

**Avebury World Heritage Site  
Archaeological and Historical Research Group  
DRAFT Notes of meeting 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

**Present:** Amanda Chadburn (Chair), Bruce Eagles, Colin Shell, Gill Swanton, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Brian Edwards, Paul Cripps, Sarah Simmonds, Jim Gunter, David Vaughan, Dave Field, Sian Williams, Jonathan Last, Heather Sebire, Kate Fielden, Jim Leary, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Rob Skinner, Martyn Barber, Martin Papworth, Mike Allen, Mark Boden, David Dawson, Abby George, Nikki Cooke, Sharon Bishop, Martin Bell

**1. Apologies and Introductions**

Jude Currivan, Nick Baxter, Vicky Crosby, Janet Tomlin, Ros Cleal, Nick Snashall, Julie Scott-Jackson, Katie Hinds, Rachel Foster, Susan Greaney, Andrew David

Abby George is new to AAHRG. She is currently studying for a PhD in the Mesolithic of the upper Kennet Valley and will be undertaking research to establish to what extent the upper Kennet Valley (between Avebury and Avington) was utilised in the Mesolithic period. Research will take the form of extensive fieldwalking and strategic test pitting wherever sensible and practical as well as a consolidation of existing data.

**2. Minutes and matters arising**

**2.1 Minutes**

- 2.1 AC reported that the availability of funding may affect the schedule for work on West Kennet Long Barrow.
  
- 4.3 BE reported that Pete Glastonbury has found ‘Silbaby’ recorded on a map produced in 1823.
  
- 5.1 SS reported that RC suggested the fascicule work be delayed for the time being due to the current focus on the Research Framework. BE suggested that any firm proposals are still forwarded to RC in the meantime. MA mentioned that the Prehistoric Society will be publishing the Mike Parker Pearson Stonehenge research and it might also provide a platform for publishing work at Avebury.

AC recommended fascicules remain on the agenda to encourage a return to the project when there is sufficient time.

- 13.3 AC confirmed that the re-seeding of the top of Silbury was done in agreement with Natural England.
  
- 13.8 MPK clarified that only one of the eight posts, the Head of Heritage Services, has been deleted from the structure.

**Action: SS to keep fascicules on the meeting agenda**

### **3. Monitoring of the Resource Agenda**

#### **3.1 Update on WHS Research Framework**

##### **Format and authors**

NC thanked SS for passing on all the work done by AAHRG and the initial project board in taking forward the resource assessment. She confirmed that the planned Research Framework will cover both Stonehenge and Avebury. Synergies will be explored between the two sites at the agenda and strategy stage. The two resource assessments will stand alone. The Avebury section will be written, as originally intended, by individual contributors. The Stonehenge update will be taken forward by Tim Darvill with input from those involved in recent research.

NC suggested that although the format of the resource assessment will remain very close to that originally agreed a few additions would be advisable in order to achieve a level of continuity between Avebury and Stonehenge. For these elements and some of the already planned sections authors still need to be identified. Examples of new elements include a section on interpreting the Avebury landscape to reflect the one found in the Stonehenge Framework as well as a review of the both the successes and outstanding objectives from the original Agenda. She suggested that there should be three appendices to match those in the Stonehenge Framework: excavations; bibliography; radiocarbon dates. The project board have also suggested a separate section on building survey. NC has prepared a table setting out the contents of both the Avebury and Stonehenge documents and those planned for the WHS Framework. Comments are requested and suggestions for authors of sections without named contributors.

Official invites will be sent out shortly. Contributors will be asked to aim for mid- May deadline. Time specific sections should be between 3,000 and 5,000 words and those on methods 1,500 to 3,000 as originally planned.

##### **Project Website**

A Research Framework project website is being hosted by Wessex Archaeology. This will feature a blog, links to relevant documents including the original Avebury Research Agenda and news for the life of the project. There will be a private area for contributors where they can access GIS layers and other relevant data.

PC has sent out data requests and will have relevant resources available for contributors

### **Seminar**

A day seminar is planned for June to review contributions to the resource assessments and the approach to the agenda and strategy.

### **AAHRG and Built Environment Representative**

AC reminded the group that one of key roles of AAHRG set out in the Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan is the update of the Resource Agenda. She asked the group whether the project board required a formal AAHRG representative. As many of those represented are members of AAHRG it was decided that one of these could act as the representative. MPK volunteered to undertake the role and report specific points raised by AAHRG to the project board and vice versa.

The need for a historic/built environment representative was discussed. Suggestions included John Chandler, Pam Slocombe from the Wiltshire Environment Record and Steven Ponder from the National Trust.

**Action: NC to circulate the table of contents and authors for comments/suggestions by 17<sup>th</sup> February**

**NC to circulate link to the Research Framework website**

**MPK to act as AAHRG representative on the project board**

## **4. Current archaeological & historical research**

### **4.1 Avebury WHS Lidar and NMP Review Project – Rob Skinner**

The Avebury WHS Lidar and NMP Review Project is designed as an update to the 1999 Avebury WHS Mapping Project focusing primarily on the 2006 lidar survey commissioned by Colin Shell. The project is being undertaken as a part of the IFA's EPPIC placement with Aerial Survey and Investigation at English Heritage.

