



## MINUTES OF ASAHRG'S AUTUMN MEETING, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> Oct 2024

Hybrid at the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes,  
with many thanks to them for hosting.

**Present in room:** Matt Leivers (Chair), David Dawson, Josh Pollard, Claire Selman, Phil Harding, Kerry Donaldson, George Downs, Nick Baxter, Colin Shell, Amanda Chadburn (Secretary), David Sabin, Mike Allen, [Prof. Richard Bevins](#), [Dr Ben Pears](#) and [Dr Sam Hudson](#) (guests).

**Present on line:** Anna Collar, Gill Swanton, Ben Chan, Dave Field, Nick Croxson, Alastair Barclay, Katie Whitaker, Emily Banfield, Jennifer Wexler, Susan Greaney.

### 1. Introduction

The Chair gave a tribute to our late member Prof. Tim Darvill, who had sadly died a few days before the meeting. Claire Selman would welcome assistance from ASAHRG members for her tribute to Tim on the WHS CU website. **ACTION: ALL**

It was noted that at its 46th annual meeting on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024 in New Delhi, India, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee voted not to place the WHS on their *In Danger* list. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carltonreid/2024/07/24/unesco-votes-not-to-place-stonehenge-on-danger-list-giving-green-light-for-road-tunnel/>

It was also noted that the new Labour government had decided to scrap the A303 tunnel scheme past Stonehenge on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-the-foundations-public-spending-audit-2024-25/fixing-the-foundations-public-spending-audit-2024-25-html>

### 2. Apologies

Brian Edwards, Emma Sayer (observer), Neil Adam, Briony Clifton, Jonathan Last, Nick Snashall, Heather Sebire, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger.

### 3. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting in May were agreed and it was also agreed that ASAHRG minutes could be made available publicly in future on the WHS website, subject to redactions if needed. They would only be put up once agreed at the following meeting. **ACTION: AC**

#### **4. Matters arising from the Minutes**

The Kate Fielden tribute written by ASAHRG and the Chris Gingell tribute are both now published in WANHM (circulated). Both Kate and Chris were long-time members of ASAHRG.

ASAHRG held two summer meetings in the form of field visits: 18/7/24 to Manor Park, Avebury, hosted by Josh Pollard and another on 30/7/24 to Cherhill, again hosted by Josh Pollard, and then on to Spring Field, Avebury, hosted by Anna Collar. Thanks were given for these really interesting field visits where some superb archaeology was being uncovered.

#### **5. Any Elections and Membership updates**

Three new members were elected: Fabio Silva, Erica Gittins and Clare King. Congratulations were given to our new members.

It was noted that George Downs from WHS CU is a new ex officio member; the meeting welcomed him.

The Secretary agreed to remove lapsed members (under the non-contact 2-year ToR rule) in her next update of the membership list. **ACTION: AC.**

Unlike the Chairs and Rep, the Secretary is not an elected but an appointed role. In view of this, and so as not to block the role, the Secretary invited other ASAHRG members to take up this role if they wish. No volunteers were forthcoming so the Secretary agreed to remain in place for another year. Thanks were given to her for her work.

#### **6. PRESENTATION 1: Dr Anna Collar – *‘Excavations of the Roman site at Springhead, Avebury’***

Dr Anna Collar gave a presentation on her excavations on a Roman site just to the north of the henge at Springfield 2021-24. Some ASAHRG members had visited over the summer. She has found a triple ditched enclosure, a very deep shaft and a possible shrine building very close to the winterbourne.

Full details and more information can be found here on the recording starting at 22.10. [redacted]

#### **7. Discussion of any monitoring issues**

It was agreed that there should be an item on the Condition Survey at the next meeting.

## **8. Representative's Report and Update on other meetings attended**

Colin Shell and David Dawson reported back on the latest governance issues. The two Steering Committees have now agreed to meet jointly; membership is to be reviewed.

The Charity Commission have asked a series of new questions which were answered yesterday. It is hoped that the new CIO (the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Trust) will be in place by the end of 2024. Governance changes can either take place now or when the full charity is in place. Claire Glazebrook has been given a contract via the NLHF to look at the proposed CIO strategy by the end of March 2025. It is proposed that an initial CIO will have 3 or 4 trustees, the objects would be wide, and in due course it would have a fuller number of trustees.

## **9. S&A World Heritage Coordination Unit Report**

Claire Selman reported that the proposed charity was her big news.

A review of the WHS Management Plan is on the horizon; this proposal and the way forward will be taken to the Steering Committees in November. It is proposed to start work in 2025 and finish in 2026.

The setting study is moving forward. It will be shown to the Partnership between the 18th of November and the 13th of December 2024. There will be a public consultation around June 2025. The setting study has been drafted by Chris Blandford Associates.

