

Avebury World Heritage Site
Archaeological and Historical Research Group
Notes of meeting 13th January 2012

Present: Gill Swanton, Bruce Eagles, Brian Edwards, Sarah Simmonds, Jim Gunter, Dave Field, Jim Leary, Martyn Barber, David Dawson, Nikki Cooke, Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger (Chair), Colin Shell, Nick Baxter, Mike Allen, David Vaughan, Paul White, Heather Sebire, Katie Hinds, Dan Miles, Sian Williams

1. Apologies and Introductions

Andrew Lawson, Josh Pollard, Mike Parker Pearson, Vicky Crosby, Jonathan Last, Amanda Chadburn, Ros Cleal, Julie Scott Jackson, Damian Grady, Kate Fielden, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Susan Greaney, Rachel Foster, Jude Currihan, Abby George, Nick Snashall, Nicola Hembrey, Paul Cripps

Dan Miles from the EH Heritage Data Management team attended AAHRG for the first time to discuss the RFC Yatesbury Community Archaeology Project

2. Minutes and matters arising

2.1 Minutes

3.1 SS, BT and NS are meeting later in January to organise a UNESCO World Heritage Convention 40th Anniversary Walk at Stonehenge and Avebury.

4.2 SS to follow up with AG regarding location of field walked areas. Information to be sent to SS and the HER.

4.5 SS to invite Richard Osgood to AAHRG to talk on Defence Estate archaeological projects and objectives

5.7 The Silbury monograph was with referees before Christmas. Comments from among others Martin Bell and Alistair Whittle are being addressed over the coming weeks before it is sent to the publishers.

9.3 EH confirmed that under the Ancient Monuments Act utility companies can carry out emergency works on health and safety grounds without SMC but must create only the minimum disturbance. Retrospective permission should be sought from DCMS at the earliest opportunity. NS and AC to discuss need for an out of hours contact number in non-emergency work situations where liaison may be necessary.

3. Monitoring of the Resource Agenda

3.1 Update on WHS Research Framework

NC reported work was progressing well with almost all contributions in although some papers are still awaited. Progress was discussed at the second advisory board meeting and options were considered including printing with

original chapters where necessary and an addendum explaining updates were awaited. This has been decided against and there is therefore a plea for outstanding sections to be provided as soon as possible so that the project can move forward. Consultation cannot take place on the agenda until the resource assessment is published.

Targets: web publication by the end of January/February ; collate final agenda March/April; strategy at the end of May/June followed by period of consultation; summer set up ready for print.

Consultation will be a simple banner display at key points in WHS and visitor sites. It will focus on what the public want to know about the WHS. A comments box will be provided. GS requested that banners were placed in discrete locations. MPK offered the History Centre as a venue. SS suggested Marlborough Library. There will be a parallel more detailed web-based consultation.

Wessex Archaeology's Ann Upson has provided the built heritage section.

Action: Those with outstanding sections to send in as soon as possible.

GS to update Experimental Archaeology section and send to Martin Bell for review.

NC to approach AG regarding Mesolithic section.

4. Current archaeological & historical research

4.1 The RFC Yatesbury Community Archaeology Project - Dan Miles

Yatesbury Aerodrome was established by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in late 1916 to train pilots in air reconnaissance before they were sent to the front. The RFC Yatesbury Community Archaeology Project aims to investigate the airfield using a multidisciplinary approach combining archaeological field work with documentary research and oral history studies. This is part of a larger county wide project to investigate and promote the knowledge and understanding of Wiltshire's Great War heritage in the run up to 2014 and the centenary of the outbreak of war.

Initial fieldwork was carried out over two weekends in September and October 2011. This included field walking, metal detecting, geophysics and test pitting on the gunnery deflector training range, the early phase of the airfield and a German POW camp. Initial analysis of the finds has given us important insights into the infrastructure and facilities at the airfield and on the conditions and daily life of those who served and lived there, including German POWs.

The project has been organised by Finding the Forgotten in partnership with a number of local organisations including the Yatesbury History Society, RAF Yatesbury Association, WAHNS Archaeology Field Group, the Wiltshire Military History Society, local metal detecting clubs and villagers from the local area.

