

ASAHRG AUTUMN MEETING, 13.10.23

Online only, 9.30am-12.30pm

With many thanks to David Dawson for facilitating the online meeting.

Present: Kerry Donaldson, Anna Collar (part), David Dawson, Phil Harding, Martin Barber, Christina Tsoraki, Katy Whitaker (part), Neil Adam, Tim Darvill, Steve Marshall, Alistair Barclay, Colin Shell, Jonathan Last, Ben Chan, David Nash, Amanda Chadburn (Secretary), Brian Edwards, Matt Leivers (Chair), Gill Swanton, David Roberts (part), Heather Sebire (part), Emma Sayer (observer; part), David Sabin.

1. Welcomes/ Housekeeping/ Agree Agenda/ Introduction – Meeting Chair: Matt Leivers

Christina Tsoraki was welcomed to her first meeting, having been elected at the previous one.

Kate Fielden was present at the last meeting but has sadly passed away since; many members attended her recent memorial service. It is planned to write a tribute to her for WANHM, which will go into her archaeological life in more detail than the newspaper obituaries could. The Secretary agreed to liaise with Brian Edwards who would set up what tasks he thinks need to be done, and then these could be worked on by various members. For example, somebody might like to research her contribution to Middle Eastern archaeology. Amanda will circulate Brian's suggested tasks as soon as possible. We have about 8 months to write this. **ACTION: Amanda and Brian, and then all members.**

There were **two site visits** over the summer: Josh Pollard's excavations at Avebury Manor Estate and Anna Collar/ Stuart Eve's excavations to the north of the henge. Thanks to all the site directors for facilitating these visits.

ASAHRG celebrated it's 30th Anniversary with cake and a picnic at Stonehenge during the Dahlia Exhibition. Many thanks to Brian Edwards and English Heritage for facilitating this wonderful day. (Photographs have been circulated).

2. Apologies: Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Nikki Cook (readmitted), Roland Smith, Josh Pollard, Nick Baxter, Andrew David, Claire Selman, Nick Snashall, Jess Thompson, Lisa Brown, Briony Clifton, Susan Greaney, Mike Allen (had technology issues getting into and remaining in the meeting), Jackie McKinley, Mel Barge (invited as an *ex-officio* member), Sophy Charlton.

It was noted that Sophy had a good excuse as she is on her honeymoon – many congratulations to her from ASAHRG!

3. Minutes of last meeting – Agreed.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

Amanda reminded members that Dan Miles and Claire Selman had both asked for ASAHRG volunteers to help with two separate tasks. See minutes of the April meeting previously circulated. **ACTION: All**

5. Elections and Membership

Proposed members. Jennifer Wexler and Martin Brown were both elected; congratulations to them both. **ACTION: Amanda to add to the membership list.**

Future members. It was agreed that the new editor of British Archaeology, Cat Jarman, should be approached and asked. Brian Edwards said he was happy to propose her. **ACTION: Amanda to approach her.**

Existing Members. Our member Nikki Cook - who attended the recent picnic - had fallen off the address list given to Amanda through no fault of her own. The Chairs agree to readmit her and the meeting agreed this too. **ACTION: Amanda to add to the membership list.**

Ex-officio members. Claire Selman has accepted. Mel Barge, Nick Croxon and Adrian Green had all been approached. Mel replied that she had to ask her line managers. Amanda indicated that she had not heard from the other two but thought she may have an incorrect email for Nick; Jonathan Last kindly supplied the correct one. (*Post-meeting note – Nick has accepted*). Congratulations to our new *ex-officio* members. **ACTION: Amanda to add to the membership list.**

Amanda indicated that the role of Secretary is not an elected position but is rather a function who works to the Chairs. However, in line with our elected positions and the spirit of our new ToR, Amanda did not want to carry on forever in an unelected position if others wanted to do the role. She therefore offered the role to other members, having done it for a year since taking over from the Coordination Unit when it had no staff. It was agreed that the membership could reply back if they had any interest in the role, and that Amanda would offer it again to the membership on an annual basis. **ACTION: All**

Amanda agreed to carry on in the role but indicated that she wanted the position regularised, so she is no longer the Acting Secretary. Members agreed she is now the Secretary (assuming there is no interest from any other members) for the next year.

