

Dig this!



Glen resident recounts archaeological dig in Turkey

Battling temperatures of more than 35C Don Ablett, of Glen Williams, works his square at the dig site in Zincirli, Turkey. (Below) A stele at Zincirli.

Photo by Eudora Stuble/courtesy of the Neubauer Expedition to Zincirli

Story by Don Ablett
Photos courtesy Don Ablett

Don Ablett, a high school principal and a long-time resident of Glen Williams, has long been interested in archaeology. A member of the Ontario Archaeological Society, he has participated in a dig on a pre-historic (before 1650) Iroquois village in Vaughn.

Setting his sights on a larger project, he connected with Karen Parker, a well-known artist at the Williams Mill in Glen Williams. She is also the primary illustrator for the largest dig in the Middle East, at ancient Sam'al, capital of an Iron Age kingdom in southeastern Turkey. Located in the town of Zincirli, just north of the Syrian border, this project is led by Dr. David Schloen of the University of Chicago.

Below is Ablett's first-person account of the dig in Turkey.

Part 1: Who Killed Bill?

It was hot. Real hot— 50C hot with a furnace

breeze that would melt the face on a statue. As I examined the sword, I felt that foul play had claimed the victim. Picking up the blade, I knew my life would never be the same. Just how had I gotten myself into this situation?

It was over a year ago that I was speaking with my friend, Karen Parker, who is a well-known artist at the Williams Mill in Glen Williams. She also happened to be the primary illustrator for a large archaeological dig in Turkey which was just past its fourth year of a 10-year project. I had asked if they took volunteers, so she put me in contact with the director of the dig, Dr. David Schloen, from the University of Chicago.

With Karen's recommendation, and my promise to play guitar around the campfire (if they had campfires), I was

invited to participate. So, after being poked and prodded and receiving warnings about the various tropical diseases that could ruin a promising adventure, I was ready. The excitement began three days before my departure, when my passport went missing in late June 2010 in Washington, D.C. It didn't stop until I landed at Toronto's Pearson airport in late August.

Part 2: Zincirli

Since 2006, Schloen has been the director of the Neubauer expedition to Zincirli, a large-scale excavation of the important walled city of Sam'al, in what is today southeastern Turkey, 100 km north of Antakya (Antioch). From 1888 to 1902, a team of archaeologists, led by Felix von Luschan, conducted five seasons of excavation at Zincirli on behalf of



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