This summer we will be back at the airfield carrying out more field work including excavating the site of the POW camp.

For more information and if you would like to get involved please contact Dan Miles - findingtheforgotten@hotmail.co.uk

In response to questions from the group DM reported that some worked flints and some pieces of prehistoric pottery had been found. They will be passed to Devizes Museum. Some Roman material was found. Roman material was noted in the field, but as it was outside the fieldwalking area, it was not picked up. There are two grade one listed hangers one of which has fallen down and is irreparable. Restoration on the second has stopped as it is on part of the land which is up for auction.

4.2 Stonehenge Aerodrome - Martyn Barber

Stonehenge Aerodrome was located just a few hundred metres west of Stonehenge itself, occupying some 360 acres of downland spreading as far as Normanton Gorse to the southwest and Fargo Plantation to the northwest. Prior to its construction, the site was occupied by Fargo Cottages (or Virgo as they are constantly referred to in contemporary sources).

The aerodrome was active for only just over 3 years, from the autumn of 1917 to the beginning of 1921, but its presence had a considerable impact on the longer term history of Stonehenge and its environs - the post-war survival of the aerodrome buildings prompted the public appeal that led to the National Trust acquiring so much land in the area.

The aerodrome saw plenty of comings and goings, but for much of its life it was home to the No. 1 School of Navigation and Bomb Dropping, daytime training and flying being focused around buildings placed astride the A303 and night-time activity based near Fargo Plantation. At capacity, it would have been home to over 1500 military personnel (including around 350 women), and would be training roughly 120 pilots and 120 observers per month.

Archival research has shown that neither the history of the aerodrome nor the origins and progress of the post-war appeal were quite as straightforward as has seemed in previous accounts. It can also be stated with a fair degree of

certainty that the Royal Flying Corps never asked for Stonehenge to be demolished, although they did build a rain gauge near a barrow.

A detailed report on the history of the site is almost complete and will be freely available as a pdf from the English Heritage website. A more detailed report looking at the history of the Stonehenge landscape in the 20th century, based again on aerial photographs and unpublished archival material, is also in preparation. Meanwhile, 'A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology', containing much to interest any Wiltshire-based archaeologist, historian or indeed anyone else, is available from all good bookshops, and many of the others.

4.3 Stones of Stonehenge Project

The interim report was circulated before the meeting. Unfortunately the team were unable to attend in January but SS will invite them to the next AAHRG. The group welcomed the useful, non-invasive work and new interpretations and was interested in learning what might be planned next.

NB mentioned the bluestone fragments on Silbury Hill. JL referred to the discussion at the last meeting on their likely authenticity. DF confirmed that they are unlikely to be either the result of an accident or a hoax.

4.4 Eric Ravilious Puffin Picture Book

Devizes Museum has acquired a rare draft of Eric Ravilious' Puffin Picture Book *The Whitehorse*. The work was left unfinished due to the artist's death in WW2. The text was to have been written by H.J. Massingham author of *Downland Man*. Consideration will be given to commissioning artists to fill in missing sections of the book.

There will be talk on the artist and this work at the Devizes Festival in June. Nick Schlee's Landscapes with Stones exhibition will open on 14th January.

5. Review of Current Opportunities for Dissemination of Research

5.1 Ridgeway Project

CS reported that the images for the Ridgeway Project are finished and the final write up can proceed.

5.2 Stonehenge Landscape Project

DF reported that the project is drawing to a close and there are preparations for a synthetic volume.

5.3 Roughleaze, Avebury

Fieldwork is about to be published.

5.4 Between the Monuments Project

Work on the project design continues and the funding is being sought.

5.4 Chalcolithic

JP and RC have a piece on the Chalcolithic in the new British Archaeology

5.5 Prehistoric Society Europa Day

The Prehistoric Society's Europa Day will take place on June 9th

5.6 Marlborough Mound

JL will be spending a term at the McDonald Institute beginning in April. He will be writing up Marlborough Mound.

5.7 Birmingham University Stonehenge Hidden Landscape Project

David Key's production company has a contract to work with Birmingham University.

