



## **Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Site Archaeological and Historical Research Group Draft Notes of Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

**Present:** Gill Swanton, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, (Chair), Brian Edwards, Sarah Simmonds, Colin Shell, Dan Miles, Beth Thomas, Phil McMahon, Rachel Foster, Bruce Eagles, Nick Baxter, Susan Greaney, Matt Leivers, Andrew David, Andrew Powell, Heather Sebire, Mark Bowden, Martyn Barber, Nick Snashall, David Dawson, Jude Currivan, Sian Williams, David Field, Nicola Hembrey, David Richards, Stuart Needham, Dave Sabin, Kerry Donaldson, Helen Wickstead, Heather Papworth, Andy Ford

### **1. Apologies and Introductions**

Kate Fielden, Abby George, Jonathan Last, Jim Gunter, Julie Scott Jackson, Josh Pollard, Steve Marshall, Ian Barnes, Ros Cleal, Paul Cripps, Jim Leary, Paul White, David Vaughan

The group welcomed new members Stuart Needham, David Sabin, Kerry Donaldson and David Roberts. SS reminded the group of the process for nominating new members; an existing member needs to nominate a new member who will also require a seconder who is an ASHRG existing member. Emails to the secretariat are sufficient. Please inform the secretariat if you would like to bring a guest/observer to a meeting.

Andy Ford and Heather Papworth from Bournemouth University and Helen Wickstead from Kingston University are welcomed as presenters at today's meetings.

Following the membership review two members have stepped down: Andrew Lawson and Vicky Crosby. Those who step down are welcome to return to ASHRG when their research interests return to the WHS and its environs.

### **2. Minutes and matters arising**

#### **2.1 Minutes**

The minutes were approved.

#### **2.2 Matters Arising**

Covered under agenda items.

### **3. ASHRG Final Draft ToR**

The ToR were accepted by the group with one small amendment to third paragraph: replace Group with Forum with reference the Avebury Environs.

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

##### **4.1 Update on WHS Research Framework**

###### **4.1.1 Resource Assessment**

Matt Leivers (ML) from Wessex Archaeology reported that the Resource Assessment was in the final stages of completion. It was sent for peer review and the response to the comments is being finalised. The project design for the edit was agreed by the project board at their meeting earlier in the day.

###### **4.1.2 Research Agenda**

The Research Agenda has been redrafted to reflect comments from AAHRG and wider stakeholders. Final comments from the SARF project board are expected at the end of the March. The Agenda will be amended in response prior to undergoing a peer review process. It final draft will be circulated to ASHRG for comment.

###### **4.1.3 Research Strategy**

An outline Strategy with broad principals and aims has been drawn up based on input at workshops and suggestions provided by some authors as part of their resource assessment. A first draft of the Strategy is expected in April following the completion of the Agenda. The project board will discuss the Strategy in May and it will then be circulated to ASHRG for comment.

It was suggested that it might be more appropriate to consult ASHRG prior to the peer review of the Agenda. It was pointed out that the group had already had the opportunity to comment prior to the peer review. The project will however take into account this point before agreeing the final order for review and circulation.

###### **4.1.4 Launch**

The target date for completion and publication of the Research Framework is February 2015. It is hoped that a joint launch and possible seminar can be arranged to coincide with the publication of the new Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan.

ML confirmed that the Research Framework does include reference to the environs beyond the boundary of WHS.

The group acknowledged that elements of the Resource Assessment will already be out of date to some extent but that any Framework can only offer a point in time. Keeping the Framework updated following publication will be a challenge. A process for this will need to be identified with ASHRG.

**Action: SS to forward link to the documents on the Wessex Archaeology website once the most recent versions have been completed and uploaded.**

**SS to add an item to the next ASHRG agenda to focus on the Research Framework.**

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

### **5.1 Assessing airborne SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) for archaeological prospection and preservation in Avebury WHS - Heather Papworth and Andy Ford (Bournemouth University)**

AF gave a presentation on the planned survey work at Avebury. A summary of the presentation is provided below.

