

Minutes of ASAHRG's spring meeting

28th April 2023.

Held at the Avebury Club, Beckhampton Road, Avebury, SN8 1RD.

ASAHRG would like to thank our Chair, Gill Swanton, who very kindly paid for the hire of the hall and the lunch for our spring meeting.

In person attendance:

D.J.Sabin, Kerry Donaldson, Ben Chan, Kate Fielden, Gill Swanton, Amanda Chadburn (minutes), Phil Harding, Brian Edwards, Steve Marshall, David Dawson, Josh Pollard, Alistair Barclay.

Online attendance:

David Nash, Heather Sebire (part, due to the memorial service for Tom Schadla-Hall), Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Emily Banfield, Matt Leivers.

1 Welcomes/ Housekeeping/ Any other Agenda items/ Introduction

Meeting Chair: Gill Swanton

Gill welcomed ASAHRG members to the meeting, held at Avebury for the first time in many years. David Dawson was also thanked for helping with the hybrid arrangements.

2 Apologies

Rachel Crellin, Katy Whittaker, Anna Collar, Stuart Eve, Neil Adam, Lisa Brown, Vince Gaffney, Susan Greaney, Nick Snashall, Claire Selman, Dan Miles, Fritz Luth, Jude Currivan, Clive Ruggles, Colin Shell, Mark Bowden, Jess Thompson, David Field, Richard Osgood, Claire Selman.

3 Agree Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

4 Matters/ actions arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

5 Two brief presentations were given by Josh Pollard.

Fieldwork in Avebury Manor environs, Summer 2023. He will be working with Briony Clifton and Mark Gillings, continuing the themes in the Living with the Monuments project. Avebury's manorial estate is to be investigated through evaluation methodologies. Complements work at Rough Leaze (2007) and Butler's Field (2018) and the WSI can be circulated to those who are interested.

Test pitting at Cherhill, 2022-23. He is investigating a Neolithic ditch/ quarry scoop. They found remarkable sequences. [Redacted]

At the Manor they have left a buffer near the scheduled monument (the henge), but perhaps they ought to be going closer? One member indicated that there were structures put up by Ken King in this area, which they may come across.

6 Finalising the new Terms of Reference. Amanda Chadburn. Final versions with tracked changes had been pre-circulated and all changes were agreed, therefore there is a new and finalised ToR which Amanda will circulate. **ACTION: AMANDA**

7 Proposed new members; proposed new Chairs.

The meeting agreed to admit Dr. Christina Tsoraki as a member.

Following the stepping down (as per our terms of reference) of Gill Swanton (and previously Katy Whitaker and Richard Osgood), three new chairs were elected, and the Group decided to stagger their start dates so we don't run out of all Chairs at the end of their terms. Thus, Matt Leivers starts immediately, David Dawson will start at the autumn meeting and Neil Adams will start at the winter meeting in January. Gill will continue until the autumn meeting, so we always have at least two Chairs.

Gill Swanton, who has been a chair of ASAHRG one way and another, since its foundation in 1993, was thanked for her enormous contribution to ASAHRG over the years and was presented with a bottle of "Broad Bean and Banana" wine in finest ASAHRG tradition¹ as a token of her hard work.

8 WHS Steering Committee/ Partnership Panel Representative's report. Colin Shell.

Colin had sent apologies but had indicated that he would send the Secretariat a text of what he had covered recently as the Representative for circulation, and members could email queries to him and copy to the Secretariat and the Chairs. **ACTION: COLIN/ SECRETARIAT**

9 Update on the work of the WHS Coordination Unit including WA Conference and Digital Photoframe project – Claire Selman

A paper had been pre-circulated and Amanda read it on behalf of Claire. This is an opportunity for ASAHRG to create digital content to promote the archaeological work taking place at the WHS in a simple and compact way. **ACTION ALL:** Claire is asking for volunteers and help with content.

ACTION ALL: Amanda reminded members that at the last meeting Dan Miles had previously also asked for volunteers for the Wealth and Knowledge Project - Research Frameworks.

10 PRESENTATION: Dr Fran Allfrey – Introduction to the Avebury Papers Project

Fran presented the Avebury Papers project hosted by the NT at Avebury.

¹ Around 20 years ago when Chris Gingell stepped down from AAHRG when he left the Avebury NT team and moved to the Stonehenge NT team, he was presented with a bottle of "Broad Bean and Banana" wine by the Group. This was because he had helped discover a trespasser under the protective cover at the top of Silbury Hill (when the hole was still open) fast asleep, having consumed a whole bottle of Broad Bean and Banana wine. The missing person incident had triggered virtually every class of emergency service known in the UK.

There are 5000 items in the collection, letters, sketches and so on; each of these will eventually have a record and will be digitised. The plan is to publish alongside digitisation. Many of these are papers dating from the 1930s, which are important in the history of archaeology for Britain. Her role is concentrating on papers and volunteers. Eventually all the information will also be copied to ADS (for State Guardianship papers) and the National Trust.

She then explained the digitisation project and the principles behind it.

A number of volunteers are currently transcribing the Alexander Keiller diaries, expanding names and so on. They are also working on the diaries of Dennis Grant King diaries and also papers by Stuart Piggott.

The digitisation studio is very small and is based in the National Trust estate office. ASAHRG members are welcome to visit, but in small numbers at a time with advance notice.

