

## **Chapter 5: The Results of Archaeological Investigations: Analysis, Interpretation and Public Education**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Archaeological investigations often result in the complete removal of physical archaeological remains from the site in question. The record made by the archaeologist before, during and after archaeological investigations is therefore an important outcome of the investigation process, for both understanding what the archaeological site means and in communicating that meaning to the public.

Concerns about the expense of the archaeological process in relation to the current outcomes and public benefits have been discussed in Section 4.8. One of the proposals to address these concerns is to improve the output of the archaeological process and to facilitate public access to the information.

It is recognised here that archaeological investigation is meaningless if adequate analysis of the archaeological data is not undertaken and made accessible to the community. Many archaeological projects undertaken in the last twenty years have produced large collections of artefacts that have been catalogued but remain unanalysed. Archaeological sites are being excavated at an increasing rate, rapidly adding to this body of data. In some cases this is resulting in the loss of the scientific significance of the collections and therefore the sites from which they came. Other sites such as Cumberland Street at the Rocks have been analysed and interpreted in detail and have been used to reconsider public histories of the area and provide on site interpretation facilities for visitors to the area. While analysis on this scale is not always a desired outcome, it is important for sites of high significance.

Archaeological heritage presents the difficulty of not being “self evident” in terms of it being understood outside the archaeological profession. Archaeological sites may be likened to jigsaw puzzles with documentary evidence, structural remains, artefacts and documentary evidence having to come together to complete the jigsaw in a meaningful way.

If the pieces of the puzzle are not brought together in a meaningful way you are left with little more than a bag of broken pottery and sketch plans of the remains of a building. The question here is twofold: why isn't the puzzle being assembled and what will the benefit of the finished product be?

This chapter focuses on the product of archaeological investigations from final reports prepared for site specific excavations to interpretation strategies, publication and public education programs.

### **5.2 Development and archaeology**

The NSW Heritage Council places conditions on Excavation Permits issued under the *NSW Heritage Act* to ensure that recording and analysis of

archaeological investigations is undertaken and that where the site is particularly significant that information is made available to the public both during and after the work has been undertaken. These conditions were discussed in Chapter 4 and are attached in Appendix F.

On some occasions permit applicants focus resources on the on-site recording works leaving fewer resources for post-excavation analysis and interpretation of the findings. The post-excavation phase is however as important as the excavation of the site itself. Once archaeological relics are cleaned, examined, catalogued and analysed the data needs to be synthesised with the historic research into a form that conveys meaning about the site. This synthesis would then be used to answer the research questions posed in the permit application and to produce a final report. In many cases it would also be appropriate to communicate this research to the public.

This process is often not of interest to the developer who wishes to complete their project in the shortest amount of time and for the least amount of money, with archaeology perceived as a delay and an expense with very little return. There is also a larger question of whether the development industry should be subsidising what is essentially a research-based discipline. On occasion, developers have refused to pay for the analysis of the archaeological material or for the final report. The artefact then sit unanalysed or are discarded and a final report is never undertaken for the site.

It is important to ensure this post-excavation phase is completed to justify the money and time spent excavating the site in the first place. One possible solution to this is to require the lodgement of a bond to cover expenses associated with artefact analysis and completion of final reports, however this is probably only necessary for particularly significant sites or where the applicant has a poor track record. The legal implications of this would obviously need to be more fully explored before attempting such an action.

The precedent does exist, however, for business-funded research into historic sites and items, through the Conservation Management Plan process. It is recognised that sound research is necessary in a CMP in order to understand the way a site or building developed, the nature and choice of fabric, the use through its life, etc. in order to determine fully its significance and the best course of action for it in terms of its conservation.

The requirement to analyse archaeological data and to communicate the results to the public should be clearly communicated to permit applicants and the Heritage Office should explore resourcing options to allow assessment of all final reports submitted to the Office. The Archaeology Advisory Panel has previously suggested peer review of reports. This option should be considered further.

It would also be of assistance to have a yearly forum for heritage professionals (archaeologists, historians etc.) so that research can be exchanged and histories developed across all disciplines.

This paper is not the forum to elaborate upon the potential for archaeology to contribute to the understanding of the human experience. Certainly these things do arise from archaeology as much as they do from history or other academic disciplines. But in a practical resource management perspective what are the benefits of undertaking archaeology? Some of these are discussed below.

