

**Notes of a meeting held at the Study Centre, Avebury  
on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2001**

**Present**

Amanda Chadburn; Ros Cleal; David Field; Mike Pitts; Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger; Julie Scott-Jackson; Gill Swanton (Chair); Peter Fowler; Andrew Lawson; Brian Davison; Josh Pollard; Mark Gillings; Kate Fielden; Simon Crutchley; Sue Farr; Andrew Reynolds; Sian Williams; Bruce Eagles; Brian Edwards.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Bob Bewley; Mark Corney; Rosie Edmunds; Andrew David; Paul Robinson; Dave Batchelor; David Thackray; Colin Shell.

**2. Notes of Last Meeting (16<sup>th</sup> May) and Matters Arising**

Introductions: Sue Farr and Brian Edwards were introduced and welcomed to the meeting.

GS mentioned the recent death of Peter Reynolds, who had contributed a great deal to experimental archaeology.

Good feedback has been received following the publication of the Avebury Research Agenda in May. It was suggested that review copies should be sent to WAM and Antiquity (MPK to action).

**3. Development Control**

- West Kennett Manor: MPK mentioned a recent proposal (not a planning application yet) to build a swimming pool in the grounds of the Manor. This is likely to impinge on the non-scheduled part of Palisaded Enclosure 1, west of Gunsite Lane. Extension of the Scheduling is needed here and AC agreed to chase the MPP team about this. AL mentioned the potential use of Article 4 Directions, as at Stonehenge.
- Sarsen Kennels, Overton Hill: MPK mentioned that the planning permission for two extensions (mentioned at the last meeting) has now been granted by KDC following a desk assessment undertaken by AC Archaeology.
- National Trust proposal for toilets: KF commented on the recent application by the Trust to provide additional toilets at the back of the Barn.

#### **4. Utilities**

MPK mentioned the recent incident of a hole being dug within the Henge Scheduled area by Southern Electric. It was undertaken as part of emergency repair work in the middle of the night. Subsequently, SE has asked to be supplied with information on the location of SMs for their GIS database.

AC emphasised that EH should have been contacted by Southern Electric's planning department, even though EH probably would not have been able to respond at this time. All that could have been achieved is a watching brief at the time.

AL commented that the archaeological community is not set up to respond to emergency works in the middle of the night. However, the utility companies need to know which archaeologists can be mobilised quickly for recording emergency works.

BE mentioned that it is a struggle trying to deal with utility contractors since privatisation as the turnover of staff is high and they have to work to tight timetables.

BD and AC commented on the need to monitor the cases of unauthorised holes being dug by utility companies.

AL suggested that a network of volunteer monument wardens has been effective in some areas, such as Norfolk, and could be considered for Avebury.

#### **5. Fieldwalking project**

DF outlined the report on fieldwalking which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The paper proposes a three-year project of fieldwalking in the WHS, similar to the work carried out at Stonehenge in the 1980's. It is proposed that it will be undertaken by local archaeologists and AAHRG members, working in their spare time. There has been little systematic fieldwalking with consistent methodologies so far in the Avebury area. The approach suggested is a pick-up survey rather than recording and analysis in the field. Attention needs to be given to methodologies and sampling strategies.

DF and MPK suggested that in order to get an agreed methodology, that AAHRG should host a seminar on early next year, prior to the commencement of the project.

AR commented that a three-year project was a better approach than a short-term one because of the practicalities of access and the farming regime.

AL stressed the value of undertaken such surveys over large areas, especially when a consistent methodology is employed. Wessex Archaeology had undertaken large surveys in the 70s and 80s using different approaches, e.g. Kennet Valley, Stonehenge and the Dorset Ridgeway. The methodology used in the Stonehenge survey did evolve. It is well worth having the seminar at Avebury and then sticking to the methodology decided upon at the start. A pick-up survey would be better as trying to study artefacts in the field would be difficult, especially in winter.

RC supported the idea of the seminar, stressing that it is important to be clear about what the aim is. In the Avebury area there is a problem with a number of previous collections carried out with a range of methodologies. It will be worth re-walking these with the standard methodology. She has some doubts about the project being carried out by local volunteers, as funding and professional help will be required especially with the analysis of the finds. Storage of the project finds in the Alexander Keiller Museum may be problematic, unless the Trust's plans for converting the Rackets Court into a store can go ahead with funding from English Heritage.

GS commented that the issues of storage and museum collection areas should go on the agenda for the seminar.

AC welcomed the idea of the seminar. A review of the old collections needs to be included as part of the new project. A standard methodology and data collection policy needs to be agreed, regardless of who carries out the work.

BE suggested that metal detecting could be included as part of the survey.

The possible venue and size of the seminar was discussed. Depending on numbers, it could be held in Avebury, Devizes or Swindon. It was agreed that all interested AAHRG members would be invited, together with a number of "experts" who may want to contribute. Suggested invitees for the seminar include: Robin Holgate, Julian Ricards, John Schofield, David Hall, Bill Buoy Smyer, someone from the Lithic Studies Society.

MPK and DF agreed to start organising the seminar on behalf of AAHRG. A tentative date of Friday 1<sup>st</sup> February was agreed.

