

**Avebury World Heritage Site  
Archaeological and Historical Research Group  
DRAFT Notes of meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010**

**Present:** Amanda Chadburn, Bruce Eagles, Colin Shell, Gill Swanton, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger (Chair), Brian Edwards, Paul Cripps, Sarah Simmonds, Jim Gunter, Josh Pollard, Ros Cleal, David Vaughan, Dave Field, Sian Williams, Julie Scott-Jackson, Rachel Foster, Susan Greaney, Jonathan Last, Nick Snashall, Katie Hinds, Heather Sebire, Kate Fielden, Jim Leary, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Helen Winton, Rob Skinner

**1. Apologies and Introductions**

Martyn Barber, Martin Papworth, Jude Currivan, Nick Baxter, Vicky Crosby, Mike Allen, Kathy Perrin, Janet Tomlin, Mark Boden, David Dawson

**2. Minutes and matters arising**

**2.1 Minutes**

Draft notes from last minutes agreed with the addition of Jonathan Last to the apologies and removal of trust fund suggestion from 13.3 to replace with similar group to Friends of Stonehenge for the WHS.

In relation to action under item 3, AC will keep the group informed on plans for work at West Kennet long barrow. There is currently nothing to report.

**3. Monitoring of the Resource Agenda**

**3.1 Update on WHS Research Framework**

KP sent her apologies and asked SS to report that Wessex Archaeology had been selected from the tender process and that discussions were underway with English Heritage on the details of the final contract. There will be a fuller report at the next meeting of AAHRG.

AF added that the project design (PD) is under discussion but he can confirm some details. The PD will be very similar to the one discussed by AAHRG during the earlier stages of application to HEEP. Dr Nikki Cooke will be coordinating the framework. Paul White will be project managing the process. Work is scheduled to be over around 18 months.

SS confirmed that she had sent emails to those who have already agreed to contribute to updating the Resource Assessment for Avebury. This informed them of our success in gaining funding and that the coordinator, once appointed, would be in touch to discuss new timescales for their contributions.

**4. Current archaeological & historical research**

#### 4.1 Later Silbury Project - Nicola Hembrey

NH gave a presentation on Later Silbury; a research project to evaluate the Romano-British settlement in the fields to the south of Silbury Hill, revealed by geophysical survey in October 2006 as part of the Conservation Project (a summary is presented by Neil Linford in English Heritage Research News 10), and to assess the existing material from earlier excavations. Its aims are to increase our understanding of the settlement itself by 'ground-truthing' the geophysics, and to elucidate a poorly understood phase of activity around the monument and within the wider Avebury World Heritage Site. It will contribute to the future management and presentation of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site.

The evaluation took place between 9 August and 24 September 2010. The wider project team comprised 19 members of core EH staff and 7 external specialists; the on-site team comprised 11 members of casual staff. In addition, 6 volunteers worked for roughly one week each.

Three evaluation trenches were opened in the water meadow (Trenches 6-8). The banked enclosure identified in Dave Field's survey may be the remains of a paddock or enclosure defined by a cob wall, and is likely to be post-medieval. The discontinuous high resistance anomaly surrounded the 'tongue' of high ground may be the remains of bank cut by small leats forming part of a water meadow system (its leat and a smaller bank on the 'dry ground' side were also examined). No other features were found in the water meadow trenches – both this and the distinct scarcity of Romano-British pottery in the field are surprising. The environmental trench across the floodplain was recorded as planned, with several distinct layers of alluvial deposits, sampled for snails and for OSL dating.

Five evaluation trenches were excavated in the arable field, a small investigation (less than one-tenth of one percent) of the extensive settlement. Only features cut into the natural chalk survived in the trenches higher up the slope. The ditches suggested by the geophysics were located, and in several cases were accompanied by a slighter parallel ditch on their inside (pottery spot dates may show whether or not these were open at the same time). It had been hoped that Trenches 2, 3 and 4 would provide indications of activity in the enclosures alongside the various trackways, but this was only the case for Trench 1. It is hoped that the material for the ditch fills may provide an indication of the activities taking place nearby. Two ditch sections were sampled for snails. Trench 5 revealed the staple-shaped magnetic anomaly to be a beam slot for a timber building, cut into the hill slope to provide a level base, but no additional features associated with the building were found. Trench 1 was lower down the slope of the field and sited on the enclosure edge facing onto the trackway running south off the main Roman road. It did produce internal features, including a line of post holes inside the main enclosure ditch, the second slighter ditch (where some chalk packing may

suggest a fence), and a well, of which - in line with the PD - only part of the top fill was excavated. This fill contained a large quantity of stone, some of which had been burnt. Probing with a road iron indicated that soft fills lay below this. The fills of the enclosure ditch contained a very large concentration of pottery and burnt material (burnt grain was noted). West of the well, we found an infant burial (excavated under a Ministry of Justice licence). Metal working slag was recovered, and appropriate contexts were sampled for hammer scale.

