

Finds could date Aboriginal past

Carbon dating will be attempted on finds made at a Skew Valley Aboriginal midden pile on the Dampier Salt Lease in late August.

Finds of bone and charcoal will be dated to give an indication of the history of occupancy of Aboriginals in the area.

Bob Bevacqua a field Research Officer of the Western Australian Museum conducted the excavation work on the midden assisted by Vera Novak and Lucia Nishikawa of the museum and local resident Hiliary Smith.

Working on the perimeter of a midden that had been bi-sected by bulldozers in 1971 a one metre wide segment was marked and excavated.

Two distinct layers of differing shells were found in

the excavation indicating a change in the eating style of the Aboriginals.

Correlating this with geological information indicates that the lower levels of the midden could be 3,000 years old.

Field Officer Bob Bevacqua who holds a degree in archaeology also spent four weeks in Tom Price recording sites in the near vicinity of the township.

Detailed research of Aboriginal carvings and

occupancy has been conducted over several years in the Dampier area by Dampier Salt Engineer Enzo Virilli.

Mr Virilli had aerial surveys carried out in February.

Money from a grant for his work will enable maps to be drawn from these surveys detailing land layout and engraving sites.

The most prolific site for engravings is in Gum Tree Valley on the Salt Lease. Originally Enzo Virilli

had estimated that there were 4,000 engravings.

Now, after detailed but as yet uncompleted research, Mr Virilli considers that there are between 8,000 and 12,000 engravings in this Valley alone.

Several other middens in the area will be excavated in the future as part of the research work.

One midden in Gum Tree Valley is estimated to be four metres deep.



Shown at the excavation site discussing finds are Enzo Virilli and Bob Bevacqua foreground. In the background digging are Lucia Nishikawa and Hiliary Smith. Standing at rear is Vera Novak. The finds from this midden should prove important in determining the History of Aboriginal occupancy.