So far the lidar survey for roughly half of the project area (the total area being 61 square km's) has been examined with new archaeological features plotted using AutoCAD. As well contributing to the aerial survey mapping through the discovery of archaeological features other considerations of the project have been to add detail to known monuments, to enhance the accuracy of the aerial mapping and to identify general patterns in monument erosion.

The lidar has added a wealth of new archaeological features to the record principally the earthworks of field systems but also various mounds, enclosures, ridge and furrow, medieval village settlement and water meadows. The new data populates many of the 'gaps' in the record with archaeological features. As always with the use of lidar there is an issue with the identification of valid archaeology, patterns of field systems are obvious but some of the more ambiguous features such as mounds require assessment on the ground.

As well as completing the main project area, covering the WHS, it is envisaged that the project will allow a consideration of the archaeology of West Woods for which the lidar shows a dense concentration of archaeological features. It is intended that a report on the project results will be completed by early May.

RS's presentation was greeted with interest by the group for its potential of adding to the understanding of the landscape. AC suggested that the work should be included in the Research Framework. NC confirmed that there would be room for additions after the seminar in June.

JL requested that the report looked at plough damage. Aerial photos from 30s/40s will be compared to the lidar results to provide a broad brush picture. The lidar pictures will not allow for accurate measuring.

## **5. Review of Current Opportunities for Dissemination of Research**

### **5.1 Format of next WHS Research Seminar**

DD suggested that the seminar be related to the one planned for the Research Framework in June. This should be for contributors with a further more public seminar to be held once the resource assessment is complete. A week day was suggested for the contributors' seminar/workshop and a weekend for the public event. 14 May is a projected date however HS pointed out that there is already a busy schedule of events planned for May.

**Action: DD and NC to negotiate an appropriate date for the seminars**

## **6. Review of Membership**

SS reported that she sent out emails to those who had not been in touch over the last two years inviting them to consider their membership of AAHRG. They were invited to return to the group whenever their research focuses once more on the Avebury area. Two members responded asking to continue to receive papers while three others have withdrawn for the present.

## **7. Review of content of report to WHS Steering Committee**

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

- Lidar survey results

- Progress on the WHS Research Framework
- Vitality of AAHRG

## **8. AOB**

### **8.1 Savernake Forest**

SW reported that on looking for the fifth barrow of a group in Savernake Forest she had identified two possible monuments. In fact there are six barrows, only five of which are scheduled although they are all recorded in the HER. They seem to be set in a circle with touching ditches. She queried whether the lidar images might confirm this.

**Action: MB to check the lidar and report to SW**

### **8.2 Hunters Barrow**

BE reported that the barrow behind the Waggon and Horses is badly undermined by badger activity. SW has passed this case on to Verian at EH. Natural England will shortly be providing data on badger activity in the WHS which will clarify the situation. JL suggested that exclusion would be possible with enough resources underlining the fact that damage is often less severe than it appears. MPK suggested there may be some resources available through the monument management fund.

SW added that this is where she had found a Bronze Age knife that had been passed to Wadworths who own the land.

**Action: MPK to liaise with AC to find a solution**

### **8.3 Unconfirmed report of coring at East Kennet Long Barrow**

BE said that there had been an unconfirmed report on line that people claiming to be from EH had been seen coring at East Kennet Long Barrow. He will see if this can be substantiated and pass on any news.

### **8.4 Sarsens south of Beckhampton**

BE reported that local enthusiasts were mapping where large known sarsens appear to form a line south of Beckhampton.

### **8.5 Earliest drawing of Stonehenge by a woman**

BE has acquired the earliest known drawing of Stonehenge by a woman. Anna Benett's work is from 1830 and is accompanied by a poem.

## **8.6 Car in ditch at Silbury**

DF reported that a car had come off the road at Silbury. Its removal may have caused damage. There is still debris and archaeological supervision would be advisable during the clean up process.

**Action: AC to contact the National Trust regarding the need for supervision**

## **8.7 Copies of the Marden Project Report**

DF has ten copies of the first phase of the report to disseminate. It can also be downloaded from the EH website.

## **8.8 SW Archaeological Research Framework**

MP attended the last meeting of the group. The Avebury area is clearly a hot spot for research in the South West.

## **8.9 Marden Presentation, Alton Barnes**

KF announced that JL will give a presentation to the Avebury Society in Coronation Hall in Alton Barnes on 10 June.

## **8.10 BBC Ancient Britain**

GS reported that to accompany the new Neil Oliver series the BBC is producing locally focussed material in the regions. JL added that the BBC is also producing lots of good educational material for children which EH has advised on. This includes an inflatable trilathon.

**Action: GS to forward link to SS to send to the group**

## **9. Date of next meeting**

10.30AM on Friday May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Venue to be confirmed.

## **10. Other research opportunities (i.e. utilities, development control issues)**

### **10.1 Underground electricity supply to Avebury Trusloe**

DV reported that the watching brief on the trench for the electricity cable had found nothing significant. JG added that Robin Butler has agreed to further geophysics near the river and the entrance to the field.