Colin Shell suggested that a buffer for the WHS would need to be considered and reminded that an extension/ revised Stonehenge boundary has been proposed for over 10 years now, without action (NB Avebury had its boundary revised in 2008).

## **10. WHS Research Framework and Agenda Review/ Monitoring**

There had been a pre-circulated discussion paper by Colin Shell at the previous May meeting – how shall ASAHRG take this forward? Matt Leivers asked for expressions of interest and indicated that he was happy to help pull this together. Amanda talked about the history of the research framework. Josh volunteered, and indicated that the resource assessments are very useful. Claire offered the services of the World Heritage Coordination Unit. A task and finish group is to be set up and Amanda will send out a final request for volunteers. We should be arguing for money because one of the main problems is trying to do this with no proper resources. **ACTION: AC, Matt Leivers, ALL**

## **11. PRESENTATION 2: Prof. Josh Pollard – ‘Excavations at Cherhill and Manor Park, Avebury’.**

Josh talked about his excavations to date; some ASAHRG members had visited over the summer.

At Manor Park, there has been quite a lot of late Mesolithic activity found, and an early Anglo-Saxon pit, along with some medieval and post medieval material.

At Cherhill, there is Mesolithic and Neolithic activity along with an early Holocene buried soil of unknown extent. Bone preservation is excellent and there are well-preserved animal hoofprints around a Late Mesolithic spring.

Full details and more information can be found here on the recording starting at 1:19:00 [redacted]

## **12. PRESENTATION 3 by our guest Prof. Richard Bevins, Aberystwth University - 'A distant source for the Stonehenge Altar Stone'.**

ASAHRG was delighted to welcome Richard Bevins to talk about his work sourcing the Bluestones and the Altar Stone. ASAHRG has previously been sent links to his publications on the Altar Stone.

Richard explained that he had been working for 15 years on sourcing various stones at Stonehenge, particularly the bluestones. Various sources in the Presceli Hills have been identified by him and his team for various of the bluestones at Stonehenge.

With regard to the Altar Stone, the identification that a fragment in Salisbury Museum came from the actual stone was a gamechanger, as it allowed new analysis more easily. It was confirmed it is not a bluestone. Currently it has been confirmed the stone comes from the Orcadian basin (NOT the Orkneys themselves) and further work to pinpoint an exact location continues.

Full details and more information can be found here on the recording starting at 1:54:30. [redacted]

ASAHRG has been previously sent links to Richard's academic papers.

## **13. PRESENTATION 4: by our guests Dr. Ben Pears and Dr. Sam Hudson, Southampton University - 'Reconstructing the Prehistoric Landscape History of the Avon Riverside and Stonehenge Environs: A Multiproxy Approach'.**

ASAHRG was delighted to welcome Ben and Sam to talk about their work on the Mesolithic of the River Avon (and other periods). They have been investigating sediments and testing them, and looking at various palaeochannels along the river. They have been reconstructing the environment of the valley over time – for example, it is largely wooded until the Bronze Age when woodland starts to reduce.

They are reaching preliminary conclusions and hope to do more detailed work in future eg on animals.

Full details and more information can be found here on the recording starting at 2:39:20. [redacted]

#### **14. Standard Agenda Items:**

- a) Museum Updates.

Two updates had been pre-circulated.

- b) Other Updates including proposed fieldwork

A publication on the archaeological work necessitated by the Stonehenge Visitor Centre is in preparation by Wessex Archaeology and should be published before the end of 2025.

- c) Research Opportunities *i.e. opportunities from development, utilities or conservation work*

N/A

- d) Any opportunities for Outreach and Dissemination of ASAHRG research?

- March 16 2025 – Archaeology in Wiltshire Conference.
  - A possible ASAHRG website for “notes and queries” is to be discussed at the next meeting due to a lack of time.

#### **15. Agree what to Report from this meeting to WHS Steering Committee/ Partnership Panels**

It was agreed that Colin should report back on our presentations and site visits.

#### **16. AOB**

There had been a pre-circulated paper on possible engravings on Stonehenge's Altar Stone. Time did not allow for a discussion, but the Secretary had circulated comments between members.

#### **17. Next meeting.**

It was agreed that the Chair for Winter Meeting in early 2025 would be David Dawson, it would be hybrid and at the Museum. Date tbc.

Talks for next time will include:

- Naomi (Wessex Archaeology) on the WHS Condition Survey
- Andrew Reynolds on his recent fieldwork on the Wansdyke

Other offers of presentations are welcomed. Please contact the Secretary. **ACTION: ALL**

*Some parts of these minutes have been redacted for reasons of copyright and/or confidential research information not yet in the public domain.*