Centre for Archaeology Report 29/2002

Avebury Southern Car Park (Glebe Field): A Desk-Based Assessment

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ISSN 1473-9224

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Summary

The report summarises the known archaeology of Glebe Field, Avebury, Wiltshire (now a public car park owned by the National Trust) and its immediate surroundings, in advance of a proposed development on the site. The results of unpublished excavations in the car park and their contribution to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon and medieval Avebury are discussed. A deposit model is outlined and recommendations for mitigation are proposed in the light of the Avebury Research Agenda and Management Plan.

Keywords

Desk-based assessment
Prehistoric
Roman
Early medieval
Medieval
Post-medieval

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1 Introduction

This document assesses the likely archaeological impact of a proposed new toilet block in the Southern Car Park at Avebury, Wiltshire. It examines previous archaeological work undertaken in the affected area in order to evaluate the likelihood of encountering remains of different types and periods, and offers a deposit model. It then makes recommendations for a mitigation strategy in the light of this knowledge and in the context of two key documents: the *Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan* (Pomeroy 1998) and the *Archaeological Research Agenda for the Avebury World Heritage Site* (AAHRG 2001). The report also draws on a draft National Trust *Environmental Statement with Special Reference to the Archaeological Sensitivity of the Main Car Park* (Montague & Gingell 1996), the most accessible general study of the Avebury monuments (Malone 1989) and an exhaustive analysis of antiquarian observations and depictions of the henge and its environs (Ucko *et al*. 1991). Reports on individual sites are referenced in the text.

2 Site Location & Description

The World Heritage Site

Avebury World Heritage Site (WHS) covers an area of 22.5 sq. km on the Marlborough Downs in Wiltshire which contains a large number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological sites, principally of Neolithic and Bronze Age date. Six of these monuments are in Guardianship, namely Avebury Henge (or Circle), West Kennet Avenue, The Sanctuary, Silbury Hill, Windmill Hill Causewayed Enclosure and West Kennet Long Barrow. In addition, the historic village of Avebury is a Conservation Area with a number of Listed Buildings.

The Southern Car Park (Glebe Field)

The Southern Car Park lies in the approximate centre of the WHS, at NGR SU 100 697, to the south of Avebury village (but still within the Conservation Area) and just over 100m south-west of the Henge, whose visitors it serves (*Fig 1*). It is bounded to the east by a recreation ground; to the south by the A4361 Beckhampton Road; to the west by the meadows of Butler's Field, through which flows the River Winterbourne (subsequently the Kennet); and to the north by properties within the village. The site covers an area of 2.1ha, comprising the former Glebe Field, which was leased by Wiltshire County Council for development as a car park for visitors to Avebury in 1976. Since 1994 the land has been owned by the National Trust. The site is presently divided into three separate areas (*Fig 2*): the main car park in the western part of the site; the overflow car park to the north; and the east field, an area of pasture potentially available for extra car parking but not in practice used.

The Overflow Car Park

Preliminary discussion with the National Trust and the WHS Management Officer led to the decision that the overflow car park was the only sensible location for the toilet block (see below, Section 3). This report therefore concentrates on the overflow car park and potential associated service routes, while summarising archaeological information from other parts of the Southern Car Park site and adjacent areas.

The overflow car park comprises an irregularly shaped piece of land about 0.4ha in area, centred on SU 0995 6972. It is presently under grass, with the exception of an area of hard standing in its south-central part, at the point of vehicular access from the main car park. To the north of this is the earthwork of a hollow-way (*Fig 2*), running east/west through the area

and continuing eastward into the recreation ground, parallel to and just south of the back lane marked by the present path from the car park to the henge (*Fig 1*). The stretch of hollow-way within the overflow car park has been partly infilled to allow vehicles across. Immediately to its north a raised 'platform' area survives, 0.5-1.0m high (*Fig 3*); despite falling away a little in height within the car park, this also runs into the water meadows to the west. The platform is apparently the result of post-medieval make-up which overlies earlier features (Section 7). A higher mound of earth at the eastern edge of the site derives from more recent levelling and dumping during the creation of the adjacent recreation ground.

