

2009 - 10 Academic Year

Sept - Oct '09

# Archaeotext



Wetmore Collection, Norwalk Coast

*The Newsletter of the Norwalk Community College  
Archaeology Club and  
The Archaeology As An Avocation Program*



## Club Meetings – Fall Academic Semester

### **Save These Dates! -**

**Sept 10** - Thurs 8:00 pm -

**Summer Excavations –  
From Fairfield to Peru**

**Oct 8** - Thurs 8:00 pm -

**A New Date for the Earliest  
Blade Technology**

**Nov 12** - Thurs 8:00 pm -

**Native Peoples and Plants  
At the Mashantucket Pequot  
Reservation**



**September 10 - Thursday 8:00 pm  
Culinary Arts Dining Room – West Campus  
Summer Excavations  
From Fairfield to Peru  
Diana Lynn Messer, Rob Wallace**

**October 8 - Thursday - 8:00 pm  
Culinary Arts Dining Room – West Campus  
Cutting Edge: A New Date for  
the Earliest Blade Technology  
Cara Roure Johnson  
University of Connecticut**

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Our September meeting will feature club members Diana Lynn Messer and Rob Wallace talking about their summer excavation activities. Diana will provide an update on her excavations at Putnam Park in Redding and also in Peru. Diana Lynn Messer is a senior at Southern Connecticut State University and majors in anthropology with a concentration in physical anthropology and archaeology. She is also a Director at Large for the Archaeological Society of Connecticut.

In the fall of 2008, after a hiatus of four years, Daniel Cruson and Diana Messer returned to Putnam Memorial State Park with a crew of students from Western Connecticut State University to investigate the site of an enlisted men's hut in order to reexamine two features left from the previous excavation. Several new and distinctive features of life in the

*(Continued on page 4)*

While working in Africa Cara Roure Johnson discovered stone blades more than a half-million years old. That pushes the date of the earliest known blades back a remarkable 150,000 years and raises a question: What human ancestor made them?

The technological merits and behavioral implications of blade technology have been debated for the last fifty years. The organized production of blades, flakes with nearly parallel sides and a length to breadth ratio that exceeds 2:1, becomes widespread in the Upper Paleolithic of Eurasia and the Later Stone Age of Africa (40-50,000 years ago). However, blade technology occurs sporadically much earlier. Blades dating to ~250,000 years ago have been reported from the Middle Paleolithic of northwestern Europe, where they were presumably made by Neanderthals. They

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## In Memoriam – Pearson “Pete” Tuthill Menoher



It is with great sadness that I inform our club members of the passing of Pearson T. Menoher on May 15, 2009. The son of General Pearson Menoher and the grandson of General Charles T. Menoher, Pete was born in Arizona and spent many years in California, where he studied mechanical and metallurgical engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. Shortly after his graduation in 1942, he joined the Navy Submarine Service and served aboard the submarine Kingfish, patrolling the North Pacific for the duration of World War II.

I first met Pete, as he was known to his many friends in the club, when he began to pursue his interest in archaeology and Native Americans after retiring from his long career at Owens-Illinois, where his expertise in glass engineering and technology resulted in his many inventions and patents in the industry.

Pete graduated the Archaeology as an Avocation Program in 1983. A top student in the program, his original research projects in both the Advanced Techniques in Archaeology and Historical Archaeology courses were among the best in the history of the program.

After graduating the program, Pete remained active in all aspects of the Archaeology Club. He served two terms as a board member and for several years chaired the Nominating Committee. Pete was a major contributor to our research projects both in the field and in the lab. Indeed, the list of “digs” in which Pete participated is exhaustive, spanning over twenty years – Taylor, Watts, Merit, Allen’s Meadows, Gallows Hill, Chicken’s Rock, Treetops, to name a few – and he was a key figure in the success of each. Pete also began a career in Cultural Resource Management archaeology working on many prehistoric and historic sites in southwestern Connecticut and Westchester County, N.Y. In the lab, Pete specialized in ceramic studies and artifact analysis – his drawings and descriptions of artifacts reflected not only his engineering and science background but an artistic talent that was unparalleled (his illustration of a projectile point from one site became the cover illustration for the Archaeology program’s brochure). An experienced hand in field archaeology, Pete always lent his expertise to new students working in his square. Whether demonstrating with surgical precision the use of a trowel or the recording of data, Pete was a gentle and patient mentor to his new crew-mates.

