



MINUTES OF ASAHRG'S WINTER MEETING, Friday 21st Feb 2025

Hybrid at 10.15-13.00 at the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes,
with many thanks to them for hosting.

Meeting's Key Outcomes and Important Points

1. **Wansdyke Dating Breakthrough:** Andrew Reynold's research has dated the Wansdyke earthworks [redacted] resolving long-standing archaeological debates and providing new insights [redacted].
2. **World Heritage Site Governance:** Ongoing discussions about ASAHRG's future role in the governance structure, including where ASAHRG sits in the new structure in relation to the proposed new Expert and Stakeholder Group and Executive Board (the meeting noted that previous votes had agreed on maintaining representation at the decision-making level rather than at an advisory level).
3. **Condition Survey Results:** The survey of nearly 1,000 heritage assets shows stabilization or improvement in condition for most monuments, though cultivation and animal burrowing remain persistent threats.
4. **Research Framework Update:** Working Group will be formed to update the outdated 2016 framework, with recognition that professional resources will be needed rather than relying solely on volunteers.
5. **Setting SPD Update:** An important planning document moving toward public consultation, with potential significant impact on development around the World Heritage Site. ASAHRG to be consulted before the public consultation.
6. **Management Plan Review:** Major two-year process to begin April 2025, providing opportunity to incorporate substantial new archaeological knowledge.
7. **Protective Measures Assessment:** Boles Barrow excavation demonstrated effectiveness of meshing to prevent badger damage to monuments, providing valuable evidence for heritage protection strategies.

Present in room: Nick Baxter, Claire Selman, Martyn Barber, Amanda Chadburn (Secretary), David Dawson (Chair), Kerry Donaldson, Dave Sabin, Andrew Reynolds, Colin Shell (Representative), Phil Harding, Alastair Barclay.

Present online: Steve Marshall, Erica Gittins, Brian Edwards, Matt Leivers, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Susan Greaney, Nick Snashall, Katy Whittaker, Tom Booth (Guest), Jonathan Last, Richard Osgood, Josh Pollard, Clare King (part), Jennifer Wexler (part), Naomi Brennan (Guest, presenter).

1. Welcomes/ Introduction

New members Erica Gittins and Clare King were welcomed, and guest presenter Naomi Brennan (Wessex Archaeology) and guest Tom Booth were also welcomed.

2. Apologies received from:

Briony Clifton, Neil Adam, George Downs, Clive Ruggles, Nick Croxson, Gill Swanton, Andrew David, Lisa Brown, Emma Sayer, Ros Cleal.

3. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without corrections, except for the spelling of Nick Croxson which will be corrected in the final minutes. **(ACTION: Sec).**

In future, minutes (redacted as needed) will be placed on the WHS CU's website.

4. Matters arising

All were covered within Agenda elsewhere.

5. Membership Updates

5.1 Membership Status

Nine members have been removed under the two-year Terms of Reference rule for non-contact.

The current membership after this removal stands at 64. In 2024, it was 70 before the sad death of Tim Darvill. The last formal list of January 2023 noted 65 members. In other words, the membership is stable. A new membership list has been circulated.

Members are reminded to send any new addresses to the Secretary. **(ACTION: All)**

5.2 New Member

Tom Booth (who absented himself for the vote) was proposed and seconded for membership, and approved unanimously by a show of hands. Congratulations were given. (There are now 65 ASHRG members).

6. Representative's Report and Updates (Colin Shell)

6.1 Charity Trust Update

Progress on establishing a Charity Trust (CIO) for the World Heritage Site has been delayed. The Charity Commission has raised additional questions about the application. They have concerns which include whether fundraising alone constitutes a public benefit. The trustees-elect are meeting to address these concerns. It is hoped the CIO will be up and running by the next ASHRG meeting.

6.2 Governance Review

The governance review is ongoing but delayed. The working group (which includes ASAHRG members) continues to meet. County elections may affect the timeline and final decisions are likely to be delayed until the summer.

6.3 Byways and Road Issues

At the Joint Steering Group yesterday, concerns were raised about visitor interaction issues including parking and damage to byways and verges. It was felt by some that Wiltshire Council needed to be more active. There was a discussion of a potential one-way system pilot and weight limits for B4003. Repairs to verges were often followed by new damage.

7. ASAHRG Representation (Colin Shell)

Colin has been our Representative for longer than he expected; it had been agreed previously that his continuation would be linked to the charity establishment or governance change which has not yet happened, but hopefully is nearly there now. It is proposed that the Chairs form a search committee for a new Representative and Deputy (previously Brian Edwards) with a view to getting new Representatives asap.

