

RESEARCH REPORT SERIES no. 35-2012

STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE LANDSCAPE PROJECT

A344 CORRIDOR: LEVEL I SURVEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Anna Komar and David Field



ASSESSMENT



ENGLISH HERITAGE

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Research Report Series 35-2012

**STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE LANDSCAPE
PROJECT
A344 CORRIDOR
LEVEL I SURVEY**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Anna Komar and David Field

NGR: SU 1274 4207 to SU 0985 4289

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ISSN 2046-9799 (Print)

ISSN 2046-9802 (Online)

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SUMMARY

This report describes the archaeological sites visible on the road verges either side of the A344 in the vicinity of Stonehenge. It focuses on the section of the A344 from its junction with the A303 in the east to the junction with the A360 at Airman's Comer and highlights those areas that are particularly vulnerable to road works. This report supersedes a previously issued interim report (RDRS 8-2010).

CONTRIBUTORS

Research and field inspection was undertaken by Anna Komar and David Field. The report was written by Anna Komar, edited and subsequently revised by David Field. It was subject to further minor additions and editing by Mark Bowden.

ARCHIVE LOCATION

The archive is deposited at the English Heritage archive (the NMR), Swindon

DATE OF SURVEY

Desk-based research was carried out in July-August 2009; field inspection was undertaken on 12 August 2009; the interim report (RDRS 8-2010) was issued in 2010; it has been amended in 2012.

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Cover: Vertical aerial photograph, Christmas Eve 1943, showing the A344 running upper left to lower right. The principle features of archaeological interest crossed by the road are, from left to right: the Military Light Railway (extreme left); the 'Night Camp' and Handley Page hangars (with the ditch of barrow Winterbourne Stoke 28 just visible below one of the latter, which shows as a white patch); the dew pond; the Stonehenge Avenue; barrow Amesbury 11. (US/7PH/GP/LOC 122 frame 1050 English Heritage (NMR) USAAF Photography)

Fig 1. Location map

Fig 2. Plaque on the memorial to Major Hewetson

Fig 3. Milestone opposite Stonehenge

Fig 4. Milestone west of Fargo Plantation

Fig 5. Aerial photographic data overlain onto Greenwood's 1820 map

Fig 6. Map showing fieldwork locations along the A344 corridor

INTRODUCTION

The A344 road corridor between the site of the new Stonehenge Visitor Centre at Airman's Corner and Stonehenge Bottom was inspected for earthwork survival in advance of works related to the new Centre. The corridor extends for 3.1 km from the point where it meets the A360 Devizes to Salisbury Road junction in the west to the junction with the A303 London to Exeter in the east (Fig 1). The stretch under investigation takes an east-south-easterly course but changes angle slightly where it crosses the watershed alongside Fargo Plantation, cutting through the parish boundary between Amesbury and Winterbourne Stoke as it does so. The grass verge on each side of the road is approximately 2-3m wide and separated by a wire fence from the downland beyond. The study forms part of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) Landscape Project, which is investigating all upstanding archaeological remains either side of this corridor; this report supersedes an interim report issued previously (Komar and Field 2010).

The A344 links Amesbury to Warminster and, towards its eastern extent, passes less than 10m north of Stonehenge (NMR SU 14 SW 4). The road cuts through The Avenue (SU 14 SW 275) 12.5m from its south-western terminal and, some 120m to the south-east, just clips the outer bank of barrow Amesbury 11 (SU 14 SW 90). Further west, it passes a number of archaeological features to both north and south. These include groups of barrows (e.g. SU 14 SW 512, 513 and 545), a 'Celtic' field system (SU 14 SW 213) and later enclosure (SU 14 SW 192), as well as military earthworks and other remnants of the Stonehenge Aerodrome. Beyond Airman's Corner (and therefore outside the WHS) it bisects a further large 'Celtic' field system (SU 04 SE 16). The road itself is of 18th-century date and has been called 'an unfortunate intrusion upon Stonehenge' (RCHM 1979, xxiii), previous alignments of the route having lain some distance to the north.