From an engineering point of view, the most practical route for service connections to the toilet block follows the line of a footpath from the north-east corner of the overflow car park to the High Street (SU 0995 6987), a distance of *c* 110m (*Fig 1*).

3 Management Issues

The Setting

There is a pressing need for additional toilet facilities for visitors to Avebury, and the point of arrival for most visitors is the obvious place to put them. The building would also allow the provision of more information and interpretation at the point of arrival. However, the long-term plan for the car park, expressed in the NT Management Plan (Montague & Gingell 1996, sections 10-11), is to remove it to a more distant point and introduce a park-and-ride or similar scheme. This would help both with managing visitor flow and with improving the 'slightly degraded character' of the southern edge of Avebury village (Pomeroy 1998, appendix K). It would also allow the restoration of the Glebe Field to meadow conditions, which is the 'future desired state' (Montague & Gingell 1996, section 11). Relevant aims of the WHS Management Plan (Pomeroy 1998) are to:

- provide an appropriate landscape setting for the monuments;
- enhance and protect the visual sensitivity of the key monuments and their settings (in the case of the henge this should involve the 'redesign of the southern car park with minimal archaeological disturbance')
- implement a strategic policy to reduce parking congestion.

Montague and Gingell (1996, section 10.2) suggest intrusive groundworks should be avoided and 'alternative strategies for … the provision of lavatories should be formulated'. Effectiveness and reversibility are seen as the tests required for any provision of facilities, while they also suggest the facilities should 'convey the same air of temporariness as do parked vehicles themselves'.

Siting, Construction & Mitigation

Given that a toilet block will be constructed, it is likely to comprise a semi-permanent structure with shallow foundations, probably consisting of a concrete 'raft' founded on the natural chalk. Although this will reduce the impact of the development on buried features it is unlikely to remove it altogether, and some kind of archaeological mitigation will still be necessary. In all previous cases where works of similar depth have been required in the car park (i.e. the laying of hard standing upon the natural chalk) archaeological excavations have taken place, in order to mitigate potential damage to sub-surface features (Section 7).

The choice of the overflow car park as the site for the toilet block reflects a number of considerations, including the existing pressure on space in the main car park (see Pomeroy

1998, section 7.2.3) and the desire to preserve the undisturbed east field, which has surviving earthwork features. The overflow car park has previously been subject to geophysical survey and partly excavated (Section 7) so its archaeology is not a complete unknown; it is also relatively well screened, so the visual impact of the new building should be minimal. In addition it would lie on the tourist route from the car park to the henge, and is closer to the services available on the High Street.

Potentially the service trench to the High Street is likely to have at least as severe an archaeological impact as the building footprint, if not more so. The Management Plan states that 'there is particular concern that measures should be taken to mitigate potential damage during the installation of essential service' (Pomeroy 1998, section 6.1.10), which does not require planning permission. The present project needs to be exemplary in terms of both impact assessment and mitigation strategy relating to the services. Accordingly, alternative proposals are outlined below (Section 10).

4 Environment

Geology & Topography

The site lies at a height of *c* 155m OD, slightly above the floodplain, sloping down from east to west (*Fig 3*). It is situated on the boundary between Middle Chalk (to the east) and Lower Chalk, with alluvial deposits adjacent to the Winterbourne a little further west - the river itself lies just over 100m from the site. Local soils are typical brown calcareous earths associated with drift deposits or valley gravels (Evans *et al*. 1993, fig 3), giving way to rendzinas to the east and calcareous alluvial gleyed soils to the west. Alluviation, the burial of earlier ploughsoils, and perhaps also hillwash have contributed to the development of relatively deep deposits in the vicinity. The precise sequence of deposits in the overflow car park itself is considered further below (Sections 7-8).