6. Representative's report and discussion (i.e. report on the previous WHS Steering Committee /Partnership Panel meetings and other relevant information) – *Colin Shell*

The main issue is the Governance of the WHS, and this is a fast-moving situation. Since our last ASAHRG meeting, there have been various governance initiatives and a recent survey to members.

Colin went through the various governance options which are being discussed. A small trust CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) is currently being discussed – which will not host the WHS coordination unit at this stage. This new body may run alongside a version of Sam Rose's proposals, which would mean that ASAHRG would no longer have an executive role but simply an advisory one. Help is requested by Colin on an informal basis so that a number of members can help him on a task and finish group to look at the governance options. There will almost certainly be work to do before the next ASAHRG meeting. **ACTION: Members to contact Colin if interested.**

In the discussion after Colin's briefing, David Dawson confirmed that he has joined the CIO Working Group following Colin's suggestion.

Amanda said that from her perspective, two main governance issues affecting ASAHRG are a) where it sits within the Governance structure i.e. whether it sits on the executive bodies as now, or on a future advisory body (Sam Rose proposal), and b) where the WHS Coordination Unit should sit. These are questions for members to consider.

Emma Sayer, the Independent Chair of the Partnership

Panel: <https://www.stonehengeandaveburywhs.org/management-of-whs/partnership-panel/>

had been invited to attend the meeting as an observer. She thanked Colin for his work as the ASAHRG Representative and confirmed his briefing. Claire Selman is currently drafting a paper for the next Partnership Panel meeting which sets out outline proposals only, nothing is set in stone yet. Emma indicated that ASAHRG has a number of questions to consider, including its place in any future governance structure. She indicated that on timescales, a small trust CIO could be put in place relatively quickly with a fuller governance redesign in the spring of 2024.

David Dawson indicated that another issue for ASAHRG to consider is whether there will be a possibility for an ASAHRG member to have a role as a Trustee on a future CIO. He highlighted that the Wessex Museums Trust has moved to the position where the museum directors are ex-officio trustees, but there is a majority of independent trustees, including an independent chair.

Matt Leivers thanked Colin on behalf of the Group for his work, which has involved many meetings.

7. Presentation and discussion. English Heritage proposals for a new education centre - Heather Sebire, English Heritage.

Heather indicated that it was 10 years since the Stonehenge visitor centre opened in 2013. At that stage the education room flexibly shared space with the cafe area, but since then there have been a huge number of education visits and other education "discovery visits" too. This means that a dedicated education space is needed and EH wanted a revamp. During Covid-19, a spacious staff welfare area was needed, so an extension was built onto the ancillary building in the coach park. This is

currently acting as a temporary education centre, and the café has permanently moved into the old education room.

However English Heritage want a much better facility for education visits with an emphasis on STEM learning. They are therefore planning a new learning centre including a lab and a Neolithic classroom which is a replica of a larger Neolithic house than the ones that are on site at present. They are proposing to do a building which is based on Durrington 68, but scaled down to about 95% of the original for various planning and practical reasons.

As part of the planning, the Linfords from Historic England revisited their previous geophysical surveys which had been undertaken in advance of the construction of the visitor centre, partly because geophysical survey techniques have moved on so much: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/47-2023?search=*&searchResultsPerPage=100&searchType=research+report&sort=publicationDate+desc

They found some natural periglacial stripes and a few other anomalies. There have been evaluation excavations, and the planning is being worked up with Historic England colleagues amongst others.

The feedback about the new proposals from a public survey has been overwhelmingly positive and the local schools are keen. Although the public survey has closed, comments are still welcome and should be sent to Heather. **ACTION: All** English Heritage are looking for volunteers to work on their new proposals – please contact Heather. **ACTION: All**

Heather also gave a brief update on the geology issues to do with the Altar Stone noting that Amanda had circulated the academic papers already. It now appears that the altar stone may not come from South Wales but from further afield.

DISCUSSION: Brian Edwards said it was good to see broad support for the education centre but asked about timescales for the life of the building. Heather indicated that the new education centre would be part of the timescales of the life of the overall visitor centre.

