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3D photogrammetry plan of excavations (M. Negus Cleary with 3D photogrammetry background by P. Kucera)

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Beyond the grey and into the blue: Growing scope and ambition of our Colloquium and its proceedings

Ilya Berelov and Shaun Canning

The 7th volume of the proceedings of the annual Colloquium marks yet another step in the maturation and continual advancement of this event and its participants. As an industry, we have witnessed the growing primacy of Aboriginal Victorians in the cultural heritage assessment process, the growth and development of individual practitioners, the widening of the scope of our endeavours, and a growing awareness of our various related disciplines in the wider community.

Our motivations when initially developing the Colloquium and subsequent publication of the proceedings lay in recognition of a need to bring together the different interest groups within the heritage community to improve interaction and co-operation. We feel that this has been well and truly accomplished, and that there is now a greater cross-pollination of ideas between heritage practitioners and stakeholders on all sides of the equation. Our audience now includes Traditional Owner groups, government regulators, consultants, academics and students.

The first steps to this lay in the annual presentation of data from excavations, surveys and various projects undertaken across Victoria. There was recognition that vast amounts of 'grey literature' were being generated by consultants, and that these data could form the basis of future studies to further assist our understanding of Victoria's past. This literature largely lay dormant in archives, as consultants' reports are seldom revisited.

The first colloquia and their proceedings presented much of these data to practitioners for the first time, as this information was generally not available to the public. Various co-operative projects have sprung up as a result, and important relationships have formed. These broader, collective endeavours continue to this day in the form of important contributions of a variety of new data including a new Aboriginal rock art sequence from Gariwerd (Gunn and Goodes); faunal remains from an early historical site in the Melbourne CBD (Biagi); a newly identified shipwreck in Port Phillip (Taylor); Chinese tablewares from a gold rush site in regional Victoria (Macgregor)—and information generated during Victoria's first heritage offset project (Cleary et al.).

And whilst this volume of *Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria* presents yet another collection of works that are testimony to the continued commitment to share new information, we feel that something deeper and more profound has also occurred. Whether one focuses on the exposition by Thomas and his colleagues of radiocarbon dates collected across the state to date, or considers the strictly geoarchaeological perspectives of Czakka's reconstructions of archaeological landscapes. Whether one ponders syntheses of environmental factors contributing to the condition of archaeological sites (Lawrence et al.); the need for more community archaeology (Dunk and Macgregor); unique perspectives on the archaeology of community-making (Morrison); or the rise of cultural mapping (McConachie and McAlister). What is certain is the deepening scope of these endeavours, and the collective strive for interpretation, synthesis, innovation and greater understanding—away from mere reporting of data.

We feel that this volume represents a tangible expression of our profession's desire to showcase the best of our work, moving away from basic compliance reporting, while striving towards shared meaning among and across our community of practitioners. This is a significant milestone for our discipline, leading to broader understandings of our past and a deeper appreciation for those who created it. We commend these papers to you, and look forward to what is shaping up to be an important period of growth for our field.

Once again thanks are due to all those involved in organising and in participating in the Colloquium and in the editorial and publication process, as well as to the Major Sponsors Ochre Imprints and ACHM; Sponsors Biosis, VicRoads and Heritage Insight and Supporters Extent, Ecology & Heritage Partners, and La Trobe University.

Finally the editors and authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land and heritage discussed at the Colloquium and in this volume and pay their respects to their Elders, past and present.

‘Dig with us’: A public participation model for the Harrietville Chinese Mining Village Project in northeastern Victoria

Melissa Dunk and Paul Macgregor

Abstract

In October 2017, The Uncovered Past Institute conducted archaeological investigations at the Harrietville Chinese Mining Village in Victoria. The fieldwork was based on a public participation funding model, whereby members of the public paid to assist with the investigations as an experience. This model requires a balance between meeting the operational requirements of an archaeological dig and providing a one-of-a-kind experience for participants. Participants ranged from people fulfilling a lifelong dream, with a general interest in archaeology or of Chinese-Australian ancestry to students looking for field experience. Overall, the investigations were a success in facilitating meaningful and substantial participation in archaeological practice. This paper presents an overview of the project, the first field season and the funding model, and highlights the project's success in generating useful information about the site while providing members of the public an opportunity to engage with archaeology.

Introduction

The Uncovered Past Institute was established in 2016 to increase public interest in Australia's rich and diverse past through research-driven archaeological investigations of historic sites, funded by public participation, and to support and work with local community groups and researchers.

