



**Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Site
Archaeological and Historical Research Group
Notes of Meeting 23rd May 2014**

Present: Gill Swanton, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger (Chair), Brian Edwards, Sarah Simmonds, Colin Shell, Dan Miles, Beth Thomas, Rachel Foster, Matt Leivers, Andrew Powell, Nick Snashall, Sian Williams, David Field, Dave Sabin, Kerry Donaldson, Jim Gunter, Josh Pollard

1. Apologies and Introductions

Kate Fielden, Abby George, Jonathan Last, Julie Scott Jackson, Steve Marshall, Ian Barnes, Ros Cleal, Paul Cripps, Phil McMahon, Nick Baxter, Susan Greaney, Heather Sebire, Martyn Barber, David Dawson, Jude Currivan, Nicola Hembrey, Stuart Needham, Mark Bowen, Bruce Eagles

David Roberts sent his apologies and will present on the work at Urchfont at the next meeting. He was detained on site due to delays resulting from the poor weather.

2. Minutes and matters arising

2.1 Minutes

The minutes were approved with the addition at 6.4 of the date of Open Farm Sunday – 8th June. This will take place at GS's farm in West Overton. SS will attend for the WHS.

2.2 Matters Arising

6 – JP reported that the watching brief for the grain store at Windmill Hill Corner had found nothing significant; only a small piece of medieval pottery.

3. Monitoring of the Resource Agenda

3.1 Update on WHS Research Framework

3.1.1 Resource Assessment and Agenda

ML from Wessex Archaeology reported that positive progress was being made on the Research Framework. The Resource Assessment has been peer reviewed and any necessary changes will be made. Comments have been received from the project board on the Research Agenda and revisions made. The resulting draft was discussed with the project board in the morning prior to today's ASHRG meeting. Following a final recirculation to the project board the Research Agenda will be peer reviewed alongside the Research Strategy.

3.1.2 Research Strategy

Following discussion with the project board a rewrite of the initial draft of the Research Strategy will take place. At the meeting in the morning the level to pitch the Strategy was agreed. It was decided to provide higher level approach rather than detailed information on the appropriate methodology for addressing each of the research questions. Following approval by the project board this will be sent for peer review alongside the Agenda. The peer review is planned for July and the outcome will be reported back the project board for discussion. The Agenda and Strategy should be ready to circulate to the ASHRG for final comment in August.

3.1.3 Launch

The target date for completion and publication of the Research Framework is spring 2015. It is hoped that the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan and Research Framework can be launched at the same time. A conference was suggested to coincide with the launch.

4. Current archaeological & historical research

4.1 West Kennet Avenue Occupation Site 2014 Season - JP

JP gave a short presentation outlining the planned works which will take place between 20th July and 9th August as a continuation of the Between the Monuments project and the work begun on the West Kennet Avenue Occupation site last year.

BE queried whether ploughing had taken place in that location based on anecdotal evidence and Underwood's photographs of turnips being cultivated in the area. It is possible that some ploughing may have taken place for a limited period although it is unlikely to have been deep in that period. Turnips also sit high in the soil causing less disturbance. JP added that Mike Allen's augering data confirmed the area was unploughed. The physical presence of stones will have a major limiting factor for cultivation.

BE suggested recording and/or mapping such instances recorded in historic images to build up a wider picture of historic land use. Stukeley also recorded land use in his drawings.

JP added that it might be useful to extend the augering survey further out. It could be useful to undertake auger surveys in transects in advance across the area. CS suggested using high resonance magnetic susceptibility. Charley French's soil chemistry results did not indicate much evidence of occupation in the area indicating that it might have been short-lived. It is therefore unlikely that Mag Sus would return strong results.

JP reported that they had also reviewed the scatter material collected by Thomas and Holgate and put this onto the project GIS. In addition fieldwalking at the foot of Avebury Down has produced possible evidence of axe-production to add to Kendall's findings.

There may be evidence to suggest flint extraction in the area. JG reported that he and VW have undertaken a resistivity survey in the field above and found signs of possible pits that might confirm this.

Action: NS to pass on an initiation to visit the excavation to SS to circulate to the group

4.2 Between the Projects: Snail Creep Geophysics - Colin Shell

The magnetometry of the barrows/ring ditches in Snail Creep Field, North Farm, West Overton, previously reported (4.2 of 25th October 2013 AAHRG Notes), has been completed with the survey of the largest in the group, the central 30m diameter barrow. In contrast to the other sites in the field, there is clear evidence of internal structure surviving in the ploughed-down mound of this monument. A GIS-based visualisation will be generated to show how this cemetery may have appeared in its valley setting with the barrows upstanding, and the positioning confirmed to resolve the current, minor, plotting discrepancies between the HER and NMR spatial records.

4.3 Geophysics at East Kennett - KD

KD will present on their survey at the next meeting of ASAHRH but gave a brief summary of recent work. Geophysics undertaken as part of an HLS scheme has shown an eroded barrow plus two or three others possibly relating to East Kennet long barrow. They are all subject to erosion through cultivation. There is also a possible medieval sheepfold.