### **5.3 Informing the public**

Archaeology is still an academic discipline by its nature and should seek to inform others of its findings. This can range from the general public to school students to tertiary institutions.

Archaeology can educate the public in a number of ways, depending on the nature of the site and its location. These include:

- media coverage;
- brochures and public reports;
- organised tours and events;
- ;interpretive works
- links to education programs at all levels;

#### **5.3.1 Media Coverage**

Archaeological projects often receive attention in the media. While this attention is sometimes focussed on problems with archaeological site investigation in the context of development it is more often has a positive focus. Such attention has a number of benefits both to the heritage industry and to the community. It raises awareness of archaeological issues and helps ensure that they are addressed in future projects and also serves as an outlet for information back to the community about significant sites.

It also provides the developer or public authority an opportunity to promote their project and look positive for doing something about heritage (e.g. Cadia Mine). Press coverage becomes problematic for government, project proponents and archaeologists, however when, the archaeology becomes an emotive issue for the public (as at the Conservatorium) or when it is perceived to be delaying an important public project (as at Orange Court House).

Nevertheless, in general the positives of press coverage far outweigh the negatives. This could be capitalised upon through press releases prepared by the Heritage Office on upcoming archaeological projects or encouraging applicants to undertake to contact the press themselves. A possible flow-on benefit may be that good media coverage would encourage the preparation of final reports.

### **Suggested Actions:**

- **the AAP continue to discuss options for peer review of archaeological reports;**
- **the HC put out a press release about major upcoming archaeological projects;**
- **applicants are encouraged to promote major archaeological projects through the press through HC consent conditions.**

### **5.3.2 Brochures & ‘Public’ Reports**

Some sites will warrant additional interaction with the public because they are particularly unusual, well preserved or are in public ownership. The preparation of brochures during a project will help the public understand a more about the site, the archaeology and the process, which is being undertaken on that site. This is especially important for projects, which may be controversial or are taking place on publicly owned land.

A brochure of 2-4 pages can summarise most of the information about the site in a way appropriate for the layperson, with small illustrations to give a general picture of the site and its significance. These are generally well received by the public and require little effort or expense on the part of the applicant or the archaeologist.<sup>1</sup>

Brochures also lead nicely into ‘public’ reports. ‘Public’ reports are a phenomenon more commonly seen in the United States or England. A public report is a brief (15-20 page) plain English report designed to provide the layperson with a greater understanding of the site based on the outcomes of the archaeological work. These public reports are usually produced at the end of a project as a part of the final report production phase of a project. They can then be distributed through appropriate cultural outlets, on site, or through the Internet, if appropriate. They are also useful documents to provide to libraries, schools and local councils as they promote the heritage of the area, provide a direct public benefit and provide the applicant with a forum to promote their heritage credentials.

‘Public’ reports are uncommon in historical archaeology in Australia, but are used extensively in Aboriginal archaeology. Such reports should be encouraged to a greater extent, especially on major historical projects. Their cost is once again quite negligible and has the potential to provide more direct public benefit than a small display of artefacts or tokenistic in situ conservation effort. Most recently, a production of a ‘public’ report was made a condition of consent for archaeological works at Walsh Bay. Depending on the nature of the site, the project or the location, the audience for the report may require further consideration and in some instances multiple versions of a report may be desirable for different audiences (e.g. primary students vs. the general public).

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<sup>1</sup> Brochures have been prepared for sites such as Dawes Point Battery and the Conservatorium of Music, both public sites. Their production is much less common for private sites.

**Suggested Actions:**

- that the HC require through permit conditions that brochures and/or public reports are prepared for major archaeological projects
- copies of public reports should be lodged with local libraries, the State Library and DUAP/HO;
- consideration should be given to placing such reports on the HO website.

**5.3.3 Organised tours**

Archaeological sites are popular places for the public to visit, when the sites are in accessible locations and there is something of interest to the public. Some large archaeological projects have been open to the public with great success, either through organised tour or through public participation in the excavation works.

On sites which are in publicly accessible locations, are on public land or where there are substantial archaeological remains and artefact then there is a direct benefit to the public from visiting such sites. Members of the public feel included in a piece of 'hidden heritage' and are in general grateful for the opportunity to see a site before it is destroyed. Tours can be extremely useful in the raising of awareness of archaeological heritage (and heritage generally) with the wider community.