The Institute's first archaeological investigations were undertaken over three weeks in October 2017 in the Harrietville Chinese Mining Village, near the township of Harrietville in Victoria, Australia (**Figure 1**). This paper presents an overview of the Harrietville Chinese Mining Village project, and reflections on the public participation model that it employed.

Study area

Chinese gold miners established the Harrietville Chinese Mining Village as a settlement in the early 1860s (*Ovens and Murray Advertiser* 26 Jan. 1861:3). The site includes a number of benched levels on sloping ground, which is 100 m wide at the widest point, and which follow the south bank of the East Branch of the Ovens River for approximately 700 m. Two modern gravel vehicle

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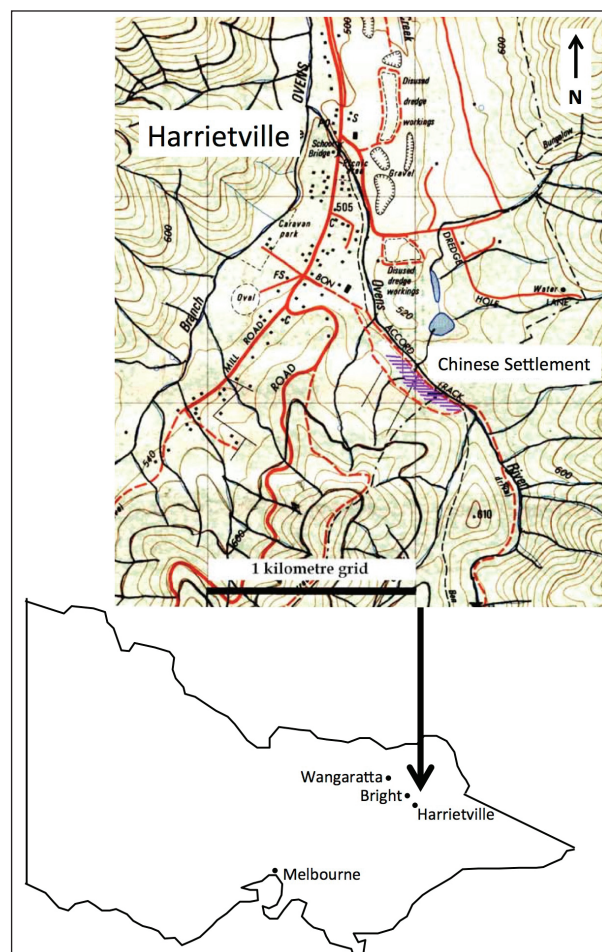


Figure 1: Location of Harrietville and the Chinese Settlement

tracks follow the length of the village and frame its location: the first is situated close to the Ovens River, the second is located further upslope. The village site has become heavily overgrown with vegetation since it was abandoned, possibly during the early twentieth century.

Historical evidence indicates that a substantial number of Chinese people were undertaking alluvial gold-mining activities in the Harrietville area from ca 1860 to 1900. This occupation was centred on a 'Chinese camp ... at the back of Harrietville' (*The Argus* 23 Aug. 1884:4) on what is colloquially termed the 'Left' or 'East' branch of the Ovens River, approximately 1 km upstream from Harrietville (**Figure 1**).

In 1884, a journalist with the pen name ‘The Vagabond’ visited the district and described a communal kitchen with five fireplaces ‘at which all the cooking of the camp is done’ (*The Argus* 23 Aug. 1884:4). The same journalist also described a water race supplying domestic water to this kitchen and to vegetable beds. Other than this account, no further geographical, physical or community information about the village has been identified. Archaeological evidence is therefore crucial for determining the scale, duration and structural composition of this habitation/economic complex.

A severe wildfire in 2000 affected over half the village area and destroyed virtually all of the undergrowth, but also revealed extant features of the Chinese village for the first time in 15 years. After the fire, local mining historian Andrew Swift conducted a survey of the site in October 2000. Swift (2001) identified bench levels, the location of the water race, and a variety of stone features. At this time, he also nominated the site for listing in the Victorian Heritage Inventory, and attempted to raise support for an archaeological excavation. However, like many sites of high archaeological significance in Victoria that are located on Crown land, it is not likely to be impacted by development, which drives the majority of archaeological work in Victoria. Attempts by Swift to obtain grants for an excavation were unsuccessful.

Developing the project

In 2015, a new approach to funding an excavation was instigated. Swift teamed up with another local historian, Diann Talbot, along with historian Paul Macgregor and archaeologists Gordon Grimwade and Melissa Dunk, to form The Uncovered Past Institute. The purpose of this initiative was to trial a public participation funding model of archaeological investigations, with participants paying to participate in the investigations and thereby funding them.

