

**Avebury World Heritage Site
Archaeological and Historical Research Group
DRAFT Notes of meeting 27th May 2011**

Present: Gill Swanton (Chair), Bruce Eagles, Colin Shell, Brian Edwards, Paul Cripps, Sarah Simmonds, Jim Gunter, David Vaughan, Dave Field, Sian Williams, Kate Fielden, Jim Leary, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Rob Skinner, Martyn Barber, Mike Allen, Mark Bodwen, David Dawson, Abby George, Nikki Cooke, Rachel Foster, Susan Greaney, Nick Baxter, Katie Hinds, Josh Pollard, Nick Snashall

1. Apologies and Introductions

Andrew Lawson, Mike Parker Pearson, Jan Tomlin, Heather Sebire, Nicola Hembrey, Vicky Crosby, Jonathan Last, Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger, Martin Papworth, Amanda Chadburn, Ros Cleal, Julie Scott Jackson

2. Minutes and matters arising

2.1 Minutes

- 8.2 DV reported that Hunters Barrow would be put forward as part of the Monument Management Scheme this year. DD added that the location of the Bronze Age dagger was being looked into by Wadsworth.

3. Monitoring of the Resource Agenda

3.1 Update on WHS Research Framework

NC reported that all invited authors had confirmed. The outstanding sections of the Resource Assessment are documentary research the technical summary and Avebury element of the built heritage section. A representative for built heritage has been found for the Advisory Group. BE suggested John Chandler as a possible author for this section.

There is likely to be some timetable slippage although two sections have already been submitted: Bimolecular and Lower Middle Palaeolithic. EH has agreed the end of the summer for submission of all chapters. Public consultation will take place in September. The complete Resource Assessment will be circulated to all workshop invitees for comment.

The workshop will take place on 24th June in Devizes Town Hall. It is hoped that it will generate outline questions for inclusion in the Research Agenda. NC confirmed that preparation for the workshop should include an awareness of the current position and an idea of where we would like research to take us. A balanced focus on both halves of the World Heritage Site should be achieved at the workshop as the majority of authors and consultees are Avebury-related.

Action: Those who cannot attend on 24th June to submit questions for evolving Agenda

4. Current archaeological & historical research

4.1 Stones of Stonehenge Project/

4.2 Between the Monuments

JP presented both the Stones of Stonehenge and the Between the Monuments Projects to the group. Full details of both can be found in the project designs attached as appendices. The group expressed support for the projects in principle.

Action: All to send any comments to JP

Action: MA to send or provide links to short reports from the projects to appear on the Avebury World Heritage Site web pages

4.3 Marlborough Mound Dates

JL reported the dates based on analysis of the cores taken from the Marlborough Mound undertaken at Fort Cumberland. The four dates represent a range with the lowest one (16.5m down) being the earliest 2840-2480 cal BC (95% confidence) or 2830-2490 cal BC (68% confidence); the two from 12.25m down were 2570-2300 cal BC (95% confidence) or 2480-2400 cal BC (68% confidence) and 2620-2460 cal BC (95% confidence) or 2580-2470 cal BC (68% confidence); and the highest one (6.5m down) was the latest 2300-2040 cal BC (95% confidence) or 2280-2140 cal BC (68% confidence). The dates get later the higher up the mound suggesting that it was perhaps built over a number of phases and added to over time.

The results will be published. In addition Peter Fowler will be writing up the profile of a nearby ditch observed during a watching brief in the 1950's.

NB welcomed the findings which confirmed the theory that the mound was pre-Norman.

4.4 Avebury WHS Lidar and NMP Review update

RS reported that 61km² of a lidar derived Digital Elevation Model and oblique aerial photographs from 2009 and 2010 were consulted for their archaeological content.

The lidar data was cross referenced with the exiting aerial photograph transcription, Google Earth, Ordnance Survey mapping both modern and historic, the Wiltshire County Council HER and the English Heritage AMIE monuments record.

The study clearly demonstrates that aerial survey methodology can continue to find new sites of archaeological interest in a well researched landscape increasing the AMIE monument records for the study area by approximately 12%.

Amongst other results the lidar data demonstrates that the lowland regions of the study area are just as rich in archaeological potential as the downs revealing many subtle earthwork features. The imagery also presents an excellent depiction of the well preserved field systems across the downland. However the study also reiterates the fact that lidar is a complementary tool for aerial survey, not a replacement for the study of photographs. Many of the sites seen in the aerial photographs, especially cropmark sites, were not visible at all in the lidar.

A ground truthing exercise identified a few specific sites of interest including a possible prehistoric or Roman open settlement and the earthworks of a probable large medieval or post medieval building near Lockeridge House.

The study is ongoing with a report to be completed shortly.

West Woods/Lockeridge project

A project is proposed that follows up on the results of the Avebury lidar survey.

Working with volunteers the project intends to investigate the relationship between the resource of West Woods and the settlements surrounding it, focusing on the historic period.

