



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Although Matt Schmidt has undertaken various public archaeology initiatives over the last four years, in the last year Matt has been promoting New Zealand archaeology not only at the local level but also on national television. Locally, Matt has been presenting talks on heritage to local groups such as Southern Heritage Trust, U3A groups and Rotary, as well as undertaking guest lectures on heritage such as for the Uni of Otago Surveying School. But most notably, two of his heritage projects became the subject of Seven Sharp stories.

The first was the re-excavation of three Chinese Hut sites at the Arrowtown Chinese Settlement in Arrowtown in October 2023. This was a public archaeology project where schools could come and visit the excavations and have a go. There were on-site talks on the settlement to schools and visitors to the settlement were taken around the site. The story run by Seven Sharp noted that Matt became interested in archaeology through the original public archaeology approach taken by Neville Ritchie when he excavated the Cromwell Chinese Settlement and the Arrowtown Chinese Settlement forty years previous. Matt visited Neville's excavation when he was 14 on a public open day.

The restoration of the Rathbun grave at Bowen Falls in Milford Sound was the other story featured on Seven Sharp in February 2024. William Rathbun died in 1894 while building the Milford Track. He was buried under the Bowen Falls but his headstone was broken in the 2020 Fiordland floods. Matt raised funds to have a new headstone made; he contacted Williams's great-grandson William 'Bill' Rathbun and together with DOC staff and some volunteers, they restored the headstone.