More importantly, over the last three decades, Pete became a treasured friend to all who knew him in the Archaeology Club. Pete’s wide range of interests and experiences were revealed in the many conversations we had over the years – whether it was about his days working on a farm to the effects of the earth’s atmosphere affecting optical perception beyond the horizon while at sea (I hope I got that right!), to geometric formulas for the calculation of prehistoric vessel size and shape to hunting in the mountains of the West – Pete never failed to educate and entertain.



Pete was not only a mentor to many young archaeology students in the field, but a mentor in life. His casual confidence and steadiness born of a rich life, combined with his generosity of spirit, made him a close friend to several young students who sought his guidance on important personal matters.

Pete was pure fun to be with. He had a razor-sharp wit that would leave you in stitches. I well remember the time a young man in his early twenties was regaling all who would listen about his vast life experiences, to which Pete casually commented “I have shoes older than you”! Club members will remember

his prowess at the club’s “Primitive Games” – whether propelling a dart with the atlatl, hitting the mark with a blowgun from the Amazon rainforest or employing his patented shoeless technique in “foot-tossed rock” – it was fun to watch him letting loose.

Pete will be greatly missed – he was truly one of a kind. Our deepest condolences to his wife Janet and his family.

*“His drawings and descriptions reflected his engineering and science background, and as an artist talent that was unparalleled.”*



Pete at the Manakaway site on Greenwich Point in 1994



Pete executing his own unique style in the “foot-tossed rock” competition.  
Photo by Ernie Wiegand

*(Continued from page 1)* **Earliest Blade Technology**

are also known from the Middle Paleolithic in the Near East, where they date to ~380,000 yrs ago.

In Africa, blades become common in the Later Stone Age after 50,000 yrs ago, and form the basis for much Middle Stone Age technology in southern Africa. Cara discovered blades from the lower portion of the Kapthurin Formation, Kenya, dating to



545-509,000 yrs ago. They add more than 150,000 years to the known lifespan of blade technology. This implies it has an African origins and suggests that the common ancestor of Homo neanderthalensis and Homo sapiens possessed the knowledge and skill to produce blades. Furthermore, the persistence of blades in the time interval 509-285,000 yrs ago in the Kapthurin Formation shows that, in Africa, a blade-making tradition was not only established early but was also

a persistent feature of African Middle Pleistocene technology.

Cara Roure Johnson is a Paleoanthropologist and a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at UCONN Storrs, where she also received her B.A. and M.A. in Anthropology. In 2007, Cara received her Ph.D from UCONN and is presently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Anthropology there. Cara's major research interests include: African archaeology, human evolution, geoarchaeology, human osteology, lithic technology and site formation processes and has taught classes in both anthropology and archaeology. Dr. Johnson's interests regarding the origins of modern Homo sapiens have resulted in extensive excavations in the Kapthurin Formation in Kenya, East Africa.

Please join us for a fascinating lecture, Thursday, October 8th, in Culinary Arts Dining Room, West Campus; refreshments at 7:30 PM; lecture at 8:00 PM.



