This summer I interned for Domain Archaeology with the Environmental Studies Internship Fund. My internship advisor was the University Archaeologist, Dr. Sarah Sherwood. I also worked closely with Dr. Gerald Smith, Professor of Religion and an authority on local history and architecture. The main focus of my internship was the documentation of Fulford Cottage, a historic home site on campus, before its demolition. I also assisted Dr. Sherwood with excavations and lab work, gaining familiarity with a variety of skills and tasks important to a career in archaeology.

Dr. Sherwood and I structured the internship with two goals in mind: not only for me to gain experience in the field of archaeology, but also to take on a project that would fulfill the methods requirement of the Anthropology major. The methods requirement is intended to give Anthropology majors first-hand experience in their chosen field, ultimately producing a research paper. While my project was originally centered on conducting archaeological lab work, such as cataloguing and analyzing artifacts, my methods project took a different direction this summer as a unique opportunity presented itself. With the planned renovation of Canon Hall and the construction of a new dormitory adjacent to it, Fulford Cottage was slated for demolition. This historic home site was Fulford Hall’s only remaining outbuilding. This building was originally constructed to be a servant’s quarters but also saw a variety of other uses over the years. While all of the grand old Sewanee homes, like Fulford Hall and Rebel’s Rest, once possessed their own outbuildings, Fulford Cottage was one of the very few still standing relatively intact. Little information existed in the historical record; for example, its date of construction was listed as “c. 1938.” Working with Dr. Smith, my responsibility was to establish as close as possible the house’s actual date of construction and original purpose, taking extensive measurements, photographs, and samples along the way, and ensure thereby that an accurate record of Fulford Cottage remained in the records after its demolition.
Our work on Fulford Cottage began with detailed photographs and measurements of the exterior. For the horizontal and vertical measurements I used Dr. Smith’s method of measuring between structural intervals on each wall, or elevation. For example, I began by establishing a vertical baseline at the edge of the house from which all horizontal measurements would be taken. From there, I measured to the next structural interval, the edge of the window frame, then from the edge of the window frame to the edge of the window, and so on all around the house. From these measurements I was able to reproduce accurate drawings of all sides of the house, and later on, I did the same for every wall of the interior of the building. The result of all this measuring is a field notebook full of drawings and measurements not just of every wall, but also the doors, windows, and other pertinent details. As part of my methods project, I will use these measurements to produce accurate images using Adobe, ensuring a digital copy exists along with my hand drawn diagrams.

Everything I measured I also photographed, along with any other details of the house that might give Dr. Smith and me clues as to how it may have been constructed. He taught me the type of details to look for—spacing of the floor and ceiling joists, the width of beams, the type of plaster used, and the kinds of nails, to name a few. In all historic sites nails can be especially diagnostic, since around 1890 machine-cut nails (rectangular in cross-section) were phased out in favor of wire nails (round in cross-section). Nowhere in the structure of the house did we find cut nails, so we could be reasonably confident the house was built post-1890.

As the date of demolition drew closer, Physical Plant Services (PPS) helped us by opening holes in the walls, ceilings, and floors so we could examine and photograph the inner structure of the house. While they were removing a window from the building, I spotted a builder’s signature and date in pencil on one of the diagonal wall boards. The date, however, had already been cut in half, obscuring it. Despite this, we were able to make out “L.T. Long, July 1911.” As the dismantling of the house progressed I learned that Fulford Cottage, like many historic homes, was incredibly well-built, and even after a century much of the structure was still
locked tightly together. As Dr. Smith said, documenting homes like this before their destruction
is bittersweet, since in taking them apart we get to appreciate the excellent workmanship that
went into them only before they have to come down.

In addition to work on the house itself, the Fulford Cottage project included extensive
background research at Special Collections and interviews with community members. At
Special Collections, I searched through old editions of the Sewanee Purple along with files of
correspondence, articles, and personal writings from the people who had lived in or worked on
Fulford, mostly the Fairbanks and Benedict Files, since they are associated with the original
construction of Fulford Hall and the probable date of construction of the servants’ quarters,
respectively. Though few specific dates could be gleaned from the files, they did provide a
wealth of detail on day-to-day life in the house. For example, Sam Benedict recounted the family
burning thirty-six buckets of coal one winter day in an attempt “to take the chill off that high-
ceilinged barn.” When PPS scraped four long trenches around the cottage so we could examine
the subsurface and look for artifacts, the most notable feature were widespread thick layers of
coal and slag, which indicated just the kind of intense coal-burning that Sam Benedict
described.

The interviews with Marshall Hawkins, Boo Cravens, and Dr. Waring McCrady, along
with less formal chats with community members who dropped by the cottage, were immensely
helpful in rounding out our knowledge of Fulford Cottage, especially the community in which it
was situated in the early 20th century. It was through these interviews that the cottage was
reasonably confirmed to be a domestic cottage and not a carriage house or kitchen, and a
rough timeline of people who occupied the house over the decades, along with the various uses
it served, could be pieced together. From the interviews I got a glimpse of the amazing amount
of knowledge about Sewanee that exists in the community outside the University. This
information is not formally written up or researched, but exists in the stories and memories of
people who live there, and whose families have lived there, sometimes almost as long as the
University has been around. I believe this experience with interviews, albeit limited, will be helpful in my pursuit of an Anthropology major, since interviews are an essential component of ethnography, or anthropological field work.

In addition to the Fulford Cottage methods project, at least one-third of my internship was spent assisting Dr. Sherwood and Domain Archaeology more generally. In the lab, I re-organized and re-cataloged artifacts from the Michaels Shelter, gaining familiarity with the archaeological cataloging system along with the wide array of artifacts found in prehistoric sites on the Domain. There was also a certain amount of office work, such as making copies of field notebooks and catalog forms. This work may not have been as exciting, but it contributed to organizing the lab and creating a better workspace. Along with Nate Wilson’s Domain Management interns, I assisted Dr. Sherwood and my fellow archaeology intern Mason Niquette with his excavation. Here I gained experience surveying with the Total Station, which we later used to create a topographical map and accurate footprint on the Fulford Cottage property, along with the process of an archaeological dig: laying out 1-meter by 1-meter units, digging carefully in 10-centimeter levels, screening for artifacts, recording soil profiles, and taking thorough notes and photographs along the way, to name a few steps. I know the experience I gained working on these sites will help me with any future excavations I work on, be they at a field school or another job.

A high point of the internship was the time I spent helping Dr. Smith and Dr. Sherwood teaching the high school students at the Sewanee Environmental Institute’s Pre-College Field Studies Experience about archaeology. I attended the same program in its first year, and those two weeks on the Domain were a major factor in my decision to come to Sewanee. I remember being especially excited by the archaeology portion of the program, so being on the other side of things and teaching the kids about all the archaeological opportunities on campus and how it’s done was rewarding, not to mention a lot of fun. Overall I would rate my summer internship as a very positive experience. There were plenty of hard and long—not to mention hot—days,
but the work we did at Fulford, out on the Domain, and even in the lab was genuinely interesting and exciting to the point that it often didn’t feel like work at all. This internship only confirmed my interest in archaeology, and in helping me build the skills I will need, technical and personal, has given me more confidence in pursuing it.