The road way passes across a subtly undulating plateau, in the west reaching an elevation of just above 110m OD on the central ridge occupied by Fargo Plantation, before descending, at first gradually and then more steeply into Stonehenge Bottom at about 85m OD in the east. The plateau comprises Icknield soils in the immediate vicinity of Stonehenge, but Andover 1 soils immediately north of the A344 road. These are light, well-drained and easily tilled but contain surface flint, although not in sufficient quantities to seriously cause damage to ploughshares (Soil Survey 1983). These lie over relatively soft and easily weathered cretaceous Upper Chalk (OS Geological Survey of Great Britain 1976, sheets 282; 298).

To either side the down is fenced off and aside from the area around Stonehenge itself was formerly cultivated. Currently, fields adjacent to the road to the west of Fargo Plantation are in cultivation as is the area to the south between Fargo Plantation and the Stonehenge Triangle. There is documentary evidence of earlier, 19th-century, cultivation just west of the Stonehenge Triangle (e.g. Wiltshire History Centre: Amesbury Tithe Award 1846). Aside from the works related to the present Stonehenge visitor facilities

and the military buildings and earthworks associated with the Stonehenge Aerodrome, these constitute the latest human imprint on the landscape.

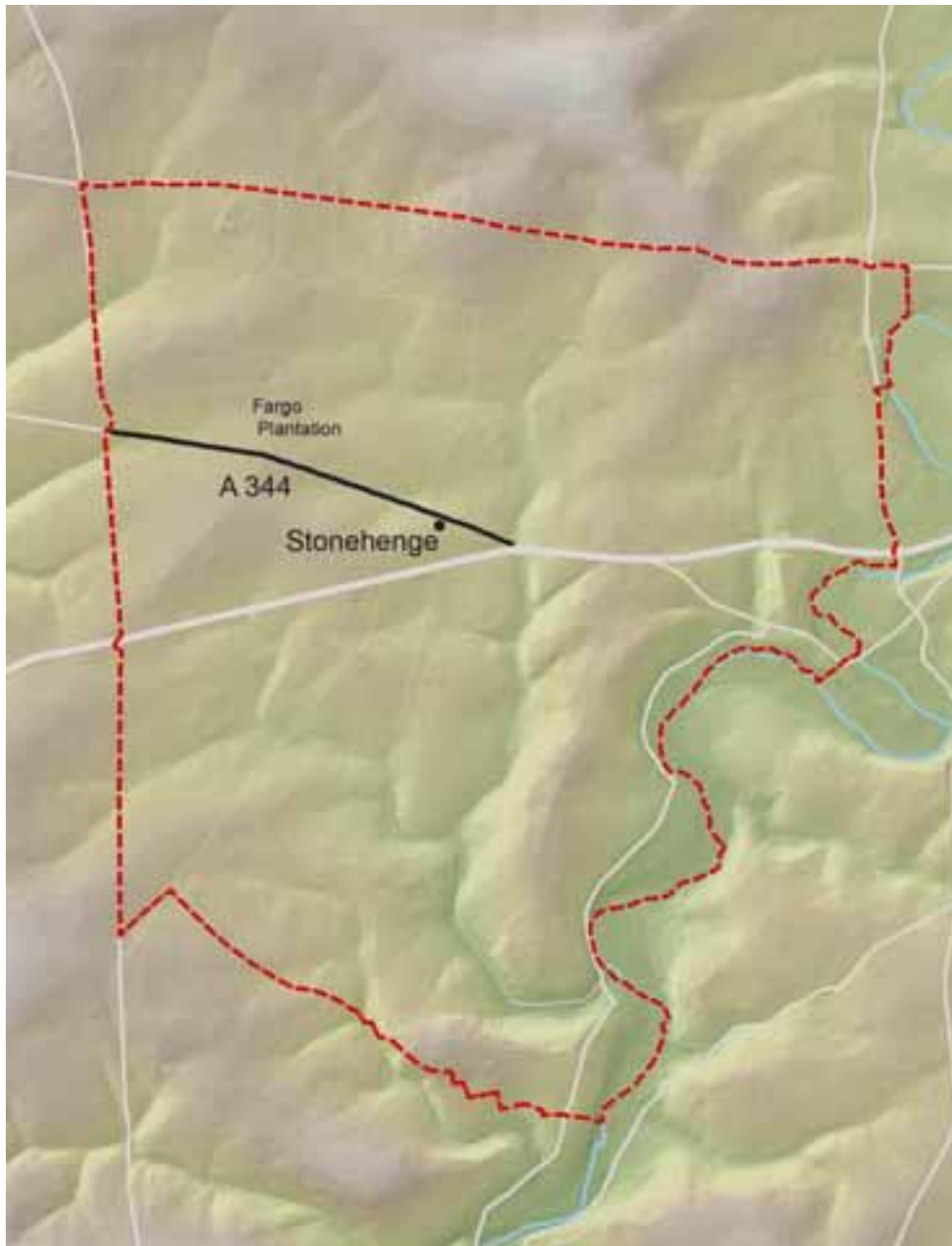


Fig 1. Site location map with the A344 corridor shown in black and the extent of the World Heritage Site outlined in red.

FIELD INVESTIGATION

The most striking intrusion is the road itself, which carves a 6m wide groove across the landscape. The grass verges on either side appear to comprise a sort of no-man's-land, the archaeology of which has seen little investigation aside from some geophysical survey work and 'rescue' excavations around Stonehenge during the cutting of pipe and cable trenches. These thin strips alongside the road do, however, potentially cover important features which can assist our understanding of the historic landscape.

Although no record of non-archaeological works along the length of the grass verge is available, field inspection revealed that man-hole covers are present at intervals along the entire length of the grass verge on the north side of the road and a pipe or cable trench exists for its entire length. Several small mounds, one damaged by rabbits and probably connected with these, exist on the north side of the road between Fargo and the Stonehenge car park. The south verge is similarly disturbed near Stonehenge, but man-hole covers were not observed as far west as on the northern verge. While the pipe trench here has undoubtedly damaged archaeological deposits and visitors to Stonehenge have worn a hollow-way in the grass verge in the vicinity of the monument, it is likely that narrow plinths of in-situ archaeological deposits remain to be investigated.

The northern verge