The detriments of public tours are quite minimal. There is a potential liability issue, but if access is handled sensibly this is not a major concern. Delay is another possibility, but if planned for in advance this can be built into the works program and can be scheduled in such a way as to avoid timing conflicts. Further consideration of OH&S issues, possibly in consultation with WorkCover, would be of benefit, as this could lead to site access guidelines which could be provided to project managers at no cost.

**Suggested Actions:**

- that provision for public tours be encouraged on major archaeological sites
- investigate OH&S issues.

**5.3.4 Interpretation works**

The main way that the archaeological significance of a site is realised for the public at present is through interpretive works. There are two main types of interpretive works used in NSW with respect to archaeology (aside from tours): artefact displays and incorporation of archaeological fabric into new structures. This leaves aside sites which are specifically earmarked for public space and therefore can receive fuller interpretive treatments (e.g. First Government House

or Foundation Park).<sup>2</sup> Interpretation works can also serve as a drawcard for commercial development, and should be promoted in that manner to project proponents when the HC requires such works.

Both artefact display and fabric incorporation have been used in various new developments around NSW. Often however they do not explain the meaning of the artefacts they display and their location often precludes easy public access. The benefit of these interpretive devices is questionable as most archaeological items do not “speak for themselves” and a display requires careful consideration of text and illustration and well as a commitment to keep the display updated. Fabric incorporation is often even more low-key but can create a host of expensive conservation problems as well as decontextualising certain elements of a site and overemphasising their importance.

While some interpretation is better than none, it is more likely that a public report or other brief publication would be more beneficial than a small piece of a site displayed under glass. Additionally, the public is expecting more sophisticated treatment of interpretation (e.g. multimedia kiosk, used at Orange Court House, etc.) rather than a static display. This will not always be desirable or appropriate for a given site. As the Heritage Council is encouraging interpretation more often, it is essential that guidance be given as to how sites should be interpreted.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- **that onsite interpretation be encouraged for sites of high significance and/or where archaeological remains can easily be incorporated into public space;**
- **that the HC prepare or commission guidelines on interpretation and conduct an education program for the heritage profession.**

#### **5.3.5 School education**

The Heritage Council has been undertaking work to integrate heritage into the primary and secondary syllabus. This will both increase the depth of understanding of Australia’s history and raise awareness of heritage conservation issues. Archaeology should be a part of this, as archaeology as presently taught at school level has primarily an ancient history focus. In the interests of making education more relevant to the part of the world students live in, links need to be forged with educators to present the archaeological heritage of Australia (both historical and Aboriginal) as well as the Asia-Pacific region (e.g. Maori archaeology, NZ historical archaeology, Asian archaeology).

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<sup>2</sup> A new means of looking at archaeological interpretation on a broader landscape scale has been developed for Port Macquarie by Hastings Council and the Heritage Group at the Department of Public Works and Services. This Plan seeks to integrate archaeological interpretation into the improvement of urban design in central Port Macquarie and emphasises the importance of the archaeological resource of the Shire to cultural tourism. Using State themes the plan identifies precincts of sites that represent these themes and develops both site based and city-wide proposals for interpretation works.

This will require further educational initiatives between the Heritage Council and educational authorities, in conjunction with the archaeological profession, cultural institutions and public authorities with archaeological assets or collections (e.g. SHFA, HHT, NPWS, etc.). Public tours, school 'digs' and greater interaction with school students are all desirable outcomes of such initiatives.

**Suggested Actions:**

- **that the HC seek further opportunities and funding to integrate archaeological heritage into the school curriculum in NSW;**
- **that additional projects such as the education kit for the Cumberland St Archaeological Site be targeted for HC funding;**
- **that HO staff and publications be targeted to liaise with schools to promote archaeology and heritage generally.**

**5.3.6 Tertiary Education and Research**

Tertiary institutions have two major roles to play with historical archaeology, firstly as educators of archaeologists and heritage professionals, and secondly as bases for research. Historical archaeology sits uneasily between its twin roles as a business undertaken by consultants and a research-focussed discipline. Commercial pressures can often mean that archaeologists working primarily as consultants will not have the time or funding, nor necessarily the desire, to undertake detailed research. The perception is, then, that research should be or will be undertaken by students and academics based at tertiary institutions.

