

**Avebury World Heritage Site
Archaeological and Historical Research Group
Notes of meeting 16th September 2011**

Present: Gill Swanton (Chair), Bruce Eagles, Brian Edwards, Paul Cripps, Sarah Simmonds, Jim Gunter, Dave Field, Jim Leary, Martyn Barber, David Dawson, Abby George, Nikki Cooke, Nick Snashall, Nicola Hembrey, Mark Bowden

1. Apologies and Introductions

Andrew Lawson, Josh Pollard, Colin Shell, Jan Tomlin, Heather Sebire, Vicky Crosby, Jonathan Last, Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger, Martin Papworth, Amanda Chadburn, Ros Cleal, Julie Scott Jackson, Simon Crutchley, Damian Grady, David Vaughan, Kate Fielden, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Mike Allen, Amanda Chadburn, Sue Davis, Susan Greaney, Rachel Foster, Nick Baxter, Jude Currivan

2. Minutes and matters arising

2.1 Minutes

10.3 GS reported that there is a planning application for a large grain store submitted by the new owner of Manor Farm West Overton on land to the north of the A4. Planning permission was given for low rise dairy units in on this site in the 1970's. The manor house is to be sold on separately from the land.

3. Monitoring of the Resource Agenda

3.1 Update on WHS Research Framework

NC reported that a lot of contributions for the Resource Assessment have been received. A number are still awaited.

At the end of July NC met AC, RF and Helen Keeley who is now monitoring the project since Kathy Perrin's retirement. EH are aware that there will be some delay in the project timetable but accepts that this is not unexpected with voluntary contributions.

A successful SARF workshop was held in Devizes in June. Forty five attendees produced an initial list of what they would like to see on the evolving research agenda. The majority of the suggested questions related to issues linked to both parts of the WHS. Others related to the space between Stonehenge and Avebury. Two documents have been sent out to ninety recipients summarising the outcomes of the workshop; a digest of all the points raised and one broken down into themes. A few comments have been received with suggested additions but no changes.

The resource assessment and agenda will be sent out to AAHRG prior to the public consultation.

A travelling exhibition will be held in addition to the web pages to boost public engagement. This is planned for the end of the year/early next year. It will cover six to eight weeks over the consultation period. EH have agreed that this will replace a public seminar day.

SS had been hoping to badge the public seminar as a celebration of the 25th anniversary of inscription on the World Heritage List. The possibility of marking the anniversary of inscription with a guided walk in both halves of the WHS was mooted. NS, GS and DF offered to assist

It was agreed that although the SARF is a largely academic document, it does have relevance to the general public who should be able to engage with asking questions about the WHS. The design of the exhibition is important. It should both communicate the research is being undertaken by professionals and prompt interest and enquiry from the general public. It should articulate the dynamic nature of our understanding of the WHS and the past.

The benefits of a public seminar were discussed. DD agreed that he would consider organising a self-funding seminar in 2012 in parallel to the SARF project. This could cover a range of periods.

Action: Beth Thomas to contact NS regarding the possibility of 25th Anniversary walk

4. Current archaeological & historical research

4.1 Later Silbury

Nicola Hembrey reported that a summary of the Later Silbury features in *Research News*. The assessment phase is complete. Nothing unexpected was found. Finds included mid-second to fourth century pottery and coins. The project is now in the analysis phase. Space has been set aside for publication in the next edition of WAM.

BE suggested that the article should include a summary of the approach to public engagement. NH reviewed the strategy which had started cautiously with 24-hour security deemed necessary on such a prominent site beside the A4. There had been a low key blog and a mention on Radio Wiltshire. Visits however still generated very active local response. Three posters on local notice boards and invitations to AAHRG generated over seventy participants.

Action: NH to send extra copies of Research News to SS

4.2 The Mesolithic of the Upper Kennet Valley

Abby George is undertaking a PhD (part time) with the University of Bristol, with Josh Pollard, Paula Gardiner and Volker Heyd as her supervisors. AG is trying to establish to what extent the upper Kennet Valley was utilised in the Mesolithic period, and what the nature of that use was.

The basis of this research is looking at transects down the valley from Avebury to Hungerford and undertaking fieldwalking and test pitting in suitable areas to try and locate any archaeological evidence. AG is also consolidating existing research and information. Hopefully, over the next four years AG will have built up a fairly accurate image of what was going on in this area in the early Holocene.

NS and JP offered to assist AG with any Neolithic struck flint picked up during her fieldwalking.

AG is discussing with her supervisors the possibility of adapting her strategy to focus slightly more on the WHS.

Action: AG to send maps of areas fieldwalked with relevant details for recording on the Avebury WHS GIS

4.3 John Loveday's visit to Avebury 1729

Brian Edwards reported on notes from John Loveday's visit to Avebury in 1729. Transcripts of his tours are available to request on line as PDF's. Extracts from his diary can also be found in a 1984 book by Sarah Markham.

Loveday mentions only the church and other buildings. There is no mention at all of the stones. He also mentions four original Stukeley drawings in the Catherine Wheel Inn: the titles of three and a description of one. Stukeley had given these drawings to George Stretch the landlord whose father was accused of being the original stonebreaker. BE suggested Stukeley may have been advocating better treatment of the sarsens, or perhaps just paying his bills.

4.4 Avebury Manor

NS reported that, running in parallel with the BBC project, the National Trust had paid for and commissioned an historic building survey of Avebury Manor which included a series of 24 dendrochronology dates. All samples have proved extremely good. The results are awaited.