The results provide useful information on ploughsoil depth, truncation and preservation of archaeological deposits in the ploughed field.

Dissemination has been via the English Heritage webpage and the popular and well-publicised excavation blog, which has been updated two or three times a week, and by three interviews with BBC Radio Wiltshire. Several successful group visits took place: Avebury Archaeological and Historical Research Group and Avebury World Heritage Site Steering Committee; Wiltshire County Councils Archaeologists; Wiltshire Heritage Group; Institute of Conservators; Alexander Keiller Museum, and a successful public tour advertised via parish notice boards, which attracted 72 interested and mostly local visitors and 11 dogs. A large number of people stopped to ask questions and look at our display boards.

Work is ongoing to undertake archive completion by the end of November; the assessment phase is due to be completed by mid-May 2011.

Many thanks are offered to members of AAHRG for their interest, support and useful input. NH thanked SS for her help in arranging communications with the local residents and WHS working groups.

In response to questions from the group NH confirmed that there were signs of historic damage from agriculture but less from modern activity. DF commented that there are signs on Silbury of potential Roman activity on its slopes. He suspects the summit and slopes may have been used memorials. NH reported that the results from the environmental samples are expected at the end of April 2011.

#### **4.2 Marden Excavation report- Jim Leary**

JL gave a presentation on the excavations which took place at Marden over the summer.

The location of the Hatfield Barrow was confirmed by excavation of a trench placed from its centre to the lip of its surrounding ditch. Dateable remains were recovered from the remnants of the mound itself, whilst features were recorded beneath it, including a central posthole and evidence for an episode

of tree clearance. Burnt material was recovered from the old ground surface below the mound and should provide good radiocarbon samples.

A section was excavated through the henge enclosure ditch terminal next to a proposed south-east entrance. The nature of this was confirmed and the ditch revealed as being originally 2m deep, and a considerable amount of prehistoric pottery, along with numerous antler picks and flint tools were recovered from it. Good organic preservation was also recorded from the lower levels of the ditch.

A thick deposit of deliberately laid gravel was recorded on the top of the causeway between the opposing ditch ends. This gravel was sitting within a shallow cut, possibly an earlier hollow way. This may well be a similar feature to the gravel roadway recorded at Durrington Walls, which led from the henge down to the River Avon. Preliminary coring outside the henge at Marden and along any likely route to the river indicates that the gravel continues and therefore supports the suggestion that it is part of a Neolithic gravel roadway leading from the henge to the River Avon.

The most remarkable part of the whole excavation, however, was in the southern part of the monument which revealed that the southern circle is a henge monument. On the bank of this smaller henge was an extraordinarily well-preserved Neolithic building. A chalk surface was clearly visible, and the central part of the surface was slightly sunken into the ground by about 20cms. This sunken area measured about 3m x 4m, and was dominated by a large hearth, which was surrounded by a gully presumably representing some sort of fireguard. On the floor were flint flakes still lying untouched in the same position they had been left in. Just outside the building were spreads of midden debris, and artefacts such as bone needles and awls and flint tools were found within it. In another area just outside the building were a large number of pig bones clearly representing feasting debris; mixed in with this were well-preserved fragments of highly decorated Grooved Ware pottery. Two beautifully made ripple flaked flint arrowheads were also recovered from around the building. Only one quarter of the internal surface of the building was exposed during this season of work and the possibility remains that the location of furniture and other internal building elements may be evident from the unexcavated area. Another season of work would elucidate this.

#### **4.3 Planned work at Marlborough Mound and "Silbaby" - Jim Leary**

JL reported on planned work at Marlborough Mound which will further contribute to the dating of round mounds in Wiltshire. A core will be taken from the top to the bottom of the Mound and two to its centre. Further cores will be taken around the ditch to establish survival. These will be examined

at Fort Cumberland. A large crane, necessary for the coring, is being assembled in the grounds of the College in preparation for the work. The project is being funded by £25,000 from the Marlborough Mound Trust.