Environmental History

In 1983-4 a series of cuttings and auger holes were made in Butler's Field, either side of the Winterbourne (Evans *et al*. 1993). Transect 1, closest to the car park site (*Fig 1, site 1*), revealed a series of palaeosols and alluvial deposits spanning the Mesolithic to the post-medieval period. The results indicate a series of changes between wet and dry conditions on the valley floor. In Mesolithic times there was no river but terrestrial and marshy woodland. Clearance and soil erosion occur together in the Neolithic period, though associated sedimentation is weak, suggesting this was sporadic and localised. Overlying this is the so-called 'Avebury Soil' which indicates dry grassland conditions (i.e. no woodland regeneration) and some cultivation in the later Neolithic. More substantial clearance and cultivation probably occurred in the Beaker phase and is associated with alluviation, continuing through to the Iron Age. In the Roman and medieval periods the alluviation ceased and the valley floor became dry grassland again. Subsequent flooding and alluviation relates to post-medieval water meadow use, probably initiated in the 17th century.

Environmental evidence is a particularly important aspect of the archaeology of Avebury, although Allen has outlined the biases in previous work (AAHRG 2001, section 2.9). In the vicinity of the car park, Mesolithic and Neolithic environmental evidence has also been recovered from the henge bank at Avebury school (*Fig 1, site 9*). The environment immediately prior to the bank construction was one of ungrazed, impoverished grassland (Evans *et al*. 1985).

5 Archaeological Background (excavation & survey)

Neolithic & Early Bronze Age

The dominant archaeological site in the immediate vicinity of the Southern Car Park is the famous henge monument of Avebury (*Fig 1*), constructed in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC. This site encloses an area of 11.5ha, with a mean internal diameter of 347m. The internal ditch was originally 7-10m deep and 23m wide. It is surrounded by a bank that would have stood 17m above the base of the ditch. Inside the ditch is an outer circle of 98 standing stones and two smaller inner circles of *c* 50m diameter. The henge was excavated to some extent on at least five occasions in the 19th century, with more extensive work in the 20th century by Gray (1935) and Keiller (Smith 1965), who re-erected many of the stones. No major archaeological work has been undertaken within the henge since the 1960s.

Although the henge is Late Neolithic in date (associated with Grooved Ware and Beaker pottery), the presence of earlier Neolithic material sealed beneath the bank shows that the site has a much longer history. The nature of activity at this time is less clear, though transient and small-scale occupation and/or deposition is most likely. The same is probably true for the Mesolithic period, which is also represented in the vicinity of the site, in particular from Butler's Field 150m north-west of the car park (*Fig 1*, *site 2*; Evans *et al*. 1993). This work produced further evidence of earlier Neolithic activity as well (pottery and flints). Additionally, a Mesolithic tranchet axe was found some 500m to the south-east (*Fig 1*, *site 3*).

The other substantial prehistoric sites in the vicinity are the Avenues of standing stones, running southwards and westwards from the henge. The first of these, the West Kennet Avenue, lies some 250m east of the car park (*Fig 1*). It is marked by a number of standing stones, some re-erected by Keiller, with concrete plinths replacing those now lost. Several barrow sites lie on the higher ground of Waden Hill to the west of the avenue. The Beckhampton Avenue, which was recorded by Stukeley, apparently ran along the line of the High Street in Avebury before turning to the south-west on the other side of the Winterbourne, but it was so completely destroyed by the 18th century that its existence has frequently been denied. Recent work has located part of the Avenue 1km west of the car park, and thereby confirmed its reality (see Wheatley 1999) but there is little information about the monument in the vicinity of the present High Street. Stukeley's various 'draft frontispieces' for his *Abury* volume (Ucko *et al*. 1991, plates 14, 32, 35) suggest there were no extant stones at the point where the footpath now joins the High Street, but other views indicate that stone holes are relatively close together in this area, perhaps every 15m or so, and might therefore be encountered by a trench (R Peterson, pers comm).

