

## ARCHAEOLOGISTS DOCUMENT RUINS AND PEOPLE AT UMM AL-JIMĀL IN JANUARY 2010

*Bert de Vries*

During January 2010 twenty four archaeologists held a multifaceted field season at Umm al-Jimāl. The goal was to complete a site presentation begun in January 2009 - to make the site accessible and inviting to the people of Umm al-Jimāl, the people of Jordan and the people of the world, with or without actual travel to the site (De Vries *et al.* 2009).

As diverse as the potential audience, the team members came from Calvin College (Grand Rapids Michigan), Open Hand Studios (Chicago Illinois), the Department of Antiquities (Jordan) and the village of Umm al-Jimāl itself.

The central goals of this multifaceted approach are summed up as follows:

1. Umm al-Jimāl Virtual Museum and Umm al-Jimāl in Reality (Museum-on-the-ground). The Virtual Museum, located on the Internet, includes a virtual walking tour which matches an actual walking tour at the site itself. A museum installation design was prepared for the Museum Visitor Center, which is about to be completed by the Department of Antiquities. This Museum-on-the-ground is being matched by the Virtual Museum on the Internet. To see the initial stages of this virtual installation please visit the project web site [www.ummeljimal.org](http://www.ummeljimal.org).
2. The Cultural Heritage of Umm al-Jimāl village and the Hauran: Documentation included study of the relationship between the ancient site and the modern community. This included recording of remains of twentieth century inhabitation of Byzantine Umm al-Jimāl – Druze remodeling of ancient buildings and Mesa'eid remainders of tent sites among the ruins. In addition the traditional culture of Umm al-Jimāl village and the Southern Hauran was documented through interviews and

the filming of traditional preparations and arts, like bread making and Rababeh playing. This cultural heritage is to be preserved in two ways: First, plans were developed for the creation of a cultural heritage center to be operated by the community and the municipality of Umm al-Jimāl. Second, a reference manual for teachers was written for the Ministry of Education to enable teachers in Jordan's school to use Umm al-Jimāl as a case for teaching Jordanian pupils both their archaeological and their traditional heritage.

3. Visual documentation: The team used an array of cameras to take high definition still photographs and videos documenting both the archaeological site and the heritage of the modern residents.

To achieve these goals the project staff was divided into six teams, each with their own areas of specialized expertise:

**The Video Production** team, led by Jeff DeKock and Kori Francis, documented the entire site in film and still photography and filmed numerous interviews with experts and local heritage interviewees (**Fig. 1**). It is producing five short films to be used in a projection room in the new site museum as well as on the Umm al-Jimāl website. For viewing these films go to [www.ummeljimal.org/media.html](http://www.ummeljimal.org/media.html).

**The Virtual Museum and Site Development** team, led by Paul Christians, created a visual tour of the site using elaborate photography techniques, developed the script and signage for such a tour, and has developed the plans for the installation of the site museum and walking tour on the ground with staff from the Department of Antiquities. Visit the Virtual Museum at [www.ummeljimal.org/museum.html](http://www.ummeljimal.org/museum.html).

**The Virtual Reconstruction** team led by



1. Kori Francis filming interview (6 January 2010. Photo by Bert de Vries).

Jacob Speelman continued photogrammetric field documentation for the three dimensional portrayal of two buildings, the Umayyad House, which is to serve as the new Museum Visitor Center (**Fig. 2**), and House XVIII, famous for its double windows. This work is the initial step in the virtual reconstruction of the Byzantine town in a digital three dimensional image.

**The Modern Cultural Heritage** team led by Sally de Vries and Muaffaq Hazza documented the tent and house occupation of the ancient site during the past century. To study the linkage between ancient and modern Umm al-Jimāl nu-

merous members of the community were interviewed to document their remembered heritage. Agreement was reached with local community leaders and the mayor of the Municipality, Saleh Fallah, for the creation and installation of a Cultural Heritage Center to serve the local community, students from area schools and tourists, both Jordanian and international (**Fig. 3**).

**The Educational Curriculum** team led by Bert de Vries developed a multi-disciplined strategy for the teaching of archaeology to Jordanian students (**Fig. 4**) in the primary and secondary schools in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Under advice of ministry's curricular specialists the team is writing a teachers' reference manual with lesson plans in the subjects of civics, history, art and archaeology, and geology. An Arabic translation of this text will be published as a Ministry of Education teacher's manual. A similar manual suitable for American and European students is also in preparation.

As a component of the site presentation program the OHS team and municipality conducted a feasibility study for the restoration of the ancient water system and its adaptation for use to satisfy irrigation and animal watering needs of the modern community (**Fig. 5**).

The overriding emphasis of this documentation season was the strengthening of the relationship between the Umm al-Jimāl community, its historical and archaeological heritage and the Umm al-Jimāl Project (**Fig. 6**). This is the culmi-



2. Site Museum: Department of Antiquities of Jordan crew reconstructing Umayyad House 119 as Museum – Visitor Center (11 October 2008. Photo by Bert de Vries).



3. Large three-room Bedouin tent site between Houses 42 and 46, west of the Barracks; looking south (9 January 2009. Photo by Sally de Vries).

nation of a process begun during the excavation phase of the Umm al-Jimāl Project (Cheyney 2009) and became a major emphasis of the field-



5. Beginning of ancient Umm al-Jimāl water supply channel at its diversion point on the Wādī az-Za'atari approximately 5km NE of Umm al-Jimāl. The channel, still functional, is in foreground, the wadi in the background. (15 January 2010. Photo by Bert de Vries).



4. The future of Umm al-Jimāl: School children in al-Hirri neighborhood (7 January 2010. Photo by Bert de Vries).

work strategy in 2009 (De Vries *et al.* 2009). An analysis of this relationship, “Presenting Umm al-Jimal as a Heritage Site: Interconnecting Ancient and Modern Communities,” was presented at the Eleventh International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan (Paris, June 8 2010), to be published in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan XI*.

#### Credits

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6. *Archaeology and community: Team members and local residents working to protect a domestic crushed-olive fuel supply from impending rainstorm (13 January 2010. Photo by Bert de Vries).*

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