Aerial archaeological prospection has conventionally used photography in the visible wavelengths (panchromatic, true-colour or occasionally false-colour infra-red) during ephemeral events to reveal contrasts in soil/vegetation tone/colour. Such events include ploughing (causing soil marks) and extreme dry weather (causing crop marks). Optical imaging is rarely coincident with such events and therefore remains mostly opportunistic in nature.

Orbital Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) has proved useful for archaeological prospection in tropical regions, where it can penetrate persistent cloud and vegetation (for example the discovery of hitherto unknown structures in the environs of Angkor Wat). These advantages outweigh the relatively coarse spatial resolution (20-30m). The same is true where SAR has succeeded in prospecting for archaeology buried beneath fine sediments in hyper arid regions (for instance Middle & Late-Neolithic settlements under the Sahara desert) using relatively long wavelengths (~24cm).

Archaeological SAR has received little attention in temperate regions, due to the coarse spatial resolution and few perceived benefits. However, it's ability (especially when using multiple wavelengths and polarization) to reveal subtle differences in soil/vegetative composition/structure due to buried sites and monuments, coupled with the fine spatial resolution (metre or sub-metre scale), means that airborne SAR has the unique capability to provide systematic archaeological surveys for the first time, irrespective of cultivation, season or weather. What is more, it holds the potential to reveal subtle changes in existing earthworks (ditches, ramparts, barrows etc.) over time (e.g. due to plough damage, footpath erosion etc.) and is also a powerful tool for policing preservation orders.

The project will assess archaeological prospection and preservation with airborne SAR at two sites. The first, *Avebury* World Heritage Site was acquired as part of an unrelated study in July 2010. This acquisition will be repeated in mid May 2014 to reveal 1) seasonal differences in buried feature prospection; and 2) changes in the state of preservation of upstanding earthworks. The second site, at *Cranborne Chase* (Dorset) uses perpendicular flight lines to cover a broad range of archaeological sites and monuments investigated and monitored by Bournemouth University. These include the *Dorset Cursus* and the *Knowlton Prehistoric Landscape*.

JC suggested the middle/upper chalk interface at Knowle Down might provide a good sample.

AF acknowledged the technique may not work that well in a temperate climate as the wet ground may inhibit penetration. Previous results have been achieved in drier climate such as Egypt. The wet winter we have had may prove a challenge. If successful, the technique can pick up invisible changes. This must be followed by ground-truthing within twenty four hours. Volunteers to assist with grass collection and augering would be most welcome.

CS pointed out that data collected in NERC funded projects undergo a one-year embargo and are released to academics after this.

**Action: Anyone interested in volunteering to assist with ground-truthing to contact Andy Ford [REDACTED]**

## **5.2 Aspects of the recent history of the Stonehenge and Avebury landscapes - Helen Wickstead and Martyn Barber**

MB and HW presented three projects that relate to aspects of the recent history of the landscapes. MB began by summarising work undertaken at Stonehenge looking at the well-documented but seldom focussed on history of interventions in the landscape during the twentieth century. These sources include the earliest records of attempts to 'retain' and 'restore' elements of the landscape.

The second piece of work summarised by HW explores the interrelationship of the landscape and archaeologists with surrealist and modernist artists, sculptors, architects and writers in the twentieth century which gave rise to the invention of concrete prehistories and modern megaliths.

The third focused on the project 'Stonehenge': Motoring Histories, Heritage Tourism and the Stonehenge Café. This project is the work of Lawrence, Wickstead and Barber. A draft project design was circulated. The Twentieth Century Society is also a partner in the project and has provided a finds specialist to assist. There will be discussions with the NT and relevant partners regarding the possibility of a proposed excavation at the site of the Café to collect further material culture to help explore what the motoring classes were doing during the period. There will be an oral history element to the project at both a local and wider level involving all individuals and groups who may have memories of the period. The team would welcome comments on the draft project design.

NS suggested the team might like to look at the oral history archive collected by the NT at Stonehenge.

HS added that the decommissioning of the visitor facilities at Stonehenge is being carefully recorded with relevant information provided for visitors.

