

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday 21 May 2014

University students on real-life “Time Team”

Students from the University of Tasmania will help to undertake detailed geophysical surveys at the Melville Street car park to assess sub-surface archaeological heritage prior to redevelopment of the site as student accommodation.

The students will use methods popularised on television shows such as “Time Team” that can look through the central Hobart car park into the ground to find buried objects.

Dr Michael Roach from the University’s School of Physical Sciences will supervise the work in conjunction with staff from engineering, architecture and environmental consulting company GHD Pty Ltd.

Site investigations are being undertaken by GHD to identify buried cultural heritage prior to excavation and redevelopment. The investigative work is being carried out as a new development application for 430 student accommodation units at the site nears completion.

The Melville Street car park has had many uses over the last 200 years and little is known about what remains below the surface. It is a challenging site for conventional archaeological investigations because the entire area is paved. Geophysical methods have been selected because they can “see through” the asphalt and concrete to reveal sub-surface features.

Dr Michael Roach said “This is a great opportunity for our fourth year geophysics students to participate in an authentic learning experience, in which they will contribute to all aspects of a real project including survey design, data acquisition and interpretation.”

“We are very happy that GHD has given us the opportunity to be involved with this investigation and it seems particularly apt that University students are directly involved in a project that will lead to the development of new student housing.”

Hugh Tassell, Principal Geophysicist at GHD, is leading the investigations and welcomes the involvement of students.

“This is a win-win situation. The students get to take part in a professional survey of a University site as part of their coursework.

“There are many challenges undertaking geophysical investigations in an urban environment and in this case we can only do the work when the car park is empty at night. Hobart City Council has agreed to close the car park for two evenings for the geophysical work so we can complete the survey.”

GHD will collate and interpret all the data from the site and prepare a report for the University and the design engineers. Each student will use the same data to prepare their own “consultant’s report” for assessment as part of their University coursework.

The locations of sub-surface archaeological features determined by the geophysical surveys at Melville Street will be used to guide the excavation of the site when redevelopment commences later this year.

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