Heather confirmed that the periglacial stripes run pretty much N-S.

Alistair Barclay wondered whether it was possible to mark the boundary of the World Heritage site on the ground somewhere within the complex? This led to a discussion about the boundaries of the World Heritage site overall. It was noted that Avebury has had a boundary extension and errors within its boundary corrected, but that this is not yet happened at Stonehenge which is apparently waiting for a setting study which is needed before the boundary change can be proposed.

Heather gave two related links:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/stonehenge/inspiringthefuture>

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/visit/places-to-visit/stonehenge/education-project/7949-stonehenge-case-for-support-booklet-a5-16pp-low-res-pdf.pdf>

8. New final ASHRG Logo – *Secretariat*

Amanda shared some images relating to our proposed new logo. There was good news and bad news. Our winning design had been put to the UK National Commission for UNESCO over the summer, but they had rejected it because the WH Emblem cannot be superimposed on other images. However, they are very happy for ASHRG to be allowed to use the World Heritage emblem *alongside* our logo if we wish (as long as we follow the correct regulations), because they have agreed that we are part of the World Heritage management structure for Stonehenge and Avebury.

Amanda and Claire have therefore been working up a Plan B which is as close to the winning design as we can make it. Our new logo design has a plan of Avebury Henge instead of the World Heritage emblem. Various comments and suggested tweaks were given by the members about the Plan B logo. Amanda agreed to work these up and put the alternatives to a final poll asap. **ACTION: Amanda**

Amanda thanked Claire for all her hard work on the logo design and in facilitating the letter to the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

9. Evora WHS - meeting and future links – *Gill Swanton*

A paper by Gill had been pre-circulated. Heather and she had attended a meeting with representatives from Evora, Portugal. She confirmed that Evora, a World Heritage Site in Portugal, wanted to make contact with ASHRG and collaborate with us and other World Heritage Site partners on various initiatives, because they will be a European Capital of Culture in 2027. It was agreed that Gill will be the lead for ASHRG on this matter. The next meeting with Evora will be in January 2024. **ACTION: Gill to attend meeting and report back.**

10. Members Updates

a) Colin Shell raised Tony Brown's Sedimentary ancient DNA project in the Avon Valley. 'The SedaDNA Revolution in Archaeology? Current Progress and Future Potential' Antiquaries lecture available at

<https://www.youtube.com/live/EZnQcUVs1Ws?si=w7ITo9UY8oMacWFC>

He suggested this as a possible future presentation or update for members, noting that our members Vince Gaffney and Mike Parker-Pearson are involved. **ACTION: Colin and Secretariat**

b) Colin Shell raised the current project of combining and reconciling the HE records with the WC HER. Cecily Cropper is undertaking this. See her Blog at <https://wshc.org.uk/blog/item/wiltshire-historic-environment-record-to-get-bigger-and-better.html>

He suggested this as a possible formal update for members. **ACTION: Colin and Secretariat**

c) Ben Chan talked about the Avebury Manor Parkland evaluations over the summer.

[Redacted]

d) Alistair Barclay indicated that the Neolithic Studies Group review of Grooved Ware in Britain & Ireland, an update of the Ros Cleal & Ann MacSween 1999 Volume, is with the printer.

e) David Dawson indicated that several ASAHRG members were giving talks at the Stonehenge Festival of Neolithic Ideas - 11/12 Nov <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/whats-on/stonehenge-festival-of-neolithic-ideas/>

11. Museum Updates

a) David Dawson (Wiltshire Museum) indicated that they had been granted development stage funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Devizes Assizes project. They have two years to develop the project to a delivery stage proposal - the current time scale is that they would be thinking of opening in 2030.