DF asked that the remaining sewage works that formed part of the twentieth century Stonehenge landscape is not removed without trace.

**Action: All to feedback to MB if there are any comments on the draft project design circulated at the meeting [REDACTED CONTACT]**

## **6. Review of Current Opportunities for Dissemination of Research including recent/forthcoming publications**

### **6.1 Archaeology in Wiltshire**

DD reported that the conference Archaeology in Wiltshire will take place on 15<sup>th</sup> March.

### **6.2 Silbury Hill Monograph**

The monograph is now available. This is almost fourteen years after the collapse occurred that triggered the conservation project.

### **6.3 Stonehenge WHS Landscape Project**

DF reported that publication should be in late 2014.

### **6.4 Open Farm Sunday, West Overton**

This will take place at North Farm hosted by GS.

**Action: GS to follow up with SS about a WHS presence on the day similar to last year's event in Avebury**

## **7. Other research opportunities (i.e. development-led archaeology, utilities)**

### **7.1 Stonehenge**

The Archaeology Service is commenting on options for army rebasing. The decommissioning of the old visitor facilities is being carefully monitored.

### **7.2 Avebury**

The Archaeology Service has commented on an application for a large grain store near the Longstones Field. The archaeological assessment was undertaken by Josh Pollard and nothing significant was found.

## **8. Review of monitoring (e.g. need for condition surveys, Management Plan actions)**

### **8.1 Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan update**

SS reported that BT had completed the review of the Stonehenge Plan at the end of 2013 and the outcomes reported to the Management Plan Project Board in January.

The Project Board agreed that the review process at both Avebury and Stonehenge had provided enough evidence to inform the update of the Management Plan. The Board also agreed that parts 3 and 4 of the Plan dealing with aims, policies and implementation should be prepared first as perhaps the most important element of the Plan which is often rushed if the main body of the Plan is completed first.

SS and BT are currently drafting the draft aims, policies and actions to present the Project Board in April. There will be a Wider Stakeholder Workshop to review these on 20<sup>th</sup> May. The main body of the text is also under preparation for the consultation draft which should be completed over the summer. The provisional date for the public consultation is autumn 2014.

## **9. Representative's report and review of content of report to WHS Steering Committees and Partnership Panel**

### **9.1 Report from WHS Partnership Panel**

CS reported that the first Partnership Panel (WHSP) had been held earlier in the week on 24<sup>th</sup> February. It was an introductory meeting for the group and gave the members an opportunity to meet the new Chair Alistair Sommerlad. CS is the ASHRG representative on the WHSP.

### **9.2 Report to WHS Steering Committees**

- ToR agreed and first meeting of the new expanded group ASHRG held at the end of February
- Progress on the WHS Research Framework
- Current Research Projects
  - Airborne SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) assessment at Avebury
  - Research into the recent history of the Stonehenge and Avebury landscapes

## **10. Opportunities for site/exhibition/archive visits in 2014**

### **10.1 Possible ASHRG visits**

- Suggestions included a summer visit to Stonehenge visitor centre combined with the excavation of the old café site if this goes ahead
- New galleries at Salisbury Museum
- Visit to Iron Age/Roman site at Urchfont. David Roberts from EH to advise.
- Possible visit to Blick Mead in April

## **11. AOB**

### **11.1 WHS Coordination Unit**

SS and BT are now based at the History Centre in Chippenham where they will be working closely together across both halves of the WHS in the newly formed Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Coordination Unit. Nick Snashall's role will be to provide archaeological advice to the Unit across the WHS.

### **11.2 EH Research Framework Survey**

DM requested that members of the group fill out the survey on Research Frameworks on the EH website in order to assist their future development.  
[REDACTED CONTACT]

### **11.3 Thanks**

MPK thanked SS for her work in setting up ASAHRG and DD for hosting its first meeting.

### **11.4 Suggestions for ASAHRG Presentations**

SS requested that members send suggestions for presenters to her for discussion with ASAHRG chairs

**Action: All to send suggestions for ASAHRG presenters to SS**

## **12. Date and venue of next meeting**

2 PM on Friday, 23rd May, 2014 at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.