The present situation does not achieve this, however. Historical archaeology is taught only to a limited extent in NSW, at the University of Sydney and at the University New England. Neither institution maintains full time teaching positions in historical archaeology, due to a variety of factors. Research work in historical archaeology is being undertaken at each institution, but by a minimal number of individuals. The danger with this situation is that with limited support for academic work, and a lessened focus on research by those working as consultants, the production of new knowledge in this field is being eroded.

This is detrimental to not only the discipline itself, but also to the public and the State's heritage. Without tertiary-trained individuals to undertake work and a sound basis for conducting future research, it is likely historical archaeology will find it difficult to make a robust contribution to heritage conservation. Mechanisms should be explored by the Heritage Council for supporting this aspect of historical archaeology, although clearly this is not, and should not be, the primarily responsibility of the Heritage Council.

The Heritage Council can be involved in tertiary education through the sponsoring of conferences, workshops or projects. In the past, the Heritage Council has funded projects, but these have not tended to be field projects. To encourage research into historical archaeology, the Heritage Council could consider funding Honours student or postgraduate scholarships at a modest level

for specific, directed research projects which will benefit heritage conservation in NSW. These could include projects directed towards specific sites, collections or issues.<sup>3</sup> Where appropriate, the Heritage Council may be in a position to lobby the universities or government, to emphasise the importance of continuing to have a strong program in historical archaeology.

Suggested Actions:

- **that the HC lobby tertiary institutions and/or government for additional support for historical archaeology;**
- **that ways be investigated to forge links between the HC/HO and tertiary institutions, through work placements, development of curriculum, etc.**
- **that the HC consider a program of modest scholarship funding for directed archaeological research projects, in consultation with the AAP.**

#### **5.4 Promotion**

A major focus of the work of the Heritage Office is on promotion of heritage items, heritage values and heritage conservation. Archaeology has figured into some of this promotion work including sponsorship of archaeology conferences and production of archaeological publications. Further work is needed however, to promote aspects of historical archaeology including:

- archaeology as an important contributor to the heritage of NSW;
- archaeology as a positive benefit to the community;
- archaeology as relevant to the contemporary community;
- archaeology as something that is present in Australia, not just exotic locations, e.g. Greece and Italy.

Media coverage of recent events at the Conservatorium of Music and Orange Court House have presented archaeology as a problem, appearing as either a delay to the project, something that would reduce or halt desired public facilities, an unnecessary expense or the preserve of heritage specialists rather than the public. This perception has created high barriers to achieving a good heritage outcome. For archaeology to have a public benefit, those perceptions need to be combated, although to an extent they will always exist among segments of the community and with some stakeholders on individual projects. Too much negative perception has a real world detriment to the practice of historical archaeology and can ultimately lead to it being seen as an irrelevance. This does not have to be the case, however, and will require the efforts of the archaeological profession and the goodwill of other stakeholders, including the Heritage Council, to promote archaeology as something positive.

This can be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- “good news” press releases;

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<sup>3</sup> The Heritage Office agreed to join with La Trobe University in funding a directed PhD scholarship at that institution, at a level of \$15,000 over 3 years, to work on a project specifically related to Archaeological Management Plans. At present, the scholarship is pending approval of Commonwealth matching funds. Should the project go ahead, it would span the period 2000-2002.

- press releases which refute negative stories;
- additional consultation with stakeholders;
- a higher profile for archaeology at HC events and in HC publications;
- embracing opportunities for public appearance for the Chair or minister at archaeological events;
- debriefing those with concerns over archaeological issues and attempting to address those concerns;
- learning from past mistakes.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- **that press releases be made to promote good archaeological outcomes;**
- **that opportunities be taken for consultation with other stakeholders to address wants, concerns or expectations with respect to archaeology.**

#### **5.5 Events**

Archaeology should be represented at all relevant Heritage Council events. This can be as simple as ensuring that archaeology publications are available at an event stall, to involving the archaeologists in the planning of events, to holding specific archaeological events. There should always be at least one archaeological event during Heritage Week. Opportunities should be taken to mention archaeology in the context of other heritage values in speeches and at launches and there should be active outreach to schools and other public organisations on archaeological matters.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- **that archaeology be represented at all relevant HO or HC events, through displays, the presence of staff or availability of publications;**
- **that opportunities be sought to promote archaeological heritage through public lectures, talks to interest groups, schools, tertiary institutions and colleagues.**

#### **5.6 Pamphlets**

The HC and HO produce a number of free pamphlets and publications throughout the year. There are two existing archaeological free pamphlets, on related to historical sites, one to maritime sites (Appendix J). Both are around 18 months old and will require updating shortly. Pamphlets are a primary conduit of information to the public and other stakeholders and should be used to the best possible advantage. Similarly, the three archaeological booklets, *Code of Practice*, *Historical Archaeological Sites* and *Archaeological Assessments* all require amendment due to changes in practice, policy and legislation.