Later Prehistory

Little later prehistoric material has been found in the immediate vicinity of the henge, though this apparent avoidance of the site itself suggests it retained considerable significance in the landscape. A similar situation was found in the environs of Stonehenge (Richards 1990). Some Iron Age radiocarbon dates have been recorded from the henge, however, suggesting it was not completely abandoned at this time. Later Bronze Age and Iron Age field systems are ubiquitous in the broader landscape around Avebury (AAHRG 2001, figs 9-10); it is possible that some later ditches, such as the hollow-way across the car park, have prehistoric origins (D Field, pers comm).

Roman

The Roman period is marked in the vicinity by a likely villa site at Avebury Trusloe (SU 08 70), *c* 1km west of the car park, near Horslip. A mosaic pavement was uncovered here in the 1920s (Kendall 1923). The nearest known Roman road lies *c* 1km to the south by Silbury Hill (largely on the line of the present A4), adjacent to which is a substantial settlement. The layout of this site suggests it sits on a route running northwards from the known road towards Avebury and beyond (Corney 1997, 139-51). Some undated ditches encountered during construction of a foul sewer pipeline, 300m south of the car park, may be outliers of the settlement (*Fig 1, site 4*; Powell *et al*. 1996, 79). Roman pottery is abundant on the east bank of the Winterbourne between Avebury and Silbury (Evans *et al*. 1993, 190) and a few sherds have been found in Butler's Field (Powell *et al*. 1996, 30) and at the Working Men's Club site, just outside the south-eastern henge bank (*Fig 1*, *site 5*; Harrington 1986). A parchmark feature spotted within the henge itself in 1995 could represent a Roman or Saxon ceremonial site (AAHRG 2001, sections 3.6, 3.8). The use (and disuse) of the Neolithic monument in later periods is a key aspect of research at Avebury.

Anglo-Saxon & Medieval

The settlement at Winterbourne near Silbury apparently continued into the 5th century AD (Powell *et al*. 1996, 57). Thereafter occupation may have moved closer to Avebury, with Early Saxon activity best attested from excavations at the southern end of the main car park (Section 7). Early or Middle Saxon interest in the henge is also shown by Gray's finds of organic-tempered sherds in the upper fills of the ditch.

Avebury is particularly important for the Late Saxon period, with both excavated and structural evidence for a long history. The RCHME survey of Avebury village shows a trapezoidal enclosure some 250m across, interpreted by Reynolds as the boundary of a 9th-century *burh*, with potentially earlier settlement extending to the west (*Fig 1*; after AAHRG 2001, fig 17; see also Reynolds 2001). The footpath targeted for the service trench marks one of the property boundaries within the putative *burh*, while the hollow-way running through the overflow car park represents its southern boundary. Both the northern and southern boundaries of the *burh* meet the henge at a point where the bank has been destroyed. Borthwick (1985) sees this as further evidence of a planned medieval construction but Stukeley's plans suggest the south-west sector of the bank survived until the 1720s (Ucko *et al*. 1991, 172). However, the village plan and the 10th or 11th-century work in the church (*Fig 1*, *site 6*) do suggest Late Saxon Avebury was rather grander than the subsequent medieval settlement: in short a failed small town (AAHRG 2001, section 2.8) with an abortive minster (Jope 1999). Although use of the henge in early medieval times is 'unremarkable' its juxtaposition with the settlement is probably not fortuitous: Reynolds (AAHRG 2001, section 2.8) suggests the henge may have served as an area where stock could be kept in times of emergency. Silbury Hill was also fortified in Late Saxon times.