In addition to this work an investigation will be taking place to discover the nature of "Silbaby" near the Palisade Enclosures. The edges and top few metres will be explored to see if the mound could be Neolithic or if it is more likely to be a natural phenomenon or simply modern road materials. The work should ascertain whether "Silbaby" merits further study.

JL confirmed that Marlborough Mound would be back-filled with chalk and "Silbaby" with the materials it is found to contain.

BE remarked that "Silbaby" appears on nineteenth century maps. AC commented that antiquarians had not picked up on the mound.

MPK requested the project designs for both pieces of work.

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

### **5.1 Possible titles for fascicules - Ros Cleal**

RC reported that she has not received any suggestions for titles from members since the last meeting of AAHRG. She has six or seven ideas for the fascicules currently in varying stages of development. She will produce a paper with further detail for circulation and discussion at the next meeting.

RC gave a brief overview of these topics:

- Polissoirs: a gazetteer of JG's work
- Winterbourne Basset Stone Circle work: JG and AD
- Silbury Hill historical material
- Vatcher material: more detailed than Longstones monograph and pits on Overton Hill
- Glebe Field material
- School site: JP and AR
- Keiller detail from excavation. A series including West Kennet Avenue and each sector of the henge

BE suggested that Steve Marshall's work on springs around Avebury might be considered as a possible topic. He suggested that non-professional contributions might perhaps be edited into shape for publication.

The fascicules could be produced under the auspices of AAHRG in conjunction with the AK Museum. AAHRG might act as the reviewing body and small working groups or individuals drawn from the group could see it through to press.

**Action: RC to circulate paper detailing options for fascicules. They will be discussed at the next meeting**

**All to send thoughts to RC on timing of fascicules, and where and in what form they should appear prior to the next meeting**

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

DD sent apologies and suggested that if anyone had any thoughts about the WHS Research Seminar, or would like to be involved in putting it together, they should contact him. This subject will be discussed at the next meeting.

**Action: All to contact DD with suggestions regarding the WHS Research Agenda**

### **5.3 Publications**

- *The Story of Silbury Hill* by Jim Leary and David Field has been published by English Heritage. There will be a launch event with a talk at Salisbury Museum on 11 November.

### **6. Review of Membership**

SS reported that she will be sending out an email to those who have not been in contact for more than two years as set out in the AAHRG terms of reference. She will check if they still wish to remain part of the group. People may rejoin the group at any point when their research interests return to the WHS.

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

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

- Later Silbury
- Marden and Marlborough Mound as context of the WHS
- Publication of *The Story of Silbury Hill*
- Potential fascicules
- Contract for Research Framework let

### **8. AOB**

#### **8.1 Great Stones Way**

The Friends of the Ridgeway have been invited to present plans for the Great Stones Way project, a walking route linking Avebury to Stonehenge, to the

Steering Committee on 10 November. SS has already raised concerns regarding adequate impact assessment, monitoring and proactive maintenance regimes to deal with any increase in footfall as well as concerns over parking congestion.

## **8.2 Manton Axe Report**

GS reported that her and AL's report on the Manton Axe Hoard will be published in the near future.

## **8.3 Experimental Earthwork fenced**

GS reported that the experimental earthwork fence has now been repaired.

## **8.4 Archive Research Data**

Katy Whitaker has completed her assessment of the archive. It will now be passed on to Mike Evans at the NMR

## **8.5 Aerial Photographs**

Rob Skinner is an EPPIC student undertaking a placement with EH during which he will be looking at Lidar data for Avebury and mapping this. He will also be looking at satellite mapping for the area.

**Action: RS will report on his work at the next meeting**

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

10.30AM on Friday February 11<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Devizes Museum

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

### **10.1 Bridgemead – Jim Gunter**

JG reported that they had reopened the Cotswold Archaeology trench. This showed very disturbed stratigraphy. From the 30's to the 50's the area was used as an industrial site and there has been a great deal of disturbance. In addition the site has been levelled using material from the Trusloe Sewer excavations. Potential postholes appear to be related to the provision of a power supply in 1942 for a pig slaughterhouse.