As the site is large and complex, archaeological investigations have the potential to run for many seasons. Swift’s (2001) survey provided a clear outline of several important features that could be explored across the village, and demonstrated that a wide range of settlement and economic activities were undertaken at this location from which a coherent context could be built.

The site also appears to be the first Chinese mining village in Victoria to be subject to an archaeological excavation program. Previous excavations of Chinese sites in rural locations in Victoria include an isolated miner’s hut at Butcher’s Gully (Stanin 2004), a fish-curing establishment at Chinaman’s Point (Bowen 2012), and a brick kiln in Bendigo (Bannear 2007; Hein 2005; Seawright 2016).

Local community support for the archaeological investigations was high. The Harrietville Historical Society and the Harrietville Community Forum were very interested in what the site could offer for future heritage tourism for Harrietville. Importantly, the site is located on publicly accessible Crown land—at the start of the Bon Accord Track, a popular walking trail affording access to the Alpine hiking region—and so providing the

potential for future site interpretation work.

The Uncovered Past Institute has invested considerable time and effort over the past two years in establishing the institute and the Harrietville dig as a pilot project to trial the public participation funding model for archaeological investigations. These efforts have included creating a research design, obtaining permits, undertaking a voluntary Cultural Heritage Management Plan (Dunk 2017a), developing deep relationships with local stakeholders and community groups, and conducting a widespread marketing campaign to attract participants.

Season One archaeological investigations

The first season of archaeological investigations was designed to mesh topics that were both educational and interesting for the participants, and to align with the ratio of one supervising archaeologist to no more than four participants, as per the conditions of the permit issued by Heritage Victoria (HV Consent No. C1086).

A staff team of ten specialists was recruited to manage the project, and to provide their expertise. This team included four archaeologists (Gordon Grimwade, Melissa Dunk, Jennifer Chandler, Allison Clark), three historians (Andrew Swift, Diann Talbot, Paul Macgregor), a curator (Paul Macgregor), a conservator (Michelle Berry), a site manager (Andrew Swift) and a dig administrator (Christine Grimwade). The team also included experts in geology (Rob Duncan), nursing (Christine Grimwade), surveying (Andrew Swift) and technical illustration (Jennifer Chandler).

After surveying the village, four excavation sites were selected for their archaeological potential and the likelihood that they could generate insights into the village’s social and economic dynamics—while keeping in mind the size of the team, and the available working space. These sites comprised two sections of the water race (**Figure 2b**), a benched stone feature that was termed Stone Feature 1 (**Figures 2a, 2d**), and a hut site that was termed West Camp 1 (**Figure 2c**).

The water race presented the opportunity to determine the dimensions and water-carrying capacity of the race, providing information about the amount of water that could be supplied, and therefore also the number of people and vegetable gardens that could be supported by that water supply.

The benched Stone Feature was a unique feature of the village archaeology which offered the opportunity to demonstrate a variety of methods of archaeological interpretation to the participants.

The West Camp 1 hut site appeared to be undisturbed by fossicking, and therefore possessed intact stratigraphy, as well as evidence for the building-construction techniques and materials that were employed.

To service the excavation, a base camp was created in a flat area near the lower vehicle track, halfway along the length of the village. The base camp was intended to be the location of meetings, lunch and tea breaks, equipment storage, first aid, and the first stage of artefact processing. Specific temporary walking trails were created through