Archaeological pamphlets should be:

- updated regularly;
- included on the Heritage Office Web Page;
- distributed to relevant outlets;
- sent as part of bulk mail outs.

New or directed archaeological pamphlets should be developed annually or biannually as needed.

General pamphlets should include mention of archaeology as:

- one of the responsibilities of the HC and HO;
- integrated into other aspects of the HC's heritage responsibilities;
- an important part of NSW's heritage;
- a contributor to the understanding of that heritage.

Possible areas for new archaeological pamphlets include:

- 'contact' or multiple values archaeological sites;
- industrial archaeology;
- archaeology and the development industry (targeted pamphlet);
- archaeology and local government (targeted pamphlet);
- archaeological heritage trails (in conjunction with local tourist authorities).

Considerations should also be given to having a specific section of the Heritage Office website devoted to archaeological projects that are in progress, HO-funded projects and policy and legislation related to archaeology.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- **that all existing HO publications related to archaeology be updated in the next 12 months;**
- **that priorities be established for additional archaeological publications;**
- **that an archaeology section of the HO website be developed.**

#### **5.7 Grant funding**

The Heritage Office grant programs, the Heritage Assistance Program and Heritage 2001, are the primary mechanisms for supporting external projects. Archaeological applications are accepted for both of these programs, but they tend to be few in number<sup>4</sup> and sometimes of questionable value to either the discipline of archaeology or heritage conservation generally.

The Heritage Office should develop priorities for archaeological projects, in conjunction with the AAP, which are sound from a heritage conservation perspective, useful to both the HO and external clients and which will have direct public benefit. Conversely, the HO should not fund projects which are poorly developed, or non-archaeological projects which will have negative archaeological impacts.

Possible priorities for future HO funded archaeological projects include:

- support to academic research projects;
- support for Council-based archaeological management plans;

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<sup>4</sup> In both 1998 and 1999 fewer than ten grant applications were received in each year for archaeological projects.

- support for high profile “good news” excavations not associated with development;
- support for projects which will improve archaeological practice or methodology.

### **5.8 Public benefit**

With all of that said, what does the public get out of archaeological heritage? Without allowing this to digress into a philosophical discussion of the value of heritage generally, evidence suggests that the public likes archaeology. This can be demonstrated through the public participation in archaeological projects, the high attendance of tours of archaeological sites and the preponderance of “good news” archaeological stories from Australia and overseas.<sup>5</sup>

Archaeology is still a discipline romanticised by the public. It has an air of mystery and buried treasure that appeals to the spirit of adventure in people. Conversely, it is this unknown factor which causes archaeology to be viewed as a problem in the context of construction or urban development. Up-front planning for archaeology, however, will allow archaeology to both present its mysteries to the public and achieve goals with respect to development on archaeological sites.

The issue with archaeology in NSW is not doing less archaeology, but doing better archaeology. Better archaeology may ultimately mean less archaeology, but not necessarily. It means planning in advance, liaising with stakeholders, promoting it as a positive and ensuring that there is a quality end product.

This will require the implementing of the reforms set out in this Review, as well as developing new ideas as they come to light. Certainly not all ideas will work, and no doubt resistance may be encountered from archaeologists, the development industry, local government and the wider community. Nevertheless, if archaeology is to remain an important and vital part of the heritage system, it must change. Similarly, other aspects of the system must change to accommodate it.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- that the HC structure conditions of consent, target appropriate funding and resources and undertake stakeholder consultation to best maximise the public benefits of archaeology through strategies outlined in this Review.

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<sup>5</sup> Major newspapers such as the Sydney Morning Herald have between 1 and 2 archaeological stories per month. These range from reports of work on central Sydney sites, to sites elsewhere in Australia, shipwrecks, and overseas sites (cf recent stories on Roman bananas and Bronze Age toast).