

MINUTES

ASAHRG MEETING, 21st OCTOBER 2022

On-line and in-person at Wiltshire Museum, Devizes, 10.30am-12.45pm

1. Present:

Online:

Gill Swanton (Chair)

Roland Smith *

Sian Williams

Susan Greaney

Steve Marshall

Heather Sebire *

Josh Pollard *

Ben Chan

David Roberts *

Kerry Donaldson

Briony Clifton

Neil Adam

Jonathan Last

Rosamund Cleal

Jackie McKinley *

*not present for the whole meeting

Devizes in person:

Amanda Chadburn (minutes)

Kate Fielden

Phil Harding

Colin Shell

David Dawson

Brian Edwards

2. Apologies:

Matt Leivers, Lisa Brown, Mark Bowden, Katy Whitaker, Nick Snashall, Clive Ruggles, Martyn Barber, Andrew David, Nick Baxter, Jess Thompson, Richard Osgood, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Dan Miles, Anna Collar and Stuart Eve.

3. The Minutes as revised were accepted as the best record possible for the previous meeting.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes (not elsewhere on agenda)

Colin Shell said that unfortunately he was unable to circulate his presentation from the last meeting as it includes copyrighted images.

David Dawson indicated that a letter of thanks from ASAHRG to the Director of the BM with regard to the Stonehenge Exhibition was being drafted.

5. Review of membership list and discussion of elections.

Membership List:

Amanda Chadburn (AC) as Acting Admin/Secretary indicated that she was still cleaning up the ASAHRG membership list - Sarah Askham had started cleaning up the membership list before she left the Coordination Unit, and AC has been continuing that work.

AC reported that there are currently 78 names including newly elected folk on recent ASAHRG circulation lists (taken from what was sent over, and from minutes and mailings over the last year). Of those 78 names, only 41 responded to the Sarah Askham's email about membership. But there are lots of active people who didn't respond! A number of people had fallen off the list in error and have now been reinstated. The meeting agreed it is important to ensure there is an-up-to-date list, not least for any elections.

Suggested way forward: AC to write individually to all those people who didn't respond to Sarah Askham, and ask whether they would like to remain on ASAHRG/ whether their names are on the list in error (apologising for any double handing).

She will try and track down new contact details for everyone. If people don't respond within 6 weeks, AC will remove them from the ASAHRG membership list. AC obviously won't recontact those who have already replied positively to Sarah. The meeting agreed this course of action. **ACTION:**

AMANDA

Members are invited to think of omissions and people who may have dropped off. **ACTION: ALL**

This clean-up is likely to take a little while, but we should have a final and up to date list within a few weeks and certainly this calendar year.

Elections:

The meeting agreed to defer any elections until at least the next meeting or ideally until the new Terms of Reference (see items below) are agreed. It was also noted that there had been a hiatus in

meetings because of Covid which had impacted on the usual terms of office, many of which are “up”. However, it was also noted that Katy Whitaker had stepped down as Chair (thanks were given to her) and needs replacing asap.

6. *New Terms of Reference.*

Amanda Chadburn is leading on this task. The draft ToR had been pre-circulated to members and she set out what had been done to change the existing ToR (having agreed this with the Chairs) –

- Tightening up the terms of office (using the 2x 3 years model).
- Tightening up the processes for choosing Chairs and the ASAHRG Rep on the WHS Meetings (and, if there are several candidates, having elections).
- Tightening up who does what and responsibilities
- Suggestion of ex-officio members
- Tweaks to the model agenda
- Changes needed with regard to in-person/ online/ hybrid meetings
- Moving the History of ASAHRG to the bottom of the document.

It was agreed members should get comments on the circulated draft new ToR to her by the end of November. The meeting agreed that we should try and agree a final ToR as soon as reasonably possible. **ACTION: ALL**

7. *WHS Steering Committees/ WHS Partnership Panel Representative's report*

Colin Shell reported on a meeting of 20th October (the day before) of the Avebury Steering Committee and members of the WHS Partnership Panel who are also on the Trust Transition Project Board (TT PB). The Governance Review was discussed, but the proposed way forward for a change of governance structure for the WHS was not accepted by the Steering Committee because, *inter alia*, it didn't sufficiently represent “community interest” - which is something which UNESCO emphasizes as important in managing a WHS*.