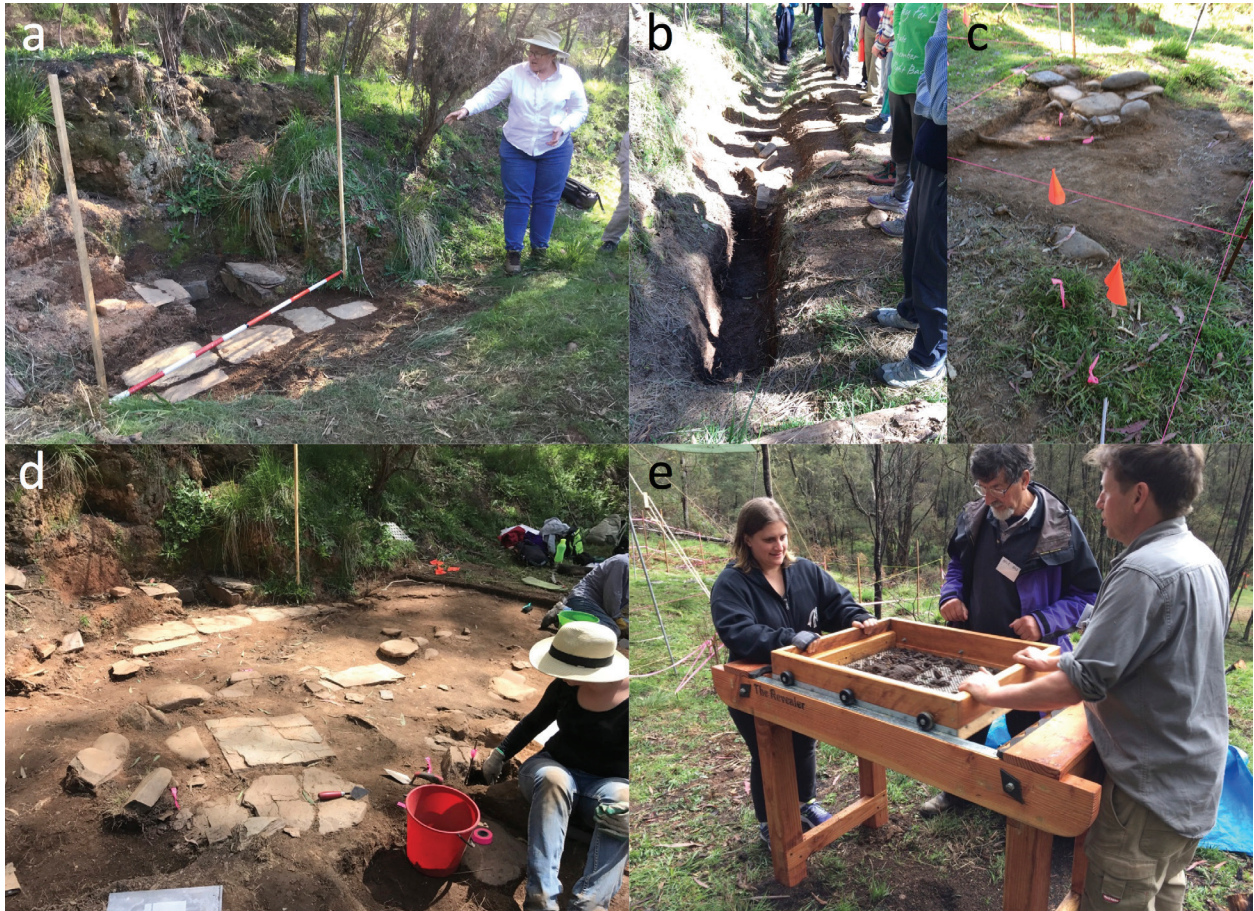


Figure 2: Excavation sites: (a) Stone Feature 1, at early stage of excavation; (b) Water Race 1; (c) West Camp 1; (d) Stone Feature, at full extent of excavation; and (e) sieving

the village area to connect the base camp to the various excavation sites. All staff and participants kept to these trails, to minimise site disturbance around the village area.

The archaeological investigations were scheduled to occur over three weeks in October 2017, to avoid the cold of winter and the heat of summer (and potential bushfire risk). By the time the investigations were due to start, a total of 36 paying participants were booked, with most people electing to participate for one week each. Twelve participants were tertiary students, three of whom were archaeology undergraduates. The remaining participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds, and ranged in age from 23–73. The number of participants involved each week was between 10–16.

All participants undertook a rigorous induction program to teach them the basic skills and principles of archaeology. Participants were divided into teams to undertake different parts of the archaeological investigations (survey, excavation, first-stage artefact processing, cataloguing). Each team comprised a maximum of four participants and one supervising staff member. Team membership was rotated so that each participant had the opportunity to know what they would like to try next, or to establish which tasks they preferred. Members of each excavation team also

rotated between excavating and sieving throughout the day (**Figure 2e**). Supervisors provided participants with guidance on excavation techniques, interpretation and artefact identification. Supervisors were responsible for the participants' work effectiveness, quality of record keeping, artefact processing and overall experience and enjoyment of the program.

Artefacts were bagged and the location of each artefact was recorded at each site. Artefacts were then sent to first-stage artefact processing to be washed, dried, examined and recorded using the site excavation record sheet (**Figures 3b, 3d**). Feedback indicated that some people enjoyed the first-stage artefact processing as they were able to paint a picture of the site and get the chance to examine the artefacts. Others felt that this was simply a boring cleaning task!

Once the artefacts had been washed and dried, they were sent to the local community hall for second-stage artefact processing (cataloguing; **Figures 3a, 3c**). This included allocating object numbers, weighing and measuring, drawing the objects to indicate shape and dimension, preliminary conjoin analysis, archival bagging and boxing. The hall was also set up as a project office and a storage location for the artefacts.

