



AACAI NSW & ACT Wine, Cheese & Chat

Friday 27 March 2015

The topic is: Mechanical Vs Test Pit Excavation

AACAI NSW are pleased to present two guest speakers, Rebecca Parkes and Dave Collard, who will present the case for archaeological test excavation by hand versus testing with machines. After the presentation a discussion of current practice and preferences will be held and guests are encouraged to discuss the issue over a glass of wine and some cheese.

Mechanically Digging by Hand vs Bespoke Mechanical Pits – Rebecca Parkes

Over the last few years the *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal objects in NSW* has offered a welcome option for testing sites and PADs without having to apply for an AHIP. The question is, should we automatically apply the Code, or should we consider the alternatives available through mechanical testing? There are a number of situations in which hand excavation of 50 x 50 cm test units will not provide the most efficient means of investigating subsurface deposits. Particularly when testing deposits at depth or when excavating more compact and clayey or rocky deposits that significantly slow down hand digging. However, there appears to still be opposition to mechanical excavation techniques, opposition that often comes from common misconceptions regarding artefact damage, stratigraphic control and overall site disturbance.

Rebecca's talk will use examples from projects undertaken during the past five years across NSW and the ACT to explore the options that are out there, the merits they present, as well as the pitfalls.

Rage against the machine: The pros and cons of mechanical test excavation – David Collard

David will critique of the use of mechanical test excavation for Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment, in comparison to more traditional forms of test excavation, particularly shovel test probing. This comparison is based upon data obtained through test excavations for the Warrell Creek to Urunga Pacific Highway Upgrade project, undertaken by Jacobs on behalf of Roads and Maritime Services, New South Wales. Factors considered in this comparison include: time, cost, logistics, stakeholder concerns, stratigraphic resolution and excavation coverage. This later theme will be considered in detail in relation to the identification of low density artefact scatters.

Based on the results of the comparison, David considers the circumstances (if any) under which mechanical test excavation may provide better outcomes for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Location: The Big Dig Centre
110 Cumberland Street, The Rocks,
Sydney NSW 2000

Time: 6 – 8pm.

Cost: Members & Students FREE, Non-members \$10.
Students should provide appropriate proof of
enrolment/ student status.

RSVP: 24 March 2015 to dianac@gml.com.au