There was a discussion of ASAHRG's role in any new governance structure – Colin indicated that there is the potential that ASAHRG may be taken from the decision-making bodies (currently the Steering Committees as set out in the Management Plan) and placed on an advisory group (proposed new Expert and Stakeholder Group). (See Note 1 below). ASAHRG has previously emphasized its desire to remain on any new oversight/decision-making body and voted on this. David Dawson said that ASAHRG has voted that it wants to be on the decision-making body as an independent group and representative of the wider academic and archaeological community. The Secretary indicated there had been two votes on this in recent years.

Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger expressed her view that ASAHRG was valuable in the governance structure, that there was great strength in it being on the Expert and Stakeholder Group, and that she would hope that ASAHRG would be open minded and look at the detail being proposed before coming to a view. She indicated that the relationships on decision-making will be different and all the influence will be with the new Expert Group. There was a brief discussion of this. David Dawson reminded the Group that the Terms of Reference for these new governance bodies is not yet finalised and therefore there is nothing for ASAHRG to consider at this point in time. ASAHRG will need to see these ToRs in due course – they are expected in late March. **ACTION – Claire Selman/ Colin Shell to send new governance ToRs to Secretary for circulation to the Group.**

David Dawson kindly agreed to serve as an Observer for ASAHRG until new Representatives were in place.

Brian Edwards noted that he was not happy about moves to place ASAHRG in any governance structure which wasn't decision-making, given the Group's previous two votes.

8. World Heritage Site Coordinator's Report (Claire Selman) – items not already covered by 7.

8.1 Management Plan Review

A Management Plan review will start April 1 2025 and continue through until the end of 2026. It will involve significant consultation and will evaluate and update the existing plan rather than create an entirely new one. A Working Group has been established to guide the process. Some ASAHRG members are part of this (but do not represent ASAHRG; this is part of their day jobs).

8.2 The Annual Action Plan for 25/6 was recently agreed by the Partnership Panel.

9. Research Framework (Matt Leivers)

9.1 Working Group Formation

There is a need to update the 2016 Research Framework, which was already outdated when published. An ASAHRG Task and finish group is to be established, chaired by Matt Leivers. Colin Shell indicated that it will be important to establish how it might be kept up to date on a rolling basis. It is unlikely to be a print volume anymore.

- Volunteers requested to help determine approach. **ACTION: All**
- Challenges include properly integrating both parts of the World Heritage Site
- Significant new research to incorporate since last version

9.2 Southwest Regional Framework

- Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger reported on parallel work to update the Southwest Regional Research Agenda.
- Grant proposal is being submitted to Historic England via Dan Miles.
- Would be a two-year project with paid project officer.
- Suggested World Heritage Site framework should follow this regional work.
- Recommendation to seek funding for the new WHS Framework for dedicated resources rather than rely on volunteers.

9.3 Volunteers

- Nick Snashall, Josh Pollard, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Alistair Barclay, George Downs and Tom Booth all volunteered to join the working group.
- Several others (names given to Matt) had previously expressed an interest.

ACTION: Matt Leivers to contact volunteers and set up meeting.

10. Presentations

Presentation 1. Andrew Reynolds: "The Mystery of Wansdyke Revealed" (Dating of the Earthworks)

- Presented results of 2021 fieldwork at the Wansdyke.
- [redacted]
- Demonstrates kingdom-level construction project with deep ancestral naming (Woden).

This research is not yet published but an article in the RAI's Archaeological Journal is planned.

Full details can be found [redacted].

Presentation 2. Naomi Brennan: Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Condition Survey

- Commissioned by Historic England with support from National Trust, Wiltshire Council, and WHS Coordination Unit.
- Assessed 995 heritage assets (364 in Avebury, 631 in Stonehenge).
- Involved training 30 volunteers in assessment techniques.
- Used desk-based assessment where possible, field visits for higher priority sites. (This is unlike the previous two surveys where there were field visits to all sites).
- Found most assets have stabilized or improved since 2010.
- Main ongoing impacts: cultivation and animal burrowing.
- Recommended vegetation management and reducing cultivation impacts.
- Positive feedback from volunteers suggests approach viable for future surveys.

Questions afterwards included - impacts of Climate Change? Were vulnerable monuments next to Byway 12 at Stonehenge visited? Consistency with previous surveys? Were Heritage Crime reports looked at? Where will the full report be published and what is the peer review process? How will new damage be captured? It was suggested that the "Our Wiltshire" app could be used in future to record monument condition.

It was agreed that there should be further discussion on this at the next meeting.

Many thanks were given to our guest Naomi for her presentation.