## REPORT FROM THE FIELD - GALLOWES HILL

At the Gallows Hill site work has been completed at "the Great Depression". After several seasons of work in this area, it is clear that a building once stood in this spot. This was determined several years ago when a number of large (and small!) redware sherds from a milk pan were discovered on a nearly level surface below the depression, which measured about 8 meters in diameter and about 1.5-2 meters below the natural grade of the surrounding land surface. The large size of some of the sherds indicated that they had been buried for some time, as the fragile structure of redware does not respond well to the freeze-thaw cycles of the Northeast's temperate climate. Typically, pieces near the surface readily absorb moisture and then weather into smaller pieces when the water in the sherds expands when frozen. Several of the pieces could be fitted together; indicating that the vessel had probably broken in place; their position close to one another and within a few centimeters vertically of each other gave support to the idea that they lay on the dirt floor of the building. Subsequent field seasons replicated these results. A large number of historic artifacts, chiefly redware but also including English white saltglaze stoneware and a few sherds of Delft, were also found at the same level in adjacent excavation units. Other artifacts included hand wrought nails, occasional fragments of window glass and a few pieces of window caulking.

While trenches excavated outward from the center of the depression towards the west and, more recently, the south, have failed to find evidence of a stone foundation, their absence does not alter the interpretation of the depression as the site of a structure. It is possible that the structure did not have a stone foundation, or that if it did, the stones were removed for use elsewhere. No evidence of a chimney has been found.

The ceramic evidence points to the building as having been on the site in the third and perhaps the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century, the time when English white saltglaze

stoneware was most common. Although the redware and Delft could have been made both before and after the second half of the eighteenth century, the lack of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century wares such as pearlware and whiteware would indicate that the building was no longer standing or in use past the later eighteenth century.

The fact that the recovered nails are all hand wrought also supports this timeline, as cut nails, which were developed at the very end of the eighteenth century and were in common use by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, are totally absent. Had the building been in use during the early nineteenth century, cut nails would have probably been used in making repairs or alterations.



Magdalena Kulczynska with a Wading River point found in new area. Photo by Anna May Jerusavage

The ceramic artifacts, which number in the hundreds, probably represent a limited number of actual vessels. Redware, the most common by far, is limited to two or three large milkpans, a single large plate with slip decoration and a few hollow ware pieces such as cups, bowls, crocks and perhaps a jug. The English white saltglaze stoneware is from a small number of dishes or saucers and two or three teacups or small bowls.

Very few personal items have been recovered. These include several pieces of kaolin clay tobacco pipes and a fragment of a brass shoe buckle. Food remains are also very limited. A few fragments of marine shell fish have been recovered as well as two molars, one of a pig and the other a cow. A careful inspection of the area around the structure has failed to find evidence of an historic dump or such structures as a well or privy.

Given these results, it does not appear that the structure was a house. The small amount of ceramics and extremely limited number of food remains indicates that while meals may have been consumed at the building, they were not prepared there. With about 25-30% of the structure excavated, it is doubtful that further work within the depression would add to our knowledge of its function. It is currently thought to have been a small farm outbuilding located far away from the dwelling of its owner. Previous research by Dr. Stuart Reeve into the history of Redding indicates that the property was at the edge of the vast holdings of the descendants of John Read, the founder of Redding and for whom the town is named, during much of the eighteenth century. Further documentary work will be conducted to establish a chain of ownership, land description and its use over time.

The prehistoric occupation of the site also continued to be excavated during the spring and summer field sessions. With the completion of the work in the depression area, the focus of the fall field season will be on an area that produced a large quartzite cobble hammer-anvil stone several years ago. The size of this tool indicated that it was used in the early stages of tool production, when large quarry blocks and/or

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**September 10 - Summer Excavations  
 From Fairfield to Peru**

**Diana Lynn Messer, Rob Wallace**

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huts were discovered and presented in "Back to the Park: Another Look at an Enlisted Men's Hut at the Putnam Winter Encampment" at the ASC meeting in April. Diana continues to work with Professor Valerie Andrushko from Southern Connecticut State University and worked on the osteological analysis of the Sturges Park human remains. Diane continues her work with Dr. Andrushko in her Peruvian expeditions.