Initially this will involve examining the air photo and lidar record of 12km² surrounding West Woods, a part of the original remit of the Avebury lidar project that was not considered due to time constraints. This rewarding work could be conducted as a series of workshops working with interested volunteers within the community. Further work might involve archival research and intrusive investigation at specific sites. It is envisaged that the investigation would complement the work of WANHS's West Woods woodland survey: a different approach to studying this fascinating landscape that goes beyond the confines of the woodland. The study would include an investigation of the medieval development of Lockeridge focussed on the newly discovered earthwork site at Lockeridge House, a possible medieval manor or building relating to the activities of the Knights Templar.

Several organisations have now expressed an interest in this project. RS has developed a presentation detailing the proposal which he is happy to present to any interested parties.

Action: If you are interested in being involved in the project please contact Robert Skinner at REDACTED or telephone: REDACTED for further details

5. Review of Current Opportunities for Dissemination of Research

5.1 Silbury Monograph

Work on the Silbury Monograph is progressing well. It is due to be delivered to the publishers at the end of the year.

6. Review of Membership

N/A

7. WHS Steering Committee

7.1 Review of content of report to WHS Steering Committee

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

- Silbury Monograph
- Précis of planned archaeological projects supported by group
- Report on the SARF seminar

7.2 Report from Steering Committee May 2011

- A review and update of the WHS Management Plan will commence in the near future
- The draft Wiltshire Core Strategy will be available for comment in late June. It includes policies on protection of the World Heritage Site. The first round of consultation offers an opportunity to comment on and help shape policies which will undergo statutory consultation later in the year

Action: SS to inform the group of the start of the consultation

8. AOB

8.1 Avenue to Learning

CS described the project which shows how the World Heritage can be used in teaching to assist and enhance learning related to the school curriculum, using Archaeology as a vehicle. Those involved in the pilot include the Young Archaeologists Club and Young WAHNS. It will then be offered to local schools. Avebury Social Club has been very supportive offering the use of its premises. Key partners include the National Trust and EH. Other support has been provided by Swindon Borough Council.

9. Date of next meeting

10.30 AM on Friday, September 16th, 2011 in Devizes Museum.

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

10.1 Skokholm Planning Decision

The decision was discussed at the Steering Committee and disappointment expressed at the lack of weight given to professional advice regarding the

historic environment. Processes to address this have been discussed by planning officers, the County Archaeologist and the World Heritage Site Officer.

10.2 PV Panels, Grain Store Galteemore Farm

SS reported that the panels have been granted permission but with a number of conditions in place to mitigate impact on landscape setting such as anodised aluminium surrounds to minimise glint/glare and matching the roof colour more closely to the panels. The planning officer has undertaken joint field visits with the WHSO to negotiate this.

10.3 Manor Farm, West Overton

GS reported that the Manor Farm, West Overton is on the market. The Countryside Stewardship Special Project is nearing its end and will require renegotiation to protect among other features half of a scheduled Iron Age enclosure. Any return to cultivation of a scheduled monument will require an EIA. Catchment Sensitive Farming is also an issue on this farm which lies in the Kennet Valley.

Action: DV will follow up on the implications

10.4 HLS target schemes in Wiltshire

DV reported that Natural England had asked the County Archaeology Service for the top thirty five priority areas in Wiltshire for inclusion in HLS schemes. Among those suggested was East Kennet Long Barrow. SS mentioned the Arable Reversion Opportunities map developed showing priority areas that NE has agreed to use to help assess HLS applications.

Action: SS to coordinate with DV on priorities for the World Heritage Site and forward Arable Reversion Opportunities map

10.5 Countryfile

DV reported that the BBC will be filming at the end of June at North Down Barrow Cemetery. The programme will look at protecting archaeology from burrowing animals.

CS added that according to the recent NE burrowing animal survey, reported on briefly at the Steering Committee in May, there are now a remarkably large number of badgers in Avebury. A written report will follow and further consideration of an approach to this challenge in light of the results of the Condition Survey.

11. Review of Monitoring

11.1 Condition Survey

PC offered some highlights from the recently completed WHS Condition Survey. Across the whole WHS a decade ago badgers affected only 1% of monuments. This has risen to 6% today. Cultivation has fallen since 1999 but remains a significant source of damage.

Results in Avebury were generally good.

- One third of monuments are now considered good/fair representing a slight improvement
- Visitor impacts are down with exceptions at the Henge, Windmill Hill and Silbury.
- Animal husbandry is still an impact but this has declined
- Fewer monuments are now classed as vulnerable
- Fewer are classified as undergoing rapid deterioration

The final report is imminent. It will be available in the public domain.

12. Final Review of the Report to WHS Steering Committee

Stands as at item 7.

13. AOB

13.1 West Kennet Long Barrow

BE enquired whether the repairs discussed at a previous AAHRG would be undertaken. RF will follow up on this query.

Action: English Heritage will report back to AAHRG on plans for West Kennet long barrow