The archaeological evidence for Late Saxon and medieval Avebury largely comes from small interventions, like that in the overflow car park itself (Section 7) or finds of pottery from excavations within the henge. However, there is a major Saxon and medieval occupation site, unfortunately unpublished (but see Wilson 1970), at the primary school, 150m north-east of the car park (Section 7). This evidence suggests that occupation had indeed shifted north-eastwards from the southern end of the car park to the western side of the henge by the 9th century. Only in post-medieval times did settlement intrude into the henge itself, though destruction and removal of the stones, whether for religious reasons or more pragmatically for use in building, seems to have begun in the 14th century (the date of the unfortunate 'barber-surgeon' found buried beneath one of the stones). It is still unclear, however, how much of

the destruction was medieval and how much occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries, under the eyes, as it were, of antiquarians like Aubrey and Stukeley (Ucko *et al*. 1991, 181). The lack of late medieval ceramics from excavations at the henge is seen as a reflection of the reversion of the site from arable to pasture, not evidence for a contraction of settlement.

Post-Medieval
The water meadows of the 17th century are associated with prominent surviving earthworks, especially in Butler's Field. Those visible in the car park's east field (*Fig 1*) may form part of the same landscape. Some terracing and landscaping has also taken place closer to the village, as seen in the overflow car park excavations (Section 7).

6 Historical Background (documentary & structural)

Medieval
Avebury (or *Aureberie* - see Borthwick [1985] for possible derivations) is mentioned in Domesday Book, among a number of churches at the end of the list of the king's lands (Jope 1999). The most notable event in the history of the medieval parish was the foundation in the 12th century of an alien priory, staffed by French monks from a Benedictine house near Rouen, on the site of the present manor (*Fig 1*, *site 7*). A number of potentially medieval buildings survive in the village but Reynolds notes that a more thorough investigation of structures hidden behind later frontages is required (AAHRG 2001, section 2.8).

18th & 19th centuries
Historical maps and plans were not consulted directly for this report, although additional research would be useful (Montague & Gingell 1996, section 4.3) Instead reference is made to summaries and descriptions in other reports (Borthwick 1985; Ucko *et al*. 1991; Montague & Gingell 1996).

Documentary evidence suggests that the car park area has been open land for several centuries, presumably as permanent pasture. Glebe Field was one of a group of small fields that adjoined the narrow floodplain of the Winterbourne and probably results from the enclosure of ecclesiastical tenure. The earliest view of the site appears to be that published by Stukeley (1743) as 'A Prospect from Abury Steeple' (*Fig 4*). Drawn in the early 1720s, it looks south from the church (*Fig 1*, *site 6*) towards Silbury with the area of Glebe Field, in the middle distance, comprising pasture and some mature trees - although the land divisions seem to differ from how they are today. The first map to show the site in detail dates to 1794 and records the Inclosure award (*Fig 5*; map by B. Haynes): Glebe Field was open land but its ownership was divided, the southern part belonging to the Revd. James Mayo and the northern part to Robert Nalder, though it had been 'exchanged to' James Mayo. A footpath through the southern plot runs parallel to its eastern edge (i.e. through the east field), joining that to the High Street, which is clearly marked. The latter path divides the vicarage land to the west (with the house shown in its present position rather than directly fronting the road, as in Stukeley's views) from a plot owned by Sarah Nalder, which contained a T-shaped range of buildings fronting the High Street (exactly as depicted by Stukeley). The division of Glebe Field, apparently marked by a hedge, lies to the south of both the hollow-way and the present division between the main and overflow car parks.

The line of the footpath to the High Street is apparently depicted as a hedged boundary on Stukeley's Frontispiece to *Abury* (see Ucko *et al*. 1991, plate 14), emerging on to the High Street ('Bekhamton Avenue') adjacent to the then vicarage. However, it is named as 'Carters

Lane' (?) on a draft version of the frontispiece (*ibid*., plate 37), suggesting it was an access route.