**ALES WELL THAT ENDS WELL  
 - FINAL THOUGHTS ON  
 THE SUN TAVERN, FAIRFIELD**

Rob Wallace is a 1998 graduate of the Norwalk Community College's Archaeology as an Avocation program. He has worked on several sites located in Fairfield and participated in numerous club digs. He is currently continuing his Bachelor's degree studies at Charter Oak State College and is also a Director at Large for the Archaeological Society of Connecticut. The subject of Rob's lecture will be the Sun Tavern located in Fairfield.

The Sun Tavern was constructed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was burned by British and Loyalist forces during their invasion of Fairfield in July of 1779. Rebuilt the following year, it served as a local tavern operated by Samuel Penfield. During his Presidential tour of the New England states, George Washington is traditionally said to have stay here during his



Rob Wallace and Adrienne Saint-Pierre, curator of the Fairfield Museum

visit to Fairfield in 1789. After Samuel's death, the building stopped being used as a tavern and became a private residence during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Acquired by the Town of Fairfield in 1978, the structure has undergone several restoration projects and is now managed by the Fairfield Museum and History Center.

In 2001 there was an archaeological excavation started at the rear of the building by local archaeologist Shirley Paustian and completed by Rob in 2006. The excavation resulted in hundreds of artifacts being recovered as well as a stone foundation to a small out-building.

Rob will review the past excavation and some of the artifacts recovered. He will also talk about the last restoration project and the future plans that the Fairfield Museum has for the building.



The Sun Tavern in Fairfield

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cobbles were broken into smaller fragments that could be then shaped into tools. Three excavation units opened this summer have been productive. In addition to the ubiquitous quartz lithic debitage, two projectile points and a cobble hammerstone have been found. The projectile points are of the Wading River type of the Late Archaic period (c. 2500-1700 BC), many of which have been recovered from other portions of the site.

This fall members of the Archaeology Club are invited to participate in the further exploration of this area which will begin in late September and continue through mid-November. If you are interested, please contact Ernie Wiegand at the Archaeology office (857-7377) for details.

The cleaning, cataloging and study of the Gallows Hill artifacts will continue during the Archaeology Club's fall lab sessions which will be held on Thursdays (except for club meeting nights) from 5-9 p.m. The room has not been established at press time; an announcement will be made at our September club meeting regarding the room assignment.

Upcoming Meetings at **The Archaeological Associates of Greenwich (AAG)**  
 Bantle Lecture Hall at the Bruce Museum, 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, Connecticut.  
 Free to AAG and Bruce Museum members and \$10 to the public at the door.

**Thursday, September 17 – 8 p.m. Topic: "The Little Foot of Flores: "Hobbit or Human?"** **Speaker:** NYU Anthropology Professor Shara E. Bailey Professor Bailey will discuss the controversy over the three-foot-tall fossil hominin skeleton found in 2003 on the Indonesian island of Flores. Despite recent findings, experts continue to argue heatedly whether this is a small human or a survivor descended from the dispersal of Homo Erectus out of Africa.

**Thursday, October 15 – 8 p.m. Topic: "The Mystery of the Unknown Man E: A Murdering Mummy?"** **Speaker:** Professor Bob Brier. Popular Egyptologist, Bob Brier will discuss his recent examination of a mysterious mummy that was discovered and examined more than a century ago by Gaston Maspero. He will explore whether this could be the son of Rameses III who was involved in a conspiracy to kill his father.

**Thursday, November 19 – 8 p.m. Topic: "Recent Travels in Iraq: An Archaeologist's Commentary."** **Speaker:** Professor C. Brian Rose. The U.S. State Department invited Professor Rose to Iraq this Spring not only because he is a distinguished Professor of Mediterranean Archaeology and Curator in Charge of the Mediterranean Section of the University Pennsylvania Archaeology and Anthropology Museum, but he is also the President of the Archaeological Institute of America. His BLOG from Iraq, where he visited "many of the sites I never thought I would see," was so compelling that he has agreed to talk about his experiences to the AAG audience.