No features of archaeological interest were noted between Airman's Corner and the Fargo Plantation during field inspection. It is possible that subtleties were masked by long grass, but the apparent absence of extant earthworks in the fields either side of the road coupled with the pipe/cable trench disturbance suggests that it is unlikely that any are present. Similarly no significant surface expression of the Larkhill Military Railway (James 1987, 198) was observed towards Fargo Plantation where it is known to have crossed the road, but the verge widens here and remains of traffic ruts, which could have eroded any existing features, are visible.

A metal gate, which is now permanently open, lies between Airman's Corner and Fargo Plantation. It is fairly rusted and has been redundant since about the 1970s. A similar gate lies at the western end of the road close to Stonehenge Bottom.

Immediately west of Fargo Plantation is a clearing, with a formal, slightly raised, north – south track providing access from the A344 and with footings of several buildings. This is the site of the former 'Night Camp' military complex (NMR SU 14 SW 647) which served the hangars across the road and was subsequently used for mine practice during the 1940s (Komar & Bishop 2010; Barber forthcoming). None of these appears to impinge on the road verge. To one side is a large round barrow, Amesbury 55 or the Monarch of the Plain (SU 14 SW 57). Further east at the south-east tip of Fargo Plantation (at SU 1134 4260) is a modern 'Celtic' cross raised in memory of Major

Alexander Hewetson of the 66th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, who died in a flying accident on 17th July 1913 (Fig 2; *and see* Komar and Bishop 2010, fig 13).



Fig 2. Plaque on the memorial cross to Major Hewetson at Fargo Plantation

Between Fargo Plantation and the Stonehenge car park are a small number of features which deserve further investigation. A square dew-pond at NGR SU 1189 4241 is bisected by the fence which separates the verge from the adjacent field. It was recorded on the north side of the fence during the Cursus Barrow Group survey (Amadio and Bishop 2010) but has not yet been mapped between the fence and the road. Its southern edge seems to have been clipped by the A344. A man-hole cover separates the pond from a small earth mound some distance westward, which has the appearance of being recently constructed and perhaps related to the drainage.

Opposite Stonehenge is a weathered milestone (Fig 3), which has been moved from its original position on the southern verge, as shown on Andrews' and Dury's Map of Wiltshire of 1773 (WANHS 1952) and on early OS editions; it is of 18th-century date (NMR SU 14 SW 722; Bishop 2011, 16, fig 3).

East of Stonehenge and towards the junction with the A303, the carriage way has been lowered to ease the passage of vehicles on the slope and any archaeological deposits will have been truncated. Just before it meets the A303, there is the second metal gate mentioned above which, like that close to Airman's Corner, is now permanently open.