## **6. WHS Boundaries**

PF outlined the report circulated prior to the meeting. This report has been written by PF and MPK since the last meeting. The Avebury Management Plan sets out a review of the WHS boundary as a short-term objective. It is also an UNESCO requirement to review the boundary. Changing the boundary is likely to be a complicated process, which will also involve local consultation. However, it is necessary to do it at this stage and will be welcomed by ICOMOS and UNESCO. It is now a question of deciding where to go from here with the report and how to develop the recommendations for new boundaries. The report addresses several areas of the current boundary, which are in need of attention:

- Need to consider creating an "apron" on the north side of Windmill Hill to protect views of the monument.
- We now know much more about the archaeological remains on the southwest side of the WHS, thanks to the survey work done by the RCMHE. This should be taken into account.
- On the southeast side we need to decide whether to include the villages along the valley bottom.

- The biggest problem is with the current eastern boundary, which cuts across important archaeological and landscape features. Due to Peter Fowler's work, we now know a lot more about this area. A decision needs to be made to either pull the boundary back to the Ridgeway, or include more of the eastern landscape. A judgement needs to be made on if we should include just visible earthworks or extend to include the whole of the historic landscape boundary, including Manton where the archaeological features are no longer visible. Consideration should also be given to the importance of the presence of sarsens to the historic settlements in the area.
- Consideration needs to be given to the definition of a buffer zone. A buffer zone should to be considered as a management device. The boundaries of the AONB could be linked in here.

### Discussion

AL commented on the issues relating to the eastern boundary. In terms of better management, it is important to not just include the areas of well-preserved archaeological features.

AC mentioned that the report is helpful. The visual envelopes around the six key monuments at the heart of the WHS designation are very important to getting the boundary right.

AR remarked on the importance of the Pewsey scarp and its rare survival.

BD suggested that it would be necessary for Kennet District Council to be made aware of what is expected of the planning department in terms of a buffer zone.

KF remarked that DCMS and EH should put pressure on KDC to accept the idea of a buffer zone.

### Actions

A further field visit to examine the boundary issues will take place on 4<sup>th</sup> December. AAHRG members are welcome to participate. Please contact MPK. The Group must make some decisions about the extent on the revised boundary at the next meeting.

## **7. Silbury Hill**

AC reported that a lot of work has been undertaken at Silbury since the last meeting.

The two small trenches excavated at the top of the Hill have revealed two pieces of antler pick in the Neolithic chalk walls, providing good dating evidence. Another small trench may be dug in the near future.

The seismic survey has now been completed and the results are awaited. These will be made available to the public. Prior to the survey the collapsed shaft had been filled with cut polystyrene blocks and capped with chalk to stabilise it and prevent further erosion.

Lots of research has been done on the Silbury archive material in the Alexander Keiller Museum and the BBC. The director of mining for Atkinson's excavations, John Taylor, also holds a lot of material. AC is trying to get access to this. EH are still having difficulties in accessing the old Ministry of Works files on the previous collapse of the top of the shaft in the 1930's. It seems to have collapsed a number of times in the past. So much new information has come to light about Silbury in the last few months that a publication will be required.

DF outlined some of the findings of the survey work undertaken on the Hill in the last few months. The ledge system around the Hill, described by Atkinson, may be a spiral used in original construction. A cropmark (10m wide) appeared for two or three days, running for 50m across the meadow from the car park area into the Silbury ditch. Geophysical survey is needed to clarify what it might be. DF has also been studying documentary material in the Bodleian, especially Gough's manuscripts which show drawings of Silbury from the 1780's. A final report on the work at Silbury will be available in November. DF has also found some documentary evidence to suggest that the Winterbourne Bassett stone circle is in a different location than currently thought. This would tie in with the negative results of the geophysical survey carried out at the site by Andrew David.

## **8. Any Other Business**

- AR reported that the Wansdyke Research Project, delayed because of Foot & Mouth, would be starting its fieldwork in November on the medieval earthworks at Shaw.
- MG circulated copies of the draft research design for the Beckhampton Research Project. To make up for delays caused by Foot & Mouth, two fieldwork seasons are planned for the coming year. One focus will be tracing the continuation and termination of the Beckhampton Avenue. Work is also proposed on the West Kennett Avenue and Faulkner's Circle. SMC will be applied for in the next few weeks. During the first week of November some geophysics and fieldwalking will be undertaken in Beckhampton Field, near Firs Farm. A research fellow has been appointed to work on the Beckhampton project. He will be looking at the Stuckley material in the Bodleian and will present the findings to AAHRG in a couple of years.
- MP commented that some possible stone holes had been noticed by Pete Glastonbury in a trench dug in 1999 by the Telewest contractors. GS has some photographs.
- SC mentioned that Damien Grady, during recent flying in the area, has photographed two enclosures under field systems south of West Kennett.
- KF advertised the Avebury Society lecture in Marlborough on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- AC mentioned that the new English Heritage GIS developer, Sarah Cross, is now in post in Portsmouth.

## **9. Next meeting**

- Fieldwalking Seminar: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2002 in Avebury
- Full meeting: Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2002 at 10.30.