4.5 East Chisenbury

JL asked if anyone knew anything about work taking place at East Chisenbury. No one present was aware of the details of the work. It was suggested that Richard Osgood the MoD archaeologist could be contacted to report on the work and if relevant invited to AAHRG.

Action: SS to contact Richard Osgood

4.6 Stonehenge

DF reported that the theory of an incomplete sarsen circle at Stonehenge has been lent further credibility by the results of radar investigation. The results show an absence of stone holes where they would have been expected if the circle had once been complete.

4.7 Silbury

JL reported that DF had found 3 pieces of blue stone in subsoil from the top of Silbury Hill. This makes four such finds when added to the single piece found by Atkinson which is now in the Alexander Keiller Museum. They were found in different parts of the summit and are indistinguishable from the flaked spotted dolomites found at Stonehenge. This lends some weight to the theory that they may have been brought to Silbury from Stonehenge in prehistory. Alternatively there may have been a ring of megaliths on the top of Silbury Hill.

5. Review of Current Opportunities for Dissemination of Research

5.1 Marlborough College Lecture

JL will give the Marlborough College lecture on The Giants of Wessex: Silbury; Silbary; Marlborough Mound; Hatfield Barrow. Related articles have appeared in *Marlborough News* online and in *Wiltshire Life*. The BBC's Country Track, broadcast on Sunday at 11 AM, will also feature Silbury.

5.2 British Archaeology

JL has a forthcoming article on Silbury's association with water.

5.3 WAM

Martin Papworth will publish the results of geophysics carried out in 2003 in the SE and NE quadrants of the Henge in the next edition of WAM.

5.4 WAHNS AGM

Julian Richards will present his work on West Kennet at the AGM on 8th November.

5.5 John Martin Avebury Watercolour

DD reported that the watercolour, Avebury Reconstructed, is on loan to the Tate Britain for the John Martin exhibition which will run until mid-January next year.

5.6 Prehistoric Wiltshire

Bob Clarke's Prehistoric Wiltshire was published this year. All proceeds from this book go to the WANHS appeal to update the Bronze Age Gallery in Devizes museum.

5.7 Silbury Monograph

The monograph will be with the publishers by Christmas.

5.8 Avenue to Learning

The partnership project was a great success. Write-ups appeared in the local press and Wiltshire Council's *Your Wiltshire* magazine which goes out to all households in the county. The project will be repeated with further local primary schools and may be extended to include older pupils. EH are developing related teaching materials.

6. WHS Steering Committee

6.1 Review of content of report to WHS Steering Committee

CS will report up to the next Steering Committee in November:

- Avenue to Learning
- Stonehenge and Avebury Research Framework seminar and forthcoming exhibition

7. AOB

7.1 Marlborough Research

DD suggested that results of recent work in Marlborough, including Ducks Meadow and Marlborough Mound, should be considered in the Research Framework.

7.2 Request for a Sarsen

GS reported that the British Geological Association have requested a sarsen from her rock pile left from a collapsed building. They will use it for a geological timeline walk at Keyworth.

7.3 Management Plan update

SS reported that the review and update is about to begin. SS is preparing a project plan for agreement with the Steering Committee. The process will involve wide engagement and consultation. AAHRG and individual members will be invited to contribute to the update as it evolves.

8. Date of next meeting

10.30 AM on Friday, January 13th 2012 in Devizes Museum.

9. Other research opportunities (i.e. utilities, development control issues)

9.1 County Archaeology Update

PV panels are now in place on the grain store at Galteemore Farm following successful negotiation to mitigate impacts involving the WHSO, applicant and planning officer.

9.2 Road Maintenance Protocol

SS reported that she had agreed a protocol with Highways and Mouchel their contractor. Mouchel will inform EH, the NT, the County Archaeologist and the WHSO of any planned works in the WHS. This will allow curators time to respond with any concerns or requirements that need to be met prior to any works. Mouchel will also inform the group of any planned works outside the WHS that involve road closures and diversions which could affect visitor management.

9.3 Emergency electricity works

NS reported that emergency works had been carried out in the High Street by a Scottish and Southern Electricity subcontractor at the weekend to restore electricity connections. Members of the public notified National Trust staff of works being carried out within the scheduled area of the henge (no contact details are provided for English Heritage to cover such incidents at weekend). Work was halted when the subcontractors, who had previously had no idea that they had been digging in a scheduled area, were informed that they were doing so. Work later recommenced as it was deemed to be immediately necessary emergency work.

The situation caused delay and frustration to all concerned. NS pointed out that NT staff do not have powers either to prevent or to authorise work in scheduled areas. This is not understood by representatives of the utilities companies or members of the public. It would help to resolve issues related to works in scheduled areas if an EH out of hours/emergency number were made available.

Action: SS to enquire about a protocol to cover such situations with EH and the possibility of providing an emergency contact number. Any protocol should be shared with utilities companies and contractors.

9.4 Bridgemead

JG reported that he will be carrying out a watching brief on the installation of a grey water tank at Bridgemead.

10. Review of Monitoring

10.1 Condition Survey

PC reported that he and PW are working on the remaining elements of the Condition Survey. The draft and final version will be complete in the near future.

11. Final Review of the Report to WHS Steering Committee

Add to item 6:

- Road Maintenance protocol agreed
- Completion of Condition Survey

12. AOB
N/A