Fig 3. The milestone opposite Stonehenge: LXXX miles from London II from Amesbury



Fig 4. The milestone west of Fargo Plantation: LXXXI from London III from Amesbury

The southern verge

There is a milestone west of Fargo Plantation (SU 14 SW 764; Bishop 2011, 16). It has recently lost a considerable part of its northern face, either from exfoliation or damage (Fig 4) but the other face is in good condition.

West of the tree cover opposite Fargo Plantation is a small clearing which contained a number of piles of solidified aggregate, and a line of degraded concrete bases, each c 0.4-0.5m square, a small number of other flat concrete bases, along with the remnants of a ceramic drain. An in-filled trench can be traced for c 3m from east to west before turning northwards. This clearing and the tree cover area adjacent to it was the location of the Handley Page Hangars (NMR SU 14 SW 646: *see* Fig 6). One of the branches of the Larkhill Military Railway (SU 14 SW 644) served the hangars and terminated here (James 1987, 198). It is likely that the trench, the concrete and the aggregate are related to the hangars or to a small railway platform that must have been situated in this area (Komar and Bishop 2010, 11-13).

Barrow Winterbourne Stoke 28 (Grinsell 1957, 202) occupies the same space; though it was covered by one of the Handley Page hangars part of its ditch seems to survive (Komar and Bishop 2010, 12, fig 6), though a large part of its area is now under dense vegetation; part of the barrow must lie under the verge or even under the road.

A report by the Defence of Britain Project mentions anti-tank cubes of Second World War date at SU11190 42628 (SU 14 SW 732) but this is almost certainly a mis-identification of the concrete foundations of the Handley Page hangars with an incorrect grid reference; there are no concrete blocks at the location identified, which is immediately south of the centre of Fargo Plantation.

Further east, between the Stonehenge Triangle and Fargo Plantation, no archaeological features were observed on the southern verge.

In the Stonehenge area, however, the A344 cuts through the Avenue just 20m north-east of Stonehenge and clips the extrapolated extent of the Heelstone ditch. The north side of the Heelstone is close to the fence, but there is no surface expression of the ditch which surrounds it. Fragments of the ditch might survive beneath the grass verge, and the plan of Pitts' cutting 91 (Cleal *et al*/1995, plan 3), suggests that the remaining arc of the Heelstone ditch should be located here. The verge could also conceal further stone settings.

Given the discoveries in trenches south of the road, it is possible that this section of the Avenue contained other features, like those found by Pitts in 1979-80 (in Cutting 103). There is just the merest shallow depression marking the position of the Avenue although there are no meaningful earthworks on the surface (*see* Bishop 2011, fig 4). The southern Avenue ditch and bank appear to kink around the Heelstone (Field and Pearson

2010, 15, figs 7 and 10); further confirmation of this crucial mis-alignment could lie beneath the road and verges.

The fence along the verge lies very close to barrow Amesbury 11 (NMR SU 14 SW 90), which during the recent EH earthwork survey was observed to have an associated external bank on its north-east side (Field and Pearson 2011, frontispiece, 12), which appears to have been ploughed down for the rest of its circuit. It is not visible as an extant earthwork on the road side of the fence, having been cut by a pipeline, but fragments of the bank could survive either side of the pipe trench.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Documents

Ogilby's road map of 1675 indicates that the forerunner of the A344 descended into Stonehenge Bottom from between the New King Barrows and lay a further distance to the north of Stonehenge than the present road. It may have cut through the Avenue in the area of the unfinished toll road (RCHM 1979, xxiii; Field *et al*/2012, 8).

Andrews' and Dury's *Map of Wiltshire* of 1773 (WANHS 1952), depicts Stonehenge in the Hundred of Underditch, with barrows surrounding the monument, and shows highways where the A344, A303 and A360 are today. The eastern corner of the Stonehenge triangle had at this time been absorbed by Amesbury Hundred, while the western half of the larger triangle formed by the three roads lay in Branche Hundred. A number of tracks crossed the larger triangular area around Stonehenge, making their way southwards across the downs towards Lake and Woodford Hutt (now Druid's Lodge), and northwards to Netheravon and Shrewton Down. Many of these tracks are not shown on Greenwood's 1820 map (Chandler 1998, 126), but whether this is because they fell out of use in the intervening years or because the later map is less detailed is not clear. Some tracks seem to correspond to field boundaries that exist today, others to linear crop marks or ephemeral earthworks identified on aerial photographs (Fig 5).