The situation now needs to go to both the Avebury and Stonehenge Steering Committees.

It has been agreed that Colin is now able to circulate documentation from the Consultants to ASAHRG.

A proposed Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Trust to enable the WHS Coordination Unit ultimately to become financially independent, an option recommended by the HLF-funded consultant, Sam Rose, had previously been rejected by English Heritage/ National Trust/ Historic England/ Wiltshire Council representatives on the Partnership Panel. However, it has now been agreed that a Working Party can discuss this and take it forward.

Colin agreed to circulate any relevant documentation to ASAHRG when appropriate. **ACTION: COLIN**

8. *Presentation/ Report – Excavations at East Kennett 2022 by Josh Pollard and Ben Chan, University of Southampton*

Josh and Ben gave a presentation on the digs at East Kennett in 2022. They were investigating the context of a sarsen-lined hole discovered in June 2020. They were hoping to find prehistoric remains.

Surprisingly, the features and context turned out to be a very well-preserved Romano-British complex with buildings, including a large bone deposit associated with late Roman ceramics.

It has parallels to the Overton Down settlement excavated by Peter Fowler, and to the later Roman settlement near Silbury Hill.

The Roman site under investigation by Anna Collar and Stuart Eve to the north of Avebury Henge is rather different with a very different pottery assemblage.

9. *Members Updates*

- David Dawson indicated that some of Wiltshire Museum's gold objects were being sampled by Leicester University – further details i.d.c.
- He indicated that Dr. Rebecca Ellis had been investigating the Marlborough Bucket as part of her PhD. There is an article on this artefact in the latest *British Archaeology*.
- Colin Shell reminded members that the second volume of Stonehenge for the Ancestors has been published – it is free to read online: <https://www.sidestone.com/books/stonehenge-for-the-ancestors-part-2> and is published by Sidestone.
- Ben Chan talked about the AHRC-funded project on the Avebury Papers, digitising the C20 excavations at Avebury, which aims to make Keiller's work more accessible. See also Annex A. <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FW003619%2F1>
- Gill Swanton indicated that a new publication of non-conformist chapels in Wiltshire includes Avebury. <https://www.whitehorsebooks.co.uk/wiltshire-nonconformist-chapels-and-meeting-houses>

10. *Research opportunities* (i.e. utilities, opportunities from development or conservation) – none were noted.

11. *Opportunities for outreach and dissemination of research.*

- Colin Shell note that because of a lack of time, it is unlikely that a conference will be held in 2023 to celebrate 30 years of ASHRG. However, it was suggested that a public lecture could take place – perhaps with posters of research alongside? Amanda Chadburn said the lecture date should be fixed soon.
- Susan Greaney noted that it was the 300th anniversary of Stukeley's 1723 fieldwork at Avebury. Ros Cleal echoed this – the NT is thinking about how to celebrate the summer of 1723.

- David Dawson reminded people of the Archaeology in Wiltshire conference to be held in April/ May 2023 – date not yet fixed.
- Kate Fielden reminded ASAHRG that the 50th anniversary of the WHS Convention is on 16th Nov 2022.
- Ben Chan indicated that Fran Allfrey (see Annex A) is looking at other people involved at the Avebury excavations – not just Keiller, especially workmen and women.
- There was a discussion as to how to reach new audiences – Brian Edwards indicated we need to tap into new audiences – just as the Avebury Residents Pack did. As well as Stukeley, we could be adding in others with living memories from both halves of the WHS. He indicated we could attempt to put on a series of talks in Avebury and Stonehenge including more about people. Ros and Ben indicated that it would be worth talking to the AHRC project team at Avebury.
- Colin Shell suggested that there could be a compare and contrast with Keiller's work – eg Cyril Fox archive in Cambridge; Wheeler at Maiden Castle. There are also wonderful cartoons by Stuart Piggott. Ros indicated the cartoons are the copyright of the Pitt-Rivers Estate but they are trying to get access.

