

# CT archaeologists continue to make new discoveries

- Maina Durafour @TheBristolPress



Dr. Sarah Sportman, an archaeologist from the OSA, speaks during a presentation on historical finds in the area.

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Although the United States is a fairly new country in comparison to others, it doesn't mean its history is any less rich. The University of Connecticut Office of State Archeology demonstrated that during a talk and presented their current projects and new objectives for 2025.

The event's purpose was to present a summary of the OSA 2024 discoveries, as well as the future projects they will be working on.

“I think people underestimate the deep history here in New England. We have over 12,000 years of history of people in the landscape, and we find traces of that all the time,” said Dr. Sarah Sportman, an archaeologist from the OSA. “When you think about it, everywhere you go, there's history here underneath our feet.”

The first project is the discovery of a burial of four individuals, found in a 17th century colonial farm in Ridgefield back in 2019. Sportman said this site was intriguing because it is unclear what the burial represents, but they believe the burials are related to the Revolutionary War Battle of Ridgefield.

As of now, they have not discovered clear evidence of a battle, such as ammunition, tools or impact on the bones. However, they are currently waiting for the results of a CT scan from Yale to see if the bones have been damaged by war weapons.

This site was discovered by the family who owns the house, after they had started renovating their basement to transform the space into a children's playroom. Sportman said the family was very intrigued by their work and the children often spent time asking them questions.

She then mentioned a Native American site they have been working on in Avon on the banks of the Farmington River. What they unveiled there was 10,000 years of history starting back at the Paleo-Indians time. This discovery was first made by a curious somebody who was detecting metal and started digging for artifacts. He then called the OSA, and they took over.

This is the first time they are being called after someone's curiosity found something and contacted them. However, this is not always a good thing, as they can destroy evidence.

“We can at least get something good out of it by going back and getting controlled excavations and getting a good idea of how it all fits together,” she said.

Sportman said when they went on site, they were surprised of how well preserved most of the things were. She and her coworkers have been able to identify very clear different layers where they have found slowly, but surely, artifacts such as pottery, hammer stones and the remains of a fire pit.

“It takes time and effort to mitigate the damages to a site like this,” she said.

To limit the damage, she said it is really important as they dig the soil to keep a good record of everything they do because once they touch it, they can never get it back to what it was before.

“If you’re in an archaeological site, you’re basically destroying it as you excavate. So that’s why it was good that he brought it to our attention so we could go out there and do that,” Sportman said.

The last site they worked on was in South Glastonbury and has been searched since 2013. They suspect this site, a 17th century English farm belonging to the Hollister family, has been the witness of events related to King Philip’s War against indigenous people. This war was the last push for Native Americans to kick the English out of the US.

It is believed the Hollisters had a close relationship with the Wangunk, a group of indigenous with whom they interacted and exchanged goods with. The excavation of the site was easier because nothing had been built on top of it. When they started digging, they found ceramic, clay pipe, glass and shell beads, all very well preserved.

On this site, they were able to pinpoint different cellars buried in the ground as well as evidence of a palisade to protect the farm from King Philip's army, all of that cooperating with the Wangunk. One of the reasons they believe that is because they have found balls and gunflints made from both English and Native American techniques.