The Tithing Award for Amesbury Parish of 1846 (Wiltshire Heritage Centre, TA Amesbury) shows areas of cultivation south of the A344 that extend from the west side of the Stonehenge triangle as far as the Fargo Plantation.



Fig 5. National Mapping Project (NMP) data (red and yellow) overlain onto Greenwood's Map of Wiltshire (1820, reproduced by kind permission of the Wiltshire and Swindon Archive); yellow lines show features depicted by NMP photo transcription, that can be related to those seen on the 1820 map. OS base map ©Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2009

Aerial Photography

The Stonehenge WHS Mapping Project and the Salisbury Plain Training Area Mapping Project (Crutchley 2000; 2002) have plotted the 'Celtic' field systems, barrows and other features that are not identifiable on the ground on both sides of the corridor.

Further west, the military buildings which were present opposite the Fargo Plantation are depicted as encroaching on the northern edge of a 'Celtic' field system (NMR SU 14 SW 213), and further west, the line of the Larkhill Military Railway cuts through 'Celtic' fields to both north and south, and through the grass verges on either side of the road. The Stonehenge Aerodrome did not affect the area immediately along the A344, except near Fargo Plantation where related military structures can be seen on air photographs from 1945 (RAF/106G/UK/915 4207). Aerial photographs dating from 1970 show a larger complex of buildings to the north of the road, while none are seen to the south. Others dated to 1978 show a rectangular building orientated east to west in the clearing to the south of the A344, while the area to the north of the road, which is presently overgrown, was relatively open at that time. A further, smaller structure is visible in the north of the northern clearing (NMR SU 1042/16/170; NMR SFI 352/170 11-OCT-1978). (For this area generally see Komar and Bishop 2010.)

Aerial photographic transcription and a plan of the Larkhill Military Railway (James 1987, 198) suggest that remains of a short branch of that railway which served the Handley Page Hangars might survive south of the road for a distance of some 300m westward of the clearing (Fig 6). Between Fargo Plantation and Airman's Corner, aerial transcription suggests an absence of archaeological features along the grass verges of the A344.

Geophysical survey

A thin corridor along the A344 from its junction with the A303 to Airman's Corner has been subject to geophysical survey although, as seen in Fig 6, only the north side of the west half of the road, and the south side of the east end, have been so investigated. A number of magnetometer and/or GPR surveys were undertaken between 1979 and 1998, most of which were discussed by David and Payne (1997). While broad locations of the surveys are shown in Fig 6, the precise locations, dates or details have not been possible to ascertain in all cases.

In October 1979 the survey of a 45m stretch of the Avenue, from the fence north of the A344 and extending north-eastwards along its length, took place. This was followed in October 1980 by an extension of the survey northwards, over a further 180m (Bartlett and David 1982, 91; Payne 1995, 506). The magnetometer and resistivity surveys revealed the Avenue ditches, as well as slight responses over the banks of this feature. They also produced responses suggestive of pits along the inside of the Avenue, some more 'definite' than others.

