also take pictures for inspiration for Mark and his wreaths.) Loie thought Colonial Williamsburg sounded like a wonderful idea.

She called our friends Mary and Ed, and they agreed it would be fun to go to Colonial Williamsburg for Christmas cheer. I went online and found out everything that would be going on at Williamsburg the weekend for which we were planning. We were concerned that such a popular holiday destination would need reservations in advance. So after several conversations and emails and so forth with Mary and Ed about what we wanted to do, I called the visitor center and spoke with an incredibly pleasant, enthusiastic and helpful gentleman who made about six reservations for events and restaurants for us. I received emails for all of them.

Mary had suggested we might be able to rent one of the restored little houses in the historic district. Investigation proved them to be both way too expensive and mostly booked. So we opted for staying at the Governor’s Inn, a motel-y hotel just outside the District, and still within what we hoped would be reasonable walking distance of the sights.

We were off with for a long weekend of colonial exploration!

## The diary

*Bucky writes...*

We do not, for this trip, have the multitude of pictures normally taken every day while traveling.

And Loie's Diary for this Trip is a model of concision. So instead of presenting this trip as Diary pages for each day followed by the relevant pictures, I present the diary here, verbatim.

### Williamsburg VA

#### Trip of Death By Eating

- Supper King's Arms Tavern Fri night
- Breakfast ditto Sat
- Death by Chocolate + Pumpkin pie + cheese plate + hot buttered rum @ [Trellis](#) Sat 3 PM
- [Rocky Mt Barbecue](#) Sat night
- Sunday morning brunch, Williamsburg Inn—omelette/ dessert buffet + salad bar + seafood/cheese buffet + entree  
10:30 – 2ish
- [Chowning's Gambol Supper](#) Sun night
- Light breakfast Gov Inn\* Mon AM

In between eating:

Sat shopping after breakfast—farmer market, hat for B, cold wind

Peyton Randolph House

Hog to ham—butchering

Holiday dec. tour @ 11:30

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\* Governor's Inn: our hotel.

(Trellis)

[Newport News Celebration in Lights](#)

(NN Rocky Mt Barbecue)

(Sun brunch)

Museum—Quilts, + nap

(“Quilt” lights on floor.

David Haring woven bedspreads + Eliza H?)

Sun afternoon/night

Back to GI, dep 5:15 to park in tavern lot + walk to Capitol for illumination fife + drums + torches

5:30–6: Walked to W+M bookstore (25 min\*\*) then back to Capitol for 7 PM concert: harpsichord, medium stringed instrument (not type of violin, right hand holds bow from underneath, instrument held bet. legs), recorder/flute. (Also vocals) violinist (also vocalist) + vocalist one hour, lovely, esp 11th c Latin “O Come Emmanuel,” 2 vocalists, a capello.

Back up the street to Chownings @ 8:20 for supper + entertainment—2 violinists, Scottish music. One musician had a tiny violin! Jefferson carried one in his saddle.

Monday up @ 7:30

Breakfast GI 9; depart 9:35

On Jamestown–Scotland Ferry @ 10! Arr Scotland 10:15

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\*\* Where we were disappointed to see no Cadogan travel guides on the shelves.

The Holiday Decorations Tour...













Our guide.





RESIDENTS  
OPEN  
PUBLIC









COWNINGS



















PRENTIS STORE  
1799  
A. PRENTIS & SONS  
1799

PRENTIS STORE  
C. 1799 RESTORED















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NOT OPEN  
TO THE PUBLIC













**AUCTION**  
TODAY  
10:00 AM  
A PUBLIC AUCTION  
of  
Antiques & Collectibles  
at  
The Store  
10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

VISITORS WELCOME  
OPEN DAILY

10:00 to 5:00

LEY'S STORE

HISTORIC AREA UPDATE  
MEMBERSHIP, ANNUAL MEETING, AWARDS, AWARDS WINNERS  
ANNOUNCEMENT  
1. ...  
2. ...  
3. ...  
PROGRAMS  
1. ...  
2. ...



TARPLEY'S STORE

















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17 45  
Shields Tavern



Lunch 11:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.

Open 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

































## The Discovery

But wait...there's more!

There is, as always, a reason for the title of this Trip. And it was a marvelous discovery, one that has subsequently served us well.

I freely admit that my memories of this Trip are fogged by a protein/fat/carbohydrate/candle- and fire light/woodsmoke haze that swathes it like a baby blanket. (Those of you who know me will understand that's a lifestyle to which I aspire.) But I do remember several things.

Both Ed and I picked up town maps that had advertisements on the reverse. And we both noticed advertisements for the [Smithfield, Virginia Ham Museum](#). Some of you may remember that for decades, I have been obsessed by the idea of having original Smithfield "peanut-fed" hog ham. Where this hobby-horse originated I never will remember, but there it is. And all of you know that ham, and pork products in general, are a staple of our entertaining.

While we eating ourselves into a lovely stupor in Williamsburg, we saw Surry sausages on the menus, and sampled them several times. They were excellent. I asked one of our servers what these sausages were, and whence they came. "From Surry, I guess. It's near here." A bit of map research showed that indeed there was a Surry, Virginia not too far from Williamsburg.