ACTION - ALL: FURTHER IDEAS TO AMANDA

12. Review of monitoring

- David Dawson indicated that Wessex Archaeology are holding a workshop for volunteers for the Condition Survey on Sat 22nd October – this is already full.
- Phil Harding indicated there would be GPS transects across monuments to look at the impact of ploughing.
- Colin Shell discussed surveys of Silbury Hill which may be of use.

13. Any Museum Updates

- Ros Cleal had pre-circulated an update. See Annex A.
- David Dawson:
 - WAM has been published.
 - Wiltshire Museum have a just completed a new store which should last them for the next 20-25 years.
 - Aubrey Burl's archive has been deposited with them.
 - The Human Henge project is ongoing with EH and the University of Bournemouth.

14. Any Other Information Exchange

- Susan Greaney reminded members about the Japan Exhibition at the Stonehenge Visitor Centre <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/circles-of-stone>
- Gill Swanton talked about the Avebury Chapel Exhibition and opening.
- David Dawson reminded people about the conference in memory of Bernard Philips. Details were in the previous minutes.

- Colin Shell talked about a WHS setting study commissioned by WC – the long-awaited boundary review has been held off because of MoD concerns – the setting study needs to be done first.
- Revision of WHS Management Plan – the Group would find an update useful. AC to request an update on the previous minutes, sections 9.1, 9.2, 9.3. **ACTION - AMANDA**

15. Review what our Rep should report from our meeting to WHS Steering Committee/Partnership Panels

It was agreed that Colin should report on our recent meetings (July 22, Oct 22), the revision of the ToR, the revision of the membership list in advance of elections, the Avebury Papers project, Josh's excavations and the 30th Anniversary of ASARHG.

16. AOB

- Sian Williams has decided to leave the Group and step down. Thanks were given to her for all her hard work as an ASARHG member and from her work when she was the English Heritage Field Monument Warden for Avebury. She would like to keep in touch socially!
- Colin Shell talked about a possible logo for ASARHG and showed a proposed logo showing two prominent stones in the West Kennet Avenue. Any ideas for a logo should be sent to Colin: **ACTION – ALL**

Future ASARHG presentations may include:

- Sourcing the sarsens – David Nash
- Roman excavations – Anna Collar and Stuart Eve
- Mark Gillings on the Avebury Papers AHRC project

17. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold the meeting online in January, to be chaired by Richard**.

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**Post-meeting note – the UNESCO definition of Communities includes groups such as ASARHG - see here for the "Context of Decision" paper which sets out the definition*
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5197/>

***Post meeting note – next meeting date is 20th Jan 2023.*

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ANNEX A: PRE-CIRCULATED WRITTEN UPDATES

Update from Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury, by Ros Cleal, Curator.

The main development since the last ASARHG is that a major project shared between Bournemouth University, University of York, the National Trust and English Heritage is now under way. The formal

launch is still a little way off, as there are some technical details still to finalise, but it is hoped to launch in November.

The project is led by Professor Mark Gillings (Bournemouth) with Co-Investigator Dr Colleen Morgan (York) and two post-doctoral research assistants who are now in place: Dr Ben Chan (member of ASAHRG for many years) and Dr Fran Allfrey.

The project will, over four years, analyse and digitise the archive relating to the henge and avenues at Avebury, principally from the work of Alexander Keiller but also taking in other smaller excavations and interventions such as the work by Faith Vatcher on the Avebury bank in 1969. One goal is to produce a landmark synthesis of this work in the mould of the Cleal et al's 1995 *Stonehenge in its Landscape* volume. Rather than an expensive monograph this will take the more digestible form of a series of linked, open source fascicules (e.g. as adopted by the Somerset Levels). The entire archive will be made openly available online via the Archaeology Data Service and will therefore bring considerable public benefit. In addition, the project has negotiated copyright permissions to make a range of important resources concerning Avebury freely available online – notably the 1991 Ucko et al. volume 'Avebury Reconsidered' and the interim report published by Keiller and Piggott in *Antiquity*. An important part of the project will be to develop new ways for stakeholders (whether heritage managers, academics, the general public, and artists) to engage with the digital archive, in order to encourage use of it for independent research, for education, and for creative purposes. As well as the archaeology there will be a considerable focus on the people and lives associated with the work on the henge and avenues.

Mark Gillings would be happy to attend a future ASAHRG meeting to discuss the project in more detail.