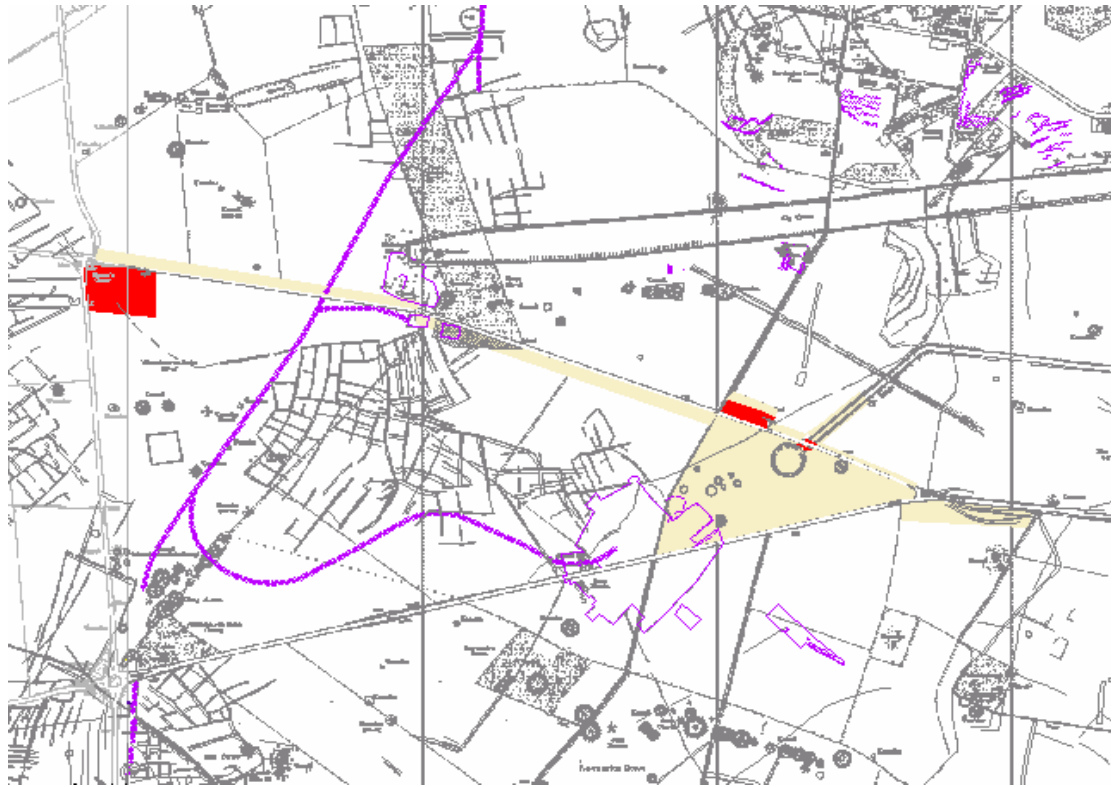


Fig 6. Fieldwork along the A344 - beige shading shows areas of geophysical survey (after David and Payne, 1997, fig1), red shows excavation areas and purple lines show military installations. Modern field boundaries, roads and archaeological features are shown in grey. Base map © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2009.

The Stonehenge Triangle was surveyed in 1994-5. The survey revealed the course of the Palisade Ditch (NMR SU 14 SW 154). The survey also confirmed the existence of several round barrow ditches previously identified on aerial photographs, as well as a possibly post-medieval track bisecting the henge from south-west to north-west, and several modern fence-lines (ibid, 85). This area has been subject to further geophysical survey, with significant results, during the course of the current project (Linford *et al*/forthcoming).

The geophysical surveys undertaken along the road corridor do not seem to have revealed such dramatic detail, and are not discussed individually by David and Payne (1997).

In April 2011 the A344 was closed to traffic for a short period and the opportunity was taken to survey the road itself with Ground Penetrating Radar but the results were disappointing, though possible traces of the Avenue ditches were seen (Linford *et al*/forthcoming).

Excavation

A number of excavations along the route of the A344 took place in the later 20th century in response to the expansion of facilities for visitors to Stonehenge. These included excavations in 1966, 1967, and 1979 related to the construction of the underpass, and of a public convenience and car park respectively (Cleal *et al* 1995, fig 24, 43, Appendix 3), a borehole survey south of the A344 undertaken in 1992 (NMR database, event 1304918) and further excavations in the Stonehenge Car Park compound in 1993 – neither of which revealed anything of archaeological interest (NMR database, events 908886 and 1046648). Near the monument itself, excavations of a service trench in 1979-80 just south of the A344 and within the Stonehenge triangle revealed a pit (pit 97) – a probable stone setting – close to the Heel Stone (Pitts 1982, 78, , 83-7, figs 3, 5-7, pls 7-9), which suggests that a pair of stones may have lain within and on the axis of the Avenue (though stone 97 and the Heel Stone are not aligned perpendicular to the solstice alignment), and that more stones may have existed along the length of the monument (Bartlett and David 1982).

Extension of the trench revealed a stone floor at its north-western end, that seemed to be of Late Neolithic date and represent stone-working activity contemporary with, and related to, the construction of Stonehenge; a hearth indicated that the floor may have been supplied with a shelter (Pitts 1982, 83, 97-104, figs 3 and 16, pls 5b and 12).