In the late afternoon, once the archaeological investigations had ceased for the day, a short tour and a



Figure 3: Object processing: (a) cataloguing workstations in Harrietteville Hall; (b) first-stage processing on-site; (c) sorting prior to cataloguing; (d) conjoin analysis, bottle; (e) technical illustration; and (f) conservation cleaning

debrief of each excavation site was undertaken, during which the site supervisor and participants who had worked on that site described what they had achieved and located. This was followed by a 'Finds of the day' talk in the hall by the team responsible for the cataloguing that day.

In the early evening, presentations were held in the hall covering topics such as Chinese ceramics and coins, surveying and GIS, local geology, the mining history of the area, and Chinese temples. These presentations were open to the broader community, but were mainly intended for participants. On the two wet weather days, all participants assisted with artefact recording in the hall, which included workshops on technical illustration (Figure 3e) and materials conservation (Figure 3f). A social BBQ at the end of each week provided the opportunity to discuss the highlights and look back on what the participants took away from the experience.

Public engagement

Public site tours were held eight times a week, and were led by the president of the Harrietteville Historical Society, Bill Jones, a font of local mining history. Each tour started at the hall, and included a walking tour of Harrietteville's mining heritage, and viewing the excavation sites from a platform above the village. A total of 120 people took part in these tours, representing a substantial proportion of the population of Harrietteville and its surrounding district (338 people; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017).

Archaeologist Melissa Dunk posted online updates on the finds and results in a blog updated three times a week (Dunk 2017b). The blog posts were light-hearted and centred around themes and topics of discussion that came up during the dig, including survey, conservation, site interpretation, drawing techniques and general updates on the artefacts identified and the progress of the investigations.

The blog website provided statistics on the number of blog viewers, their countries of origin, and how they found out about the blog (e.g. search engine, website or Facebook). There were 361 visitors to the blog during October 2017, mainly from Australia, but also the USA and the UK.

Assemblage

A total of 2,305 objects were identified during the field season, including fragments of metal ($n = 1324$; 58%), glass ($n = 513$; 22%) and ceramic ($n = 350$; 15%). The remaining 5% ($n = 118$) of the assemblage comprises fragments and pieces of bone, stone, wood and charcoal. Over half of the ceramic fragments ($n = 194$; 55%) are of Chinese origin. Different ratios will of course be obtained once aggregate weights and the Minimum Number of Vessels are determined.

Specialist staff at The Uncovered Past Institute are in the process of undertaking the artefact cataloguing and analysis, which will be followed by calculating the Minimum Number of Vessels, discards assessment and conservation. Once the assemblage analysis is complete, the assemblage will be lodged with the Heritage Victoria repository. A display showcasing the results of the archaeological excavations, and featuring some of the more interesting finds, is also being planned for the Harrietville Museum.

Discussion and conclusion

A complete site report is being prepared for Heritage Victoria (Dunk et al. in prep.). This will provide the foundation for an additional presentation at the 2019 Victorian Archaeology Colloquium which will provide an overview of the October 2017 field season.

Like any organisational start-up, a large amount of time and resources have been allocated towards planning and putting together a marketing strategy; drafting archaeological, Occupation Health and Safety and cataloguing procedures; producing a site handbook for participants; and developing content for tours and talks for the Harrietville Chinese Mining Village project.

The ratio of supervisors to participants highlighted the amount of time and patience required to provide adequate guidance for the participants, balanced with the need to ensure efficiency of archaeological processes and techniques. The enthusiasm, curiosity and passion of the participants resulted in a stop-start approach, and careful monitoring of digging, which slowed down archaeological progress, but which provided a richer and more tailored experience for each participant.

Engaging the public to provide their time and financial support for an archaeological investigation proved to be a great success in terms of archaeological achievement, public engagement and financial viability. Overall, the first season of this project was a truly rewarding and unique experience for both the participants and staff, with some of the participants achieving life-long dreams of working on a dig.

The success of the October 2017 field season, and the wide variety of sites identified during the initial

survey, has allowed The Uncovered Past Institute to plan for several additional field seasons at the Harrietville Chinese Mining Village commencing in 2019. Sites to be excavated in future seasons, and future research questions, will be developed as part of the Season One report.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the support of the people and businesses of Harrietville, especially the Harrietville Historical Society and the Harrietville Community Forum, as well as Heritage Victoria, Parks Victoria, and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Forests and Reserves). We would also like to especially thank the 36 participants who provided their support and enthusiasm to make this project possible.

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