Ethics is a part of the project because there are some sensitivities about living people particularly from the 20th century.

They hope to finish the digitisation in October.

www.aveburypapers.org

11 VIRTUAL PRESENTATION: Dr. David Nash, Professor of Physical Geography, School of Applied Sciences, University of Brighton.

- Update on research on the sarsen stones at Stonehenge.

Professor David Nash gave a presentation about his work in the area. He has been researching the source of stones at Stonehenge and gave a brief run through of his results. These have been published already. There have been two phases to the work. Firstly, the chemical print fingerprinting of the stones via pXRF analysis; all 52 remaining sarsens at Stonehenge were tested via this method. There have been two approaches:

1) the chemistry of the sarsens was analysed which showed that many of them clustered very closely together, although there are a few which were not in the cluster (Stones 26 and 160).

To their surprise, they found that there was probably a single source for the vast majority of the sarsen stones, and so they therefore decided they needed to look at a common source area. They were lucky enough to have a core drilled from stone 58 - and stone 58 is one of the most typical stones and is well within the centre of the cluster. The core from the stone 58 was drilled out in 1958 and therefore destructive analysis of part of the core was allowed. They aim to build a geochemical fingerprint of Stonehenge looking at the trace elements.

2) The second approach was sampling sarsen localities across southern Britain to see if they could find the common source area. They were not expecting to find a match, but to rule areas out. Six areas in the Marlborough Downs were sampled and to their surprise they found that the West Woods area was an exact match chemically to stone 58 and therefore by inference to 50 of the 52 remaining sarsens at Stonehenge.

In future, they are also going to be looking at the geological properties of the Philips core and doing “every new analysis they can think of”.

They will be doing ongoing work on the sarsen debitage from Stonehenge. This work will be submitted to the Journal of Archaeological Science and includes debitage from digs by Tim Darvill/Geoff Wainwright and Mike Parker Pearson and the Stonehenge Riverside project.

Weathering badly affects pXRF results and means that detailed comparisons are almost impossible. However, three chemical families are present in addition to the stone 58 group, presumably from other areas. These have been found in stone chips from the site.

Q&A,

Will the Avebury Sarsens be analysed? They are hoping to do so and obtain an AHRC grant.

They were surprised that the Heel Stone was slap bang in the middle of the Stone 58 cluster.

The Tor Stone and the Cuckoo Stone were also analysed – one is from the West Woods, the other is not.

They need to try and sample more natural sarsen areas as they have “only” sampled 20 areas to date.

Could the sarsens at Stonehenge not be from the West Woods? They don’t know how extensive that geochemical area extends, so therefore it could be from somewhere else (nearby?).

12 New ASAHRG logo – results of vote and discussion

The results of the logo competition were discussed, and ASAHRG members suggested some tweaks to the winning design. Amanda agreed to work with Claire Selman to incorporate the tweaks by ASAHRG members into a final design, and then seek permission from the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

13 Members Updates and Information Exchange

Gill fed back on the ICOMOS meeting at Greenwich.

Anna Collar and Josh Pollard will be doing excavations over the summer.

Jess Thompson is re-analysing human remains from Avebury, including beaker burials.

Ben Chan has indicated that there will be a publication on the macehead from the West Kennet Avenue excavations.

Brian Edwards talked about four lots of research being published in June.

Steve Marshall talked about publication in WANHM.

Details of various public lectures had been circulated.

(members are invited to send links to the Secretariat).

14 ASAHRG30. Celebrating 30 years of ASAHRG, 1993-2023.

Proposals for celebrating our 30th birthday were discussed. These include two public lectures, possibly in Amesbury and in the Avebury chapel; possibly online lectures and a summer visit picnic and possibly some rounders. The idea of 30 major discoveries during the thirty years was floated by Amanda.

15 Research opportunities (i.e. utilities, opportunities from development or conservation)

Amanda will send around MPK's update on this. **ACTION: AMANDA AND MELANIE**

16 Other opportunities for outreach and dissemination of research

None.

17 Review of monitoring (with a view to advising the Steering Committees/Partnership on WHS condition)

Wessex Archaeology will advise on the forthcoming condition survey in due course.

18 Review on what to report from the meeting to WHS Steering Committee/ Partnership Panels

The Group agreed Colin could report back on:

- New Terms of Reference
- New Chairs and New members
- All the archaeological presentations from the meeting
- The new logo
- ASAHRG30

19 AOB

The issue of independent scholars' access to libraries was raised - some members are not in an institution and can't readily get access to articles and research. Ben Chan agreed to ask whether universities might allow electronic access. **ACTION: BEN CHAN**

New members – should Cat Jarman be asked now that Mike Pitts has stepped down as editor of British Archaeology? How about the editor of SALON?

Amanda will write to Jennifer Wexler to see if she is interested in joining. Jennifer is the new Properties Historian at EH for the area.

Nick Baxter will be speaking on Coleridge in Wiltshire at Calne Library.

20 Date of next meeting, Chair for next meeting and venue

Matt will chair the next meeting; the venue will be decided, possibly the museum. Richard Osgood and Rachel Crellin may be able to do presentations. The date will be confirmed in due course.

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21. After the lunch there was an **afternoon site visit to Avebury Chapel** with Stephen Stacey of Avebury Parish Council Community Project (x2 papers were recirculated as background).

*[Some parts of these minutes are redacted as they relate to unpublished research]*