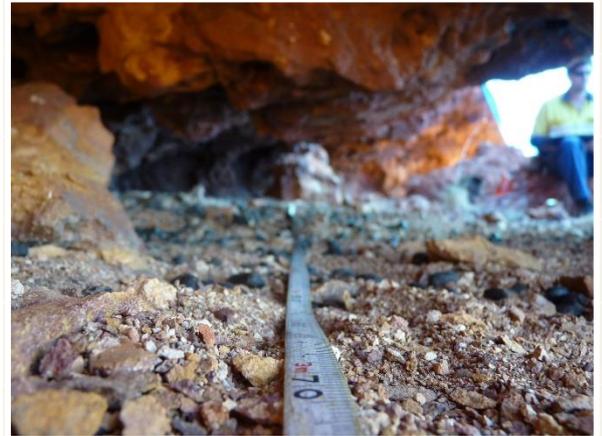




Archaeology Fact Sheet

Excavations

**Where?**

Archaeological excavations are done all over Australia, including here in Western Australia, in areas that might have historical or Indigenous artefacts under the ground.

Who?

Archaeologists are people who have gone to university for many years to learn about people and societies from the past. They learn how to do excavations and how to interpret the artefacts that they find in excavations to answer questions about how life used to be like for those people and societies from the past.

When?

Excavations are only carried out when the archaeologists have finished what is called 'desktop research'. During this research, archaeologists look for any records that relate to the place that will be excavated. These can include old council records that say what the land used to be used for, old photos of the land or discussions with people who live in that place. They also find out if any archaeological excavations have previously been done on the land or in the surrounding area. All of this information can help the archaeologists work out where the best places to dig might be and what they can expect to find.

How?

Archaeologists excavate 'test pits' using hand-held shovels, trowels and brushes. They are excavated carefully, one small layer at a time. All dirt dug out of the test pit is then passed through large sieves. This allows all the dirt to fall away, leaving only the artefacts behind. By carefully digging the test pits in layers, the archaeologists can work out how far below the surface each artefact was found, which helps when calculating dates. Test pits are usually dug down until bedrock is hit and digging can no longer continue.

What?

A lot of information can be gathered from a test pit. Archaeologists can use this information to answer a lot of questions, such as: how long have people been using the site? What kind of things were the people doing at the site? Does this information match with any written records for the site?

Other Resources

Jane McIntosh (2000) **Archeology (Eyewitness Books)**. Dorling Kindersley, London.

Written by

Elizabeth McFarlane (Senior Assistant Archaeologist)