MA will also be doing some augering at the site. Planned tree felling may delay this.

### **10.2 Underground electricity supply to Avebury Trusloe – Josh Pollard**

JP reported that the route of the supply runs from the junction box for Trusloe Manor farm across Longstones Field and the projected course of the Beckhampton Avenue. The cable is 600m long and there was a 10% chance that the work would pick something up.

In fact little was found. There was one worked flint and a little pottery. Near the barn six pieces of worked flint were found that might be late prehistoric or medieval. They seemed to have been bashed by a metal hammer. There is a huge swathe including the Longstones Field where very little prehistoric, Neolithic or Bronze Age activity shows up. This is confirmed by the results of fieldwalking. Interesting questions regarding why areas were without activity arise: the archaeology of absence. Could they have been reserved areas?

Robin Butler has agreed to allow JG to carry out further geophysics along the line of the Avenue.

**Action: JP to send report to DV**

**JP to send details of the 'bashed' flints found to JSJ**

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

DV reported on works planned under the Monument Management Scheme lead by Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service in partnership with EH. Scrub clearance will take place on the Longstones long barrow in early 2011. Tendering is now underway for this work.

### **10.4 Mound in Ogbourne St John**

MPK added that some work is planned on a curious mound in the Ogbourne St John cemetery. She will report at the next meeting.

### **10.5 Overton Hill Undergrounding**

NS reported that the project is now complete. There has been no further report from OA to add to the last one given at AAHRG. The final report will be sent in due course.

## **11. Review of Monitoring**

### **11.1 Condition Survey**

RF reported that Wessex Archaeology is surveying at present. AF reported that progress was routine. Two teams are working in Avebury looking at condition. Heights will be measured next week. Stonehenge will take place next month with the same team to ensure consistency.

**Action: Paul White to contact EH regarding a possible cut in the number of sites to be measured.**

### **11.2 Woodland Strategy**

NS reported that formal invites to prospective members of the project board will be sent out next week. There will be a formal representative of AAHRG on the board and the group will be a key consultee. Natural England are funding the project via an existing NT stewardship agreement.

### **11.3 Burrowing Animal and Badger Survey**

RF reported that this will survey will start on 10 November.

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

Report at item 7 stands.

### **13. AOB**

#### **13.1 Palaeolithic Finds**

JSJ reminded the group that unusual flint finds could relate to Palaeolithic activity. She requested that she be informed of any potentially Palaeolithic finds.

#### **13.2 Coach house change of use, Avebury High Street**

BE expressed concerns about the proposed NT catering outlet. Concerns were raised about the loss of the toilets and also about litter from the business. SS commented that the WHS management plan requires that any new facility should increase understanding and enjoyment of the WHS and direct visitors away from the central area to the wider WHS. Comments reflecting this were submitted to the planning officer.

#### **13.3 Chalk to infill settlement on Silbury Hill**

AC reported that chalk will be lifted by helicopter to the top of Silbury Hill. The chalk is designed to fill in settlement of the work in 2007. The contractor will have completed the work next week

**Action: AC to check if the area is to be re-seeded**

#### **13.4 Governance Review**

The contract for work in the review of governance of the WHS is soon to be let. Work will need to be completed by the end of this financial year.

#### **13.5 English Heritage and the spending review**

Cuts at EH are set at 32% over 4 years. The outcomes of the internal review are awaited. JL added that the new Heritage Protection Plan will be launched in November. It will represent the core of the corporate strategy for the next 5 years. The Prehistoric Research Strategy will be revised in response to the cuts.

CS suggested contacting Loyd Grossman to lobby for continued investment in the heritage sector in his role of chair of Heritage Link.

#### **13.6 Stonehenge Coordinator moves on**

AC reported that Isabelle Bedu the Stonehenge WHS Coordinator employed by EH has resigned after ten years in post to go travelling.

#### **13.7 Consultation on the Statement of Outstanding Universal**

SS reminded the group that the consultation was open until 31 October. It can be accessed via the Wiltshire Council website.

### **13.8 Archaeology Service Update**

MPK reported that Sarah McLean has been appointed HER officer. The post has funding for 3 years. The new software to allow the move from CAD to GIS will be available in April next year.

Budget cuts at Wiltshire Council mean that 25% of managers will lose their jobs. Eight of these will be in heritage. MPK's own post as well as the conservation lab manager may be at risk.