Attending a demonstration of "Hog to Ham" butchering and quizzing the docents there about peanut-fed hogs—they knew nothing about it—just whetted what should have been my sated appetite.

So between Surry sausages and Smithfield Ham, I persuaded Loie—which was easy—that we should have a side-trip going home. The fact that to do it, we would have to take a ferry across the Jamestown River to Scotland (!) was probably the clincher. How much more serendipity could we handle?

Mary and Ed needed to get back home. They said they'd rely on us for thorough research into sausages and hams.

The drive to the ferry turned out to be beautiful. From Williamsburg we drove south on the Colonial National Historic Parkway, a landscaped road through fields and over watercourses. There was a bit of confusion at the [Jamestown Settlement](#) finding the ferry landing, but we did it and were on the Jamestown River. Then we were in Scotland. Then we were headed to Surry.

Once in Surry, we of course had no real idea what to do. We stopped at a store and asked about Surry sausage. "Yeah, sure, just go down the road and you'll see the Edward's store." We did, and did. There was a huge ham-shaped sign announcing the [tiny roadside store](#). We pulled into the gravel parking lot and walked up onto the store's porch. Loie went in; I was having a cigarette and looking at the window displays when I saw a cloth-covered "Wigwam Brand" county ham on display. Wham was right.

Ages ago—ten, fifteen years?—Loie had given me *The Artful Eater* by Edward Behr. "A Gourmet Investigates the Ingredients of Great Food" was the subtitle of the book. Chapter Eight of it was "An Aged Country Ham." In the procurement notes of the book, Mr. Behr listed Wigwam Brand hams as one of America's best country hams. I had looked online, and found that it was prohibitively expensive to buy and have one shipped to us. Now, Holy Moses! By a complete coincidence—although, is there ever such a thing?—I was face to face with a Wigwam ham.

I ran into the store and grabbed Loie's arm and babbled about all this. She accepted it all as only what she would expect: that our marvelous lives together lead to these coincidences.

While we were wandering around the store, two things happened. First, I tried to tell the ladies behind the counter about my

having read about Wigwam hams a long time ago. “Oh yes, we’ve had a lot of publicity. There’s a story about us on [NPR, the Food Channel?] right now.” The lady got out her phone and showed us a video that was either being broadcast as we watched, or had been broadcast within the last few hours. So OK, we were *not* off the beaten track.

Then we saw a little sign for Surry-ano Ham. (This was a pun. [Serrano ham](#) is famous, and the Wallace Edwards ham under discussion is of course from Surry.) We read the sign and asked about it. The Surry-ano ham was made from pasture-raised heritage breed hogs that were allowed to roam a small woods of beech and oak trees, so they could eat the nuts, raised just down the road, and the hams were aged for at least a year. Oh lordy, the Surry-ano hams were too expensive for us.

“But you could go see the hogs. Tom’s farm is just down the road. If he’s out, you could talk to him about how he finishes them.” We got directions; the farm was less than a mile away, and after some map research, it turned out the farm was on the way of a reasonably efficient route home. So we bought sausage, Surry-ano ham bits and bacon. After a lot of discussion, we decided to forego a Wigwam ham. They were not nearly as expensive as the Surry-ano, but still a bit much. We had a good-sized basket of other great stuff..

Then we went off to look for the hogs.

Somewhere along the way, we had decided Smithfield would be too long a drive. We needed to get home: the trip was over. But we were slightly incorrect. A last surprise was in store.

Now please look at a few pictures, then read the final text page for *another amazing coincidence!*



















## *An Amazing Coincidence*

On the way home, we saw a sign for [Bacon's Castle](#). Really. That was too good to be true, so we stopped off.

The house was not open for visitors, it was undergoing restoration. We got views from the pull-off on the road. It was a beautiful old brick thing, and we wished we could have gone in to see it.



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## BACON'S CASTLE

THIS HOUSE, JUST TO THE NORTH, WAS BUILT BY ARTHUR ALLEN IN 1655. IN BACON'S REBELLION, 1676, THE HOUSE WAS SEIZED BY A PARTY OF REBELS AND FORTIFIED. ON DECEMBER 29, 1676, IT WAS CAPTURED BY SAILORS FROM A SHIP IN JAMES RIVER WHO WERE ENGAGED IN PUTTING DOWN THE REBELLION.

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# BACON'S CASTLE

—| BUILT 1665 |—

# ENTRANCE

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THE PRESERVATION OF VIRGINIA ANTIQUITIES

BUSES  
USE NEXT  
ENTRANCE

# *Bacon's Castle*

**TEMPORARILY CLOSED  
FOR RESEARCH AND  
PRESERVATION**

Please visit these nearby Preservation Virginia sites:

- Smith's Fort Plantation, Rte. 31, near Jamestown Ferry, 757.294.3872
- Isle of Wight Court House, downtown Smithfield, 757.357.5182



OFFICIAL PRESERVATION VIRGINIA HISTORIC SITE  
Connecting people and resources to ensure the continued vitality of Virginia's historic places  
[www.preservationvirginia.org](http://www.preservationvirginia.org)





















## Another Story

So that's the story of the Christmas Hams. We did, eventually, get to Smithfield. But that's another story.