Full details can be found on the recording here [redacted].

Presentation 3. Richard Osgood: Boles Barrow Excavation

- Fourth excavation of this earthen long barrow on Salisbury Plain.
- Examined efficacy of protective meshing installed to prevent badger damage.
- Found meshing still in good condition after ~15 years.
- Found preserved parts of the barrow not disturbed by previous excavations.

- [redacted].

This research is not yet published, but there are plans to publish a comprehensive monograph incorporating all the earlier excavations.

Full details can be found [redacted].

11. Introduction to the Setting Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (Claire Selman)

- Commissioned by Wiltshire Council, work was undertaken by Chris Blandford Associates (in 21-22, see link below).
- Draft SPD went to its cabinet in Nov/Dec 24.
- Draft SPD being prepared for public consultation (May to mid-June 2025) which will last for 6 weeks.
- Cabinet to review in early March before consultation (see link below).
- Will provide guidance on development affecting the World Heritage Site setting.
- Document has two sections: background/process and detailed description of setting.

There was a discussion of whether ASAHRG should provide a collective response or individual responses (or both). There was some interest in putting in a formal ASAHRG response.

It was agreed that there would be a detailed information session at the next meeting for ASAHRG members, in advance of the public consultation of the setting study.

ACTION: WHS CU to take forward with Secretary.

It was agreed that the ASAHRG Chairs will review the consultation draft when available, with a view to making an ASAHRG response. **ACTION: Chairs.**

Post meeting note: Further details can be found here: <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s235683/Stonehenge%20and%20Avebury%20World%20Heritage%20Site%20Setting%20Study%20-%20Draft%20Supplementary%20Planning%20Document%202.pdf>
<https://d3tenders.com/contract/?ocid=ocds-b5fd17-ed99e377-575a-48f2-b525-8b775740a6da>

12. Standard Agenda items

12.1 Monitoring – Byways in the WHS. An update from Chris Clark of Wiltshire Council was read by Claire Selman

Summary:

- Several byways remain closed to enable repair works.
- Material supply issues are affecting the timeline for repairs.
- Consultation is planned regarding byway use and mitigation measures.

- Experimental traffic order challenged.

For a number of years, it has been evident that byways within the WHS have become degraded through inappropriate use and in certain cases anti-social behaviour. Byways within the Avebury area and Stonehenge vicinity are a source of concern.

Following the Winter Solstice Celebration, an inspection of the byways around Stonehenge found their condition to be such that they would need to remain closed to enable repair work to be undertaken. Work has progressed but the wet conditions has slowed progress, along with the requirement to import some material as fill, which is proving difficult to obtain. Wiltshire Council will be shortly undertaking a consultation around the use of the byways and what can be done to mitigate the negative impacts from inappropriate use of the byways. Consultation will be with a wide range of partners.

In relation to the Ridgeway at Avebury, Wiltshire Council have run an Experimental Traffic Order closing it to mechanised traffic through the summer period in addition to the winter closure. When Wiltshire Council sought to make this a permanent Traffic Regulation Order a challenge was mounted and Wiltshire Council is reconsidering the position. Wiltshire Council have prioritised work around Stonehenge but will be considering the Avebury Byways in due course.

12.2 Monitoring - B4003 Issues (Claire Selman)

Summary:

- Repairs planned for lay-by area
- Preventative measures to restrict parking to protect verges discussed
- Longer-term options include one-way system or full closure

B4003 – Claire Selman updated members on two aspects of erosion on the B4003 / West Kennet Avenue at Avebury. Firstly, the road suffers from verge encroachment along its full stretch, with the risk increased that subsequent road repairs widen the road surface. At the recent Joint Steering Committee, members discussed the action from Avebury Transport Strategy to close the B4003 and other measures such as one-way traffic or weight restriction to lessen the impact of vehicles. Secondly, the layby area has suffered from erosion from parking either side of the layby. At the recent Joint Steering Committee members supported Wiltshire Council's proposal for the installation of posts to protect the verge from erosion, while maintaining that a longer-term solution regarding usage of the B4003 should remain a priority.

ASAHRG has expressed concern (via its Rep) that the West Kennet Avenue is on the Heritage at Risk register due to vehicle erosion/damage of the B4003, and we support action to resolve this. <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/43931>

12.3 Museums Updates

Curator Ros Cleal sent this report for the Alexander Keiller Museum:

The Alexander Keiller Collection (happily undamaged due to an effective risk management strategy) has been moved from the flood damaged store into its temporary accommodation in the West Wing of the Manor and is now safely installed. (Flood pictures here: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/wiltshire/avebury/reopening-avebury-manor>).

