

## Project: Archaeological Pollen

During my time as Honorary Guest with the ANU Department of Archaeology and Natural History (from Feb 2014), I was invited to join an archaeological field trip to Bywong, NSW. The aim of the field trip was to survey the site, dig a test trench and take systematic samples of the sediment for later detailed lab analysis.

The site is on private land not far from Lake George on low flat land adjacent to Brooks Creek. The area has a history of Aboriginal and early European settlement. Early site analysis suggested that the area might once have been an open wetland surrounded with forest.

The ANU archaeology team was hopeful that a detailed environmental history could be reconstructed from the pollen and charcoal record spanning the last 5000 years. They also suspected that the site may have been an area where Daisy yam (an Aboriginal food staple in SE Australia) proliferated over the last 1000 years.

The day brought back memories of my undergraduate years in archaeology, especially our field work where I took the nickname 'dirt girl' for my soil analysis and preparedness to get my hands dirty. The gardener in me appreciated the sweet smelling dark organic sediment more than two metres under the surface. The artist in me is now striving to communicate the wonderment hidden in ancient soils; and share the spontaneous inspiration that exists in the most overlooked sources.



The team surveying the study site in Bywong



Professor Simon Haberle clearing the core tool. Soil was assessed with a Munsell chart and results recorded.



Typical shape and surface design of grass pollen. Polymer clay, copper leaf, seed beads.



Test pit with channel from which samples were taken at 2cm intervals. Note the clear stratification of charcoal.