

**Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Site
Archaeological and Historical Research Group
Draft Notes of Meeting 27th January 2017**

Present: Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger (Chair), Sarah Simmonds, Liam Wiseman (notes), Rachel Foster, Clive Ruggles, Ian Barnes, Amanda Chadburn, Kate Fielden, Steve Marshall, Rosamund Cleal, Briony Clifton, Jude Currivan, Dan Miles, Brian Edwards, Matt Leivers, Colin Shell, David Field, Heather Sebire, Gill Swanton, Nikki Cook, Martyn Barber, Richard Osgood, Nick Snashall, David Roberts, Andrew Holmes, Kerry Donaldson, Dave Sabin, Jonathan Last, Nick Baxter

1. Apologies and Introductions

Apologies: Martin Papworth, Andrew David, Mark Bowden, Bruce Eagles, Sian Williams, Katy Whitaker, Bob Clarke

Review of Membership: SS reported that Andrew Powell from Wessex Archaeology had responded to the review to say that following the completion of his work on the WHS Research Framework he will be stepping down from membership. There were no other changes.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

2.1 Minutes

The minutes were approved with minor alterations.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 NC asked when the deadline for the Historical Biography was. BE reported that there was as yet no fixed deadline.

3. Current archaeological & historical research

3.1 Historic England Fieldwork in the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Winter 2015/16 - David Roberts

DR gave a presentation summarising the results of work conducted in winter 2015/2016 in the Stonehenge WHS south of the A303 as part of Historic England's Stonehenge Southern WHS Survey project.

These relatively small scale excavations followed up large scale geophysical survey conducted by the HE geophysical survey team. Two sites were excavated, one on Druids Lodge estate at the western edge of the WHS, to the south-east of the Winterbourne Stoke roundabout, and one near West Amesbury Farm, south and east of King Barrow Ridge.

At Druids Lodge a previously uncertainly identified long barrow (Winterbourne Stoke 71) was confirmed, and a palisade ditch dating to the Middle Bronze Age was also excavated. Two other trenches had non-archaeological results.

At West Amesbury Farm in the west of the field another large Middle Bronze Age linear ditch was excavated and found to contain two inhumations. This linear cut an earlier system of shallower ditches, which appear to be part of a wider series of enclosures across much of the field.

In the north of the field, across the road from the King Barrows, a square enclosure was excavated, but dating this feature remains difficult. In the east of the field a series of trenches excavated a large badger burrow, radiocarbon dated to the Middle Neolithic by a fox ABG, alongside two short linear features and several postholes. Immediately east of this were tree throws interspersed with five Middle Neolithic pits containing a plethora of material culture. These pits contained a large Peterborough ware assemblage, a very large lithic assemblage, animal bone and a range of other material. An inhumation intercut with the pits, and also dated to the later part of the Middle Neolithic.

These findings will be fully reported on in open access publications within 2017. Geophysical survey reports are available at research.historicengland.org.uk - search 'Stonehenge' and '2015'.

MB suggested that the most recent aerial mapping of the WHS should have been consulted. DF asked for clarification on the date for the field systems, DR stated it was between c.1450-1350 BC. KF asked whether the badger sett could have destroyed a burial. DR stated that there was nothing to lead them to that conclusion.

3.2 Preliminary Archaeological Investigations and Geophysical Survey A303 - Andrew Holmes (Arup-Atkins JV Archaeology Lead)

AH presented on the initial results of assessment work undertaken in the WHS.

JL raised concerns about whether the evaluation undertaken was extensive enough. It appears that certain data has not been taken into consideration for example data from the Stonehenge Environs Project. AH assured the group that there had been extensive assessment. The work at present has been focused on identifying what he called "showstoppers". AH said they did not want to perform extensive more intrusive work in advance of a decision on the preferred route.

AC raised the concern that the results of the current work were not available as part of the public consultation. He questioned what would happen if an area of archaeological significance was discovered on the preferred route once it had been identified. AH recognised that this would be a challenge.

KF was concerned that the assessment work already undertaken may have been rushed. She also asked about the apparent confusion over excavation at the northern longbarrow. Was excavation necessary on a monument they were already aware of and that had been excavated previously? KF commented on the possibility of a further long barrow in Diamond Wood. AH replied that they did not want to disturb an ecologically sensitive area.

CS raised concerns regarding buried archaeology and whether this had been taken into account when drawing up the route options in the consultation. AH reiterated that there was no perfect scheme; all of them would cause some level of harm to the WHS. 60 options had been reviewed against criteria including cultural heritage and the WHS to arrive at the two routes included in the public consultation. He suggested that people visit the Highways England (HiE) website to leave their feedback on the scheme.

DF questioned if it was possible to change the route after feedback from the public consultation. AH confirmed that this was the reason for the consultation process.