It is the last few days of the Airscapes art exhibition.

b) Ben Chan updated the meeting on the Avebury Papers project which is being hosted by the Alexander Keiller Museum. They are looking for stakeholders for their focus groups; volunteers are requested. If you are interested, please drop Ben a line. Brian Edwards and Emma Sayer indicated that they wish to volunteer. **ACTION: Ben and All. All volunteers please email Bchan@bournemouth.ac.uk.**

Emma also suggested that Claire Selman could put a call out across the WHS Partnership for interested parties? Ben indicated this would be helpful and interested parties should email him directly as above. **ACTION: Claire Selman to circulate.**

Brian raised the issue that Historic England had recently released some archive photographs online in an unstructured way. Enthusiastic amateurs had copied images and spread a lot of misinformation online, which has meant that a number of myths about Avebury have been perpetuated in an unfortunate way. He suggested that the Avebury Papers Project needs to release information and do this form of outreach much better. (For context see: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-12624909/The-World-Heritage-ancient-stone-circle-Avebury-FAKE-photographs-showing-stones-actually-erected-1930s-upside-down.html>)

c) Steve Marshall indicated that he had posted a lot of work online, but he was worried about losing his server. He indicated that he would be happy to move his work to the Avebury Papers project and pass on a lot of his material including scans of A.C. Smith documents and papers. He is discussing this with Mark Gillings.

Colin Shell indicated that he had downloaded Steve's scans of AC Smith's maps and will be georeferencing them for use in a GIS, and also potentially linking to the digital text available from a US library.

12. Research opportunities i.e. opportunities arising from development, utilities or conservation work – *Cultural Heritage Managers*

None.

13. Opportunities for Outreach and Dissemination of research - including conferences in 2023 to celebrate **30 years of ASAHRG** etc

The previous plans about ASAHRG30 public lectures have not come to fruition, partly because of the pressures of other duties. Amanda and others suggested that members could offer to do talks at Avebury Chapel under the ASAHRG30 badge. It was suggested that a talk based on the Dahlia Exhibition by an English Heritage person might be possible somewhere.

Please send any ideas for talks to the Secretary. **ACTION: All**

14. Review of Monitoring - *Cultural Heritage Managers*

Wessex Archaeology are undertaking the Condition Survey, and it was suggested that Naomi who is leading on this would be happy to update ASAHRG. **ACTION: Wessex Archaeology to contact Secretariat.**

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

The meeting agreed that Colin should feedback on the following:

- Evora
- Logo
- Kate Fielden proposed tribute
- Stonehenge Education Centre presentation

It was also agreed to report back that there is a concern and interest in governance changes amongst ASAHRG members. It was noted that ASAHRG gave its clear views in the last consultation when we stated that we thought the Rose proposals

are not acceptable. (But our results have yet to go to the Steering Committees).

ACTION: Colin to feedback these agreed issues.

16. AOB

Emma Sayer reported that another State of Conservation Report on Stonehenge has been requested by UNESCO (given the A303/ tunnel issues), and is being prepared by UK bodies for the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and UNESCO WH Committee, for inclusion in next year's meeting in 2024.

Colin noted that he had circulated the draft resolution about Stonehenge which was adopted at the recent World Heritage Committee meeting.

Brian Edwards recommended Jim Leary's latest book *Footmarks*. He also said that the Wiltshire Magazine for this year is exceptional in its contents. Steve Marshall offered to e-mail a PDF of his article to members who may not have the Magazine.

ACTION: All

Amanda indicated that there was starting to be a backlog of updates and short presentations which had been offered by members. Is there interest in holding short, additional and occasional online meetings (max 1.5 hours) where the content was only 20 min presentations including Q&A? The meeting agreed to this but only on the understanding that regular meetings should continue to have presentations too (usually two 20 minute presentations). **ACTION: Amanda to take forward the "backlog" with Chairs** (Post-meeting note: this is an area which could be passed to a volunteer to take forward with Amanda).

Claire Selman (WHSCU) was unable to be with us, but had pre-circulated an update. She thanked ASAHRG members for their assistance with completing the UNESCO Periodic Report for the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS.

17. Winter Meeting

This will be chaired by David Dawson and will be held in Devizes at the Museum on **Feb 16th 2024**.

The winter meeting is usually online only - but given that this one has had to be online because of Covid, it can be hybrid if desired.

Members agreed it should be hybrid, but fully online if needed due to any health and safety issues. If the meeting ends up being hybrid, there was an offer of cake!! (Thank you!).

[Some items were redacted because they relate to unpublished research]