Further west, excavations undertaken at the site of the Stonehenge car park in 1966 revealed four pits, three of which housed posts (Allen 1995, 45), producing pine charcoal, radio-carbon dated to the Mesolithic period and providing the earliest evidence of human activity in the area. Subsequent excavations in 1988 by Wessex Archaeology uncovered a feature of similar depth and diameter, which also contained some evidence of having contained a post. In contrast to the other three, the post had been removed, rather than being allowed to rot in situ. Allen also suggested that 'the presence of pine charcoal and the associated radiocarbon dates indicate that [all four were] part of the same complex of features' (1995, 47), though the same author later pointed out that the spread of radiocarbon dates suggests that the posts were not all standing at the same time (Allen and Gardiner 2002, 143). Pollen and molluscan data shows that they were dug in the early Mesolithic, in an open woodland 'which it is assumed was cleared locally prior to and perhaps for this activity' (Allen 1995, 47).

According to the plan of the car park, no other features were identified, either during the 1935 excavations by Young, the 1979 excavation by the Central Excavation Unit, or in the subsequent 1988 trench evaluated by Wessex Archaeology. It is also clear, however, that the area beneath the present ticket office was never investigated and the ramp area certainly might hide more posts south-west of that recorded by Wessex Archaeology in 1988-9.

The 1967 Vatcher excavation of the pedestrian underpass on the south side of the A344 uncovered a section of a Palisade Ditch which extends for some distance to the north of this road (Cleal *et al* 1995, 155-61); test pitting by Wessex Archaeology in 1991 also south of the A344, found evidence of Bronze Age settlement – no doubt related to the 'Celtic' field system to the south-west – as well as some evidence of Roman occupation (NMR database, event UID 621119 – report held by Wessex Archaeology).

The Avenue ditches were investigated in 1968 just to the north of the A344 by the Vatchers (in Cutting 83), south of the road by Newall in 1919 (in Cutting 103) and by Pitts (in Cutting 91) in 1979-80 (Pitts 1982); all three were service cable trenches. The south Avenue ditch was also clipped by Atkinson in 1953 (Cutting 36) and he sectioned the Avenue further to the north of the road in 1956 (Cutting 48) – subsequently re-opened by the Stonehenge Riverside Project (Parker Pearson *et al* 2008, 20-33). Cuttings 91 and 103 revealed both Avenue ditches and the continuation of the Heel Stone ditch. Both the excavations conducted by Atkinson in 1956 and that of the Vatchers revealed the Avenue ditches, from which antler picks were recovered, but nothing more.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it can be said that the following areas of the A344 corridor are known to be archaeologically sensitive (listed from east to west):

- Next to barrow Amesbury 11 where the road impinges on the outer bank of the barrow;
- The area opposite Stonehenge itself where the road crosses the Avenue, the ditch around the Heel Stone and the Palisade Ditch; of particular interest is the kink in the southern ditch and bank of the Avenue which is apparent in aerial photographs and from field survey – the section beneath the road may shed light on this;
- Next to the dew pond, which partly occupies the northern verge and is clipped by the road itself;
- Fargo Plantation where the 'Night Camp' and Handley Page hangars were alongside and on either side of the road;
- Immediately west of Fargo Plantation barrow Winterbourne Stoke 28 lies partly under the southern verge;
- The length from Fargo westward for approximately 300m, where a branch of the Larkhill Military Light Railway lay alongside the road to the south and the main line crossed the road.

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- * Remote Sensing (including Mapping, Photogrammetry and Geophysics)

The Heritage Protection Department undertakes a wide range of investigative and analytical projects, and provides quality assurance and management support for externally-commissioned research. We aim for innovative work of the highest quality which will set agendas and standards for the historic environment sector. In support of this, and to build capacity and promote best practice in the sector, we also publish guidance and provide advice and training. We support community engagement and build this in to our projects and programmes wherever possible.

We make the results of our work available through the Research Report Series, and through journal publications and monographs. Our newsletter *Research News*, which appears twice a year, aims to keep our partners within and outside English Heritage up-to-date with our projects and activities.

A full list of Research Reports, with abstracts and information on how to obtain copies, may be found on www.english-heritage.org.uk/researchreports

For further information visit www.english-heritage.org.uk