CR was concerned about the negative impact of the proposed routes on the solstitial alignment. He stated that the western portal would be directly on the alignment, and that the road junction and lights from traffic on the road would have a harmful impact on the solstitial alignment; an important attribute of OUV. AH replied that no lighting was proposed on the junction, the only lights would be from vehicles.

CS stated that he will represent ASAHRG at the WHS Partnership Panel meeting in February, though he cannot provide a group comment regarding the A303 scheme he will pass on the issues raised at this meeting.

BE was asked for clarification about the group called HMAG. He asked what the role of the group was and who was involved. He asked why it had not been mentioned to ASAHRG at any point. MPK and NS explained the purpose of the Heritage Monitoring and Advisory Group (HMAG) and its role in the scheme. BE questioned why the existence of the group was not made public, NS responded that details regarding HMAG were publicly available on the scheme website.

4 Monitoring of the Research Framework

4.1 Updating the Research Framework - Dan Miles

DM initiated a discussion on how the Research Framework could be kept up to date following its publication. He asked about the role of ASAHRG in updating the Framework and ensuring it was used.

The group agreed that it would be best to update the existing Framework on an ongoing basis. Access to up to date information is the key to meaningful updates. DM pointed out that the results of a large amount of research is currently unavailable and suggested that a way to address this should be identified. MPK explained that there was some backlog with uploading data to the HER. Resources are limited and in many cases final reports are not submitted in a timely fashion.

DM proposed three ideas to assist in keeping the Framework up to date: a yearly audit; a research charter; or recording and cross-referencing using Oasis. ML supported the idea of a yearly review as doing it less frequently would result in a huge task. The group agreed that undertaking smaller more regular updates to the Framework more regularly was the best possible way of achieving this, and then periodically work on overhauling the entire Framework based on these. NS appreciated the need for accessibility but noted that resources were slim so should go to the HER first. There was a suggestion of creating a page on WHS website to be

updated with research results. RF proposed special annual ASHRG meeting to discuss what research has been completed to inform an update.

Action: DM agreed to pull together a short paper with proposed approach/es to updating the Research Framework including an outline of necessary integration with existing or new data sources. This will be circulated to the group for discussion at a future meeting.

5. Review of current opportunities for dissemination of research including recent and forthcoming publications

5.1 Megalith WHS Newsletter -Liam Wiseman

LW requested input from ASHRG members for the next issue of Megalith. This might be a short piece on research, or alternatively a feature on their work/role in the WHS.

Action: All to send contributions to LW by mid-May

6. Other Research Opportunities

6.1 County Archaeology Update

6.1.1 Larkhill

RF stated that archaeological investigations are ongoing. A new primary school is being built south of the recently discovered causewayed enclosure.

6.1.2 Kingsgate

MPK reported that all the fieldwork is done and the results are being written up.

7. Review of Monitoring

7.1 Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan

SS reported that work on the Setting Study would be prioritised following the consultation on the A303 and related meetings. SS will be working on the brief for the work which will be discussed with relevant partners before moving forward. CS reiterated the importance of setting for the WHS.

8. Representative's report from/to the WHS Committees and Partnership Panel

8.1 A303 project

BE wanted CS to voice a strong opinion for ASHRG in the next Partnership Panel meeting. CS stated that he could not carry a group view to the meeting, though would ensure that the concerns of the group are raised in a reasonable and appropriate way. GS reminded BE that they are a group, not a committee, and as such should not vote and could not present a united view. There was recognition from the group that some members are employed by organisations involved in the scheme and therefore cannot provide any comment as it may conflict with their organisational view.

KF pointed to concerns raised in the discussion that the archaeological evaluation had not been undertaken as it should have been. MPK assured the group that the work carried out had been to very high standards.

DF said that HiE had done a better job of exploring routes this time than previously though he was concerned that the process for the choice of routes was not appropriately balanced considering that it is a unique, internationally important WHS that would be affected. He was particularly concerned about the western portal and the dual carriageway.

9. Opportunities for site/excavation/archive visits in 2017

To be discussed at the next meeting.

10. AOB

9.1 Draft notes

BE suggested that the draft notes only be circulated to those who had attended the meeting rather than all members of ASAHRG. The group agreed that normal practice is to circulate draft notes to all members of the group.

9.2 Wiltshire Archaeology Conference

DM reported that the Wiltshire Archaeology Conference would be on the 1st April in Devizes.

9.3 Roman Swindon

MPK reported that the conference on Roman Swindon would be at the Marriott hotel on 18th March.

9.4 Open Farm Sunday

GS reported that Open Farm Sunday will take place in Avebury on 11th June. The WHSCU will be attending with a stall.

11. Date of next meeting

2nd June 2017. Venue Wiltshire Museum, Devizes