KD reported that this work had revealed significant inaccuracy in the mapping of scheduled monuments. DF added that the OS methodology for mapping means that areas in the corners of maps and near rivers and escarpments are likely to exhibit inaccuracies that require particular attention. EH and the HER need to continue updating mapping as errors come to light. SS added that the evolving Management Plan includes this as an action.

Action: MPK to continue to update HER and report discrepancies to EH as they are reported

4.4 Carpenter's Cottage, Avebury

JG reported that he had undertaken a small area of geophysics in the back garden of Carpenter's Cottage within the southern inner circle. The results showed two areas that might be stones of the corners of a building.

5. Review of Current Opportunities for Dissemination of Research including recent/forthcoming publications

5.1 Reports on Stonehenge Landscape Project

DF reported that two reports had been submitted.

5.2 Cherill Article

BE has submitted an article on Cherill to WAM. His Twining article will now be published at a later date. Twining is the earliest published description of Avebury attributing it to the Romans. He was the curate at East Kennett and for a period commuted on foot between there and Wilsford providing a great deal of opportunity to become familiar with the landscape. He left East Kennett in the 1690's and published in 1723; earlier than Stukeley.

5.3 Solstitial Alignments at Stonehenge

Amanda Chadburn and Clive Ruggles are working on Solstitial alignments around Stonehenge and are planning to publish in the near future.

5.4 Talks

- Public Lecture for the Society of Antiquaries on Blick Mead 7th June
- The Excavation of Silbury Hill - talk after Avebury Society AGM on 26th June by BE

6. Other research opportunities (i.e. development-led archaeology, utilities)

6.1 Grain Store Windmill Hill Corner

RF reported that the watching brief had turned up what might be a medieval ditch. Evaluation by condition was required.

6.2 Long Acre, Bray Street, Avebury

A watching brief will be required if permission is granted.

6.3 Manor Farm, West Overton

The application has been withdrawn and will be likely to be resubmitted in the summer. GS reported that the number of houses has been reduced from fifteen to ten. The extension to the west has been reduced and the size of houses has been reduced.

6.4 Undergrounding Palisade Enclosures

SS reported that Scottish and Southern Electricity have agreed to underground cables running from Gunsite Lane westward which will greatly enhanced the setting of the palisade enclosures and Silbury Hill. They have agreed to pay for an open cut trench and watching brief which will allow for recording and avoid the possible destructive impact of moling which was originally proposed. The route will avoid the scheduled area. It represents an additional major private sector investment in the enhancement of the WHS.

6.5 Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area Dew Pond

JG reported that he had carried out a watching brief on a re-excavation of a dew pond near Green Steer on the way up to the Ridgeway. It was in an area that has not been ploughed. It is around 900mm deep and is now once again functioning as a dew pond.

7. Review of monitoring (e.g. need for condition surveys, Management Plan actions)

7.1 Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan update

SS reported that BT had completed the review of the Stonehenge Plan at the end of 2013 and the outcomes reported to the Management Plan Project Board in January.

The Project Board agreed that the review process at both Avebury and Stonehenge had provided enough evidence to inform the update of the Management Plan. The Board also agreed that parts 3 and 4 of the Plan dealing with aims, policies and implementation should be prepared first as perhaps the most important element of the Plan which is often rushed if the main body of the Plan is completed first.

The draft aims, policies and actions (APA) were presented to the Management Plan project board in April. The APA were amended based on feedback from the project board and presented to the Wider Stakeholder Workshop on 20th May. The main body of the text is under preparation for the consultation draft. This should be completed over the summer. It will then be presented to the Steering Committees and Partnership Panel who will agree the consultation draft. The provisional date for the public consultation is autumn 2014. The target date for publication is early spring 2015.

8. Representative's report and review of content of report to WHS Steering Committees and Partnership Panel

8.1 Report to WHS Steering Committees

- Progress on Research Framework
- Between the Monuments excavation summer 2014
- Damage to archaeology on by-ways

9. Opportunities for site/exhibition/archive visits in 2014

- An invitation will be circulated to visit the Between the Monuments excavation in the summer
- Invitation to Barrow Clumps dig 19th July 11 AM - 4 PM

10. AOB

10.1 Stonehenge Solstice Management

BE expressed concerns regarding the intention to permit music at Stonehenge. BT responded that the team at Stonehenge were carefully monitoring the situation and that it would be a small acoustic area at some distance from the monument. Stonehenge Visitor centre will be closed from 3 PM on Friday 20th June.

10.2 Wiltshire Archaeology Field Group Civil War Project

DM reported that Wiltshire Archaeology Field Group have a project on civil war battles including Roundway Down. It will take in Maud Cunnington's Wansdyke Morgan's Hill excavation.

11. Date and venue of next meeting

10.30 AM on Friday, 26th September, 2014 in Salisbury Museum