5.8 Later Silbury

Analysis on the Later Silbury project is progressing well. They hope to submit the completed report to WAM in the early summer. NH and VC hope to attend the next AAHRG meeting to update the group in person

6. WHS Steering Committee

6.1 Review of content of report to WHS Steering Committee

CS will précis progress on Research Agenda and presentations.

7. AOB

7.1 West Kennet Long Barrow

HB reported that EH are still hoping to undertake repairs. There is a need to control the current dripping. A summary of documentary research has been compiled and engineering options appraised. A simple repair appears to be the most likely option. Removal of the roof lights would result in health and safety and amenity concerns.

A funding stream has yet to be identified.

7.2 Avebury NE Sector of the Henge

JG reported that test pitting is taking place near the site of the collapsed cellar of the old school house in the NE sector of the henge.

7.3 Governance Review

SS reported that the consultants Egeria were currently undertaking a review of the governance arrangements for Avebury and Stonehenge. The work has been agreed by both Steering groups who will review any recommendations.

If you have any comments you would like passed on to the consultants please forward to SS.

Action: All to forward comments to SS

7.4 Army Welfare World Heritage Day

An outreach open day will take place for families at Bulford on the weekend following WH day on 18th April

8. Date of next meeting

10.30 AM on Friday, April 27th 2012 in Devizes Museum.

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

9.1 County Archaeology Update

9.1.1 Skokholm

DV reported that at Skokholm there is an application for a new garage on the edge of Green Street. This could further obscure views eastward to the henge.

9.1.2 East Farm, Stock Housing

There is potential for impact on the setting of the WHS and on several key points including the Ridgeway and Windmill Hill. The proposed location is near shelving stones field and the potential long barrow. Advice was given to bring the building back into the farm area by altering its orientation and reducing its height.

9.1.3 Hunters Barrow

This has now been cleared of scrub under the Wiltshire Council and English Heritage Monument Management Scheme. The badgers seem to have left.

9.1.4 HLC

Funding has been secured from EH. It is a three year project and the post is currently being advertised on the Wiltshire Council jobs website. The work will include Swindon Borough and more detailed sections on the WHS.

9.1.5 Ridgeway Arts Project

Faye Goodwin is running a project encouraging creative interpretation of the experience of walking the Ridgeway. Currently it involves pictures but may later include sensory and sound elements. Material will be used to encourage others out onto the Ridgeway. DV will be contributing to the project.

9.1.6 Wiltshire HER

MPK reported that a new HER officer, Faye Glover, is in post. The HER software will be updated over the coming months to improve the online experience.

9.2 Bridgemead

JG reported that one further trench will be dug to the front gate at the bottom of the High Street. All previous evaluations and watching briefs have confirmed that the area is too disturbed to offer any insights. It is likely that this trench will prove more interesting however it is in the area where a stone was purported to be beneath the former bungalow.

9.3 Hoard in SW Wiltshire

KH reported on the excavation of a hoard in SW Wiltshire. It includes an early Bronze Age flat axe, mid Bronze Age spears, Late and Early Iron Age objects. The 114 objects show a very great chronological mix. Although taken out under archaeological conditions, it will be a challenge to analyse. The deposition date is hard to ascertain as it was found within a natural feature. Salisbury Museum hopes to acquire the hoard.

10. Review of Monitoring

10.1 Condition Survey

PW reported that the project board had met for training on using the database and for discussion of its final form. It will be provided in ArcReader with drop down boxes facilitating queries.

The hard copy will be circulated with an overview summary. It will be possible to split into two parts: Avebury and Stonehenge.

PW presented to both Steering groups in November on this project and the WHS Woodland Strategy.

11. Final Review of the Report to WHS Steering Committee

As at item 6

12. AOB

12.1 Fencing opposite the Sanctuary

JG will be undertaking a watching brief for some fencing to protect the tenant's land and water supply. He mentioned problems with uploading onto OASIS at present.

Action: DV to follow up on OASIS

12.2 Tree on Burial

CS raised concerns over the mention of a tree on a burial mound on Dr Oliver's land in the Stones of Stonehenge interim report.

Action: DV/MPK to investigate site for possible inclusion in future Monument Management scheme