We're hoping to prepare an adjoining area into a space where material can be laid out and worked on, but that's not ready yet, and space is quite limited. However, if there are urgent pieces of work for which people need access to the collection, then they are very welcome to contact me and we will try and arrange access for them using a smaller area we do have already for working in,

12.4 Any other Updates including proposed fieldwork?

- None

12.5 Any Research Opportunities? *i.e. opportunities from development, utilities or conservation work*

- None

12.6 Any opportunities for Outreach and Dissemination of ASAHRG research?

- Archaeology in Wiltshire Conference – 16 March 2025. (Joining details were pre-circulated in the Agenda).
- Possibility of an ASAHRG website(?) hosting short updates/ “notes and queries”/ “kite-flying” short articles – would this be useful? Would it clash with other newsletter-type publications? And if useful, should it be public or just for ASAHRG members? – (item deferred from the last meeting).
We ran out of time to discuss this. Amanda Chadburn to circulate a paper to members to consider in advance of the next meeting. **ACTION: AC to circulate a paper.**

13. AOB

Claire Selman informed ASAHRG that Emma Sayer's tenure as Independent Chair of the Partnership Panel had come to an end and that she would be leaving. Claire thanked Emma for her work, including with ASAHRG. Sarah Nichols is the new Chair.

It was agreed that the Chairs should write to Emma, thanking her for her support and involvement. **ACTION: Chairs, Secretary.**

Post meeting note: Letter appended below.

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

It was agreed the Secretary would pull together something for the Chairs/ Rep by 5.3.25. **Action: Sec**

Post meeting note. The following was agreed:

- **Elections for ASAHRG's Representative and Deputy Representative** - Chairs will be conducting a search to find replacements (who need to be independent under our ToR); hopefully elections can take place at the next meeting. Colin will cover as Rep until then and DD as continuing observer. There was a discussion as to the future role Reps may have and where they may sit in any new structure. ASAHRG has already had two votes over the last few years on where it would like to be able to sit/contribute, and is happy to vote on (if needed) and consider any future governance changes.
- **WHS Research Framework** - a working party is being set up to work on the next iteration and review of this. Matt Leivers will chair this.
- **Presentation of two research projects by ASAHRG members** - Andrew Reynolds - The Mystery of the Wansdyke Revealed; Richard Osgood - Excavations at Boles Barrow.
- **Presentation of Condition Survey** methodology and broad-brush results by Naomi Brennan of Wessex Archaeology. This topic needs further discussion at the next meeting.
- **Background to Setting Study** presented by Claire Selman - and discussions on how ASAHRG can now become involved in advance of a formal public consultation (not having seen anything thus far as a Group). It is hoped that there will be a detailed presentation at the next meeting for the Group to consider.

15. Next Meeting

- Date agreed: May 23, 2025. Neil Adam to Chair.
- Venue: Same location
- Setting SPD to be a major agenda item for discussion
- Next meeting will include further discussion of the Condition Survey
- Offers of presentations to be sent to the Secretary. **ACTION: All**

[Some items were redacted because they relate to unpublished research/ other private group matters]



25th Feb 2025

Dear Emma,

At our last meeting on 21st February 2025, we were informed that your tenure as Independent Chair of the Partnership Panel has come to an end and that you will be leaving very soon.

The Group was sad to hear this and tasked us with writing to you. ASAHRG members wanted to express their sincere thanks for all your interest in and support for our Group over the last few years. It was very helpful to have you at some of our meetings, especially with regard to governance changes and keeping us up to date with your perspectives.

We wish you all the very best for the future and hope that you may wish to join us at any of our next social events and/ or field visits. Please do let us know if this would be of interest, and we'll make sure to send you an invite.

We look forward to meeting and working with your successor, but we will miss you.

With very best wishes,

David Dawson
Co-Chair

Matt Leivers
Co-Chair

Neil

Neil Adam
Co-Chair

Colin Shell
Representative

Note 1

One member wrote in with concerns about this section – I have amended it slightly with reference to the Management Plan 2015 to reflect [redacted] what was actually said at the meeting and it wasn't challenged. The minutes therefore reflect the meeting. For transparency, here are the concerns:

I have concerns in some of the wording in the paragraph reflecting the discussion of governance. The minutes state the steering committee as the decision-making group, and this is not factually correct. Some members of the partnership think this is the case (the terms of reference for the committee and panel are ambiguous and open to interpretation), but other members of the partnership believe the decision making sits with the Panel. This ambiguity is in part why we are doing the governance restructure. Putting this is here is misleading and is not factually correct in my opinion. I suggest this line is removed, as it is not needed here anyway