### **10.2 Bridgemoor**

Much of a vast hole in the area at the northern end had in the past been filled with scrap from the former slaughter house and the area is therefore of little interest. There may possibly be signs of a double ditch and bank in the first trench. JG will be undertaking a watching brief on the service trench but this

represents a very small percentage of the site. There has been no evidence of substantial stone holes. Excavations related to the installation of the gas and grey water tanks may provide more evidence.

### **10.3 Monument Management Scheme: Longstones scrub clearance - David Vaughan**

DV reported that BTVC conservation volunteers have cleared scrub from the long barrow.

DV requested that all researchers report work to the Archaeology Service so that the HER can be kept up to date.

### **10.4 Skokholm Planning Decision**

AC reported that despite objections from the Archaeology Service, WHS officer and EH, planning permission has been given for a development to replace the existing wood clad bungalow at Skokholm. The new development is 200m from the henge and objections were based on the increased intrusion on setting and OUV. A more modest development was recommended.

Permission was given despite an outstanding objection from EH on the grounds of harm to OUV. In this circumstance the WHS Planning Circular 07/09 requires that the application is referred to the Secretary of State to consider whether a call-in is necessary prior to determination. In August the Archaeology Service and the WHS officer delivered training to planners on PPS5 and the implications of this and other WHS-related legislation were discussed. It appears further work will need to be done with planners in this area.

SS added that the update of the WHS Management Plan will need to address the increasing development pressure in the WHS and its setting.

### **10.5 Great Stones Way**

KF reported that the feasibility study for the planned project estimated that it would attract a further 250 -400,000 walkers each year. The route will run between Avebury and Stonehenge. She raised concerns about the impact of increased footfall leading to erosion of monuments and the associated car parking resulting in congestion and damage to setting.

JG was invited onto the board of the Great Stones Way (GSW) through WAHNS. He explained that the numbers were likely to be smaller than predicted and added that the similar numbers of walkers who use the Ridgeway do not have a negative impact on neighbouring monuments and no issues had ever been raised regarding this in the past. Although there may have been some naivety in including the Avenue at Stonehenge in the route, the Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) have been flexible and responsive to feedback. Time is now being given to assessing possible impacts and thinking through the route to avoid these.

SS added that she had advised the FoR on an approach to addressing sustainability including assessing impact and designing appropriate monitoring and maintenance regimes. David McGlade from the Hadrian's Wall National Trail has also provided advice on this. Setting up a steering group with representatives of key stakeholders able to offer professional advice on the above has been recommended and the appropriate contacts provided.

### **10.6 Fox Covert Planting**

CS reported on planting in the area that according to Stukeley's work could be the end of the Beckhampton Avenue. It is also affecting the ditches of a scheduled barrow. No consultation with the Forestry Commission took place. This should occur in a WHS where afforestation, no matter how modest, needs to be considered for a possible EIA.

**Action: AC to follow up need for a damage report  
MPK to follow up with Ian Briscoe from the FC**

### **10.7 Avenue to Learning**

CS outlined the project which involves working with school children to plot and mark the stones missing from the West Kennet Avenue. It involves a number of partners: 4 schools, National Trust, Young Archaeologists and Young WAHNS. SS is hoping to gain some funding from the HLF as part of the UK WHS Cultural Olympiad bid.

**Action: SS and CS to collaborate on activity plan for submission**

### **10.8 Auguring Between the Monuments**

MA reported that he will be undertaking further auguring to develop previous work indicating possible chalk floors. It will include a teaching element for students of the Oxford University MSc on Landscape Archaeology.

### **10.9 Large scale solar arrays**

GS reported that a company called Compton Energy was sending out letters encouraging landowners to rent out areas for solar arrays. SS has reported this to the Climate Change team in Wiltshire Council and contributed to the productions of informal guidance outlining related issues and limitations for developers. This highlights the archaeological and landscape sensitivity of the WHS and range of protective policies.

## **11. Review of Monitoring**

### **11.1 Condition Survey**

The survey is near completion. The report will be provided in due course.

## **12. Final Review of the Report to WHS Steering Committee**

In addition to item 7:

- Concern over weight given to expert advice on OUV in planning decisions
- Tree planting in the WHS
- Completion of condition survey

### **13. AOB**

#### **13.1 Sian Williams**

AC spoke for the group in saying that it is sad to lose Sian from her professional role in EH on her retirement but that we are delighted that she has decided to remain a member of AAHRG. We will be having lunch in the Bear at the end of the meeting for those who can come along.

#### **13.2 WHS Governance Review**

AC is preparing a list of questions for the Steering Committee to agree to help move the review process forward. It is a difficult time to undertake the review as many organisations are going through a period of restructuring.

#### **13.3 Marlborough Mound Core**

JL reported that analysis of the cores taken is underway. The results should be available in the summer. The analysis of material from 'Silbaby' continues. Indications are that the mound is artificial with old ground surface beneath that would benefit from further investigation.

#### **13.4 Forthcoming Silbury Publication**

Rob Skinner will contribute a piece on lidar. JL thanked CS for his assistance with lidar images.