20th century
The OS map of 1889 and succeeding early 20th-century editions show Glebe Field as undivided save for a footpath running north/south through the field, approximately continuing the line of the existing path to the High Street (not as on the Inclosure Map). A single tree is depicted in what would be the centre of the overflow car park, perhaps a remnant of those in Stukeley's view. Aerial photographs of 1924 and 1947 show Glebe Field apparently under pasture, with the footpath present and the tree (a willow) standing, as mapped, just to the north of the hollow-way; the tree seems to have disappeared between 1969 and 1971 (Montague & Gingell 1996, appendix 1). The north side of the hollow-way was also the site of a broken wire fence prior to the construction of the overflow car park (Borthwick 1985; see also some recent maps of Avebury where the overflow area is divided, eg Ucko *et al*. 1991, plate 45). Interestingly, the 1924 photographs (Crawford & Keiller 1928, plates 36-7) seem to suggest that the line of the hollow-way continues into Butler's Field, curving to the west of the present drain - although it is the latter that is taken as the edge of the putative *burh* on Reynolds' map (*Fig 1*; AAHRG 2001, fig 17). Further work on the aerial photographic evidence might therefore be worthwhile.

7 Previous Archaeological Work

Overflow Car Park
Montague and Gingell (1996) record seven previous investigations in the car park, four of which took place in the overflow area. These are, in chronological order:

- a geophysical survey by the AML (1984);
- an evaluation by Wessex Archaeology (1985);
- excavation of postholes for information panels by the NT (1995);
- surface artefact collection from molehills (1996).

There has also been further small-scale investigation by the National Trust since 1996.

Geophysical survey (AML Project 271)
An area of 0.7-0.8ha within the overflow car park (all bar the north-eastern corner, where the recent mound is situated) was surveyed by magnetometry and resistivity in November 1984 (David & Bartlett 1984). Both methods showed that the field had been considerably disturbed (with iron debris and remains of fencing affecting the magnetometer). The only other positive findings came from resistivity, which showed anomalies in the south-east corner of the field, but it was not possible to assess whether any of these were archaeologically significant. Both surveys also detected the known field boundaries. Comparison with the number of features discovered during excavations in the same area (see below) shows the relative ineffectiveness of geophysics here.

Wessex Archaeology Evaluation (Fig 6)
It was considered that the construction of hard standing at the entrance to the overflow car park, consisting of topsoil stripping and the laying of gravel/hardcore on the natural chalk, would damage subsoil features. The aims of the fieldwork were to investigate this area and to assess the nature of the hollow-way and platform, the geophysical anomalies and the potential of the area destined for tree planting in the north-east corner of the site.

Consequently an irregularly-shaped area of *c* 72 sq. m was excavated during late March and April 1985 in the eastern part of the entrance/turning area to the overflow car park. Ten major features were recorded here (*Table 1*; information from Borthwick 1985, Montague nd; note that the finds still await full analysis so precise dating evidence is scanty). Their fills generally comprise clay loams with common chalk grits and fragments; colours vary but the excavator notes that the ploughsoil and the fill of terrace feature 99 (see below) had a dark, unleached colour in contrast to the feature fills. The only features with multiple fills were pit 16 (two fills) and deep pit 37 (six); the latter contained a large part of a pot of 12th to 13th-century date. The two north/south oriented wall footings are thought to be continuations of one another, although construction methods differ.

Feature 5 was interpreted as an Early Saxon *Grubenhaus* (Borthwick 1985), but the absence of Early Saxon pottery similar to that found in the main car park (see below) makes this interpretation doubtful. However, the feature had been partly cut away by two later pits, one of which (20) contained many sarsen blocks and the other (16) some medieval pottery. F5 also had two external postholes (19, 65) to the south-west and a series of internal ones against its inner edge (49, 51, 53, 55, 58) or in the flat interior of the base (45, 47), which do suggest the feature is a structure of some kind. An adjacent gully (30) also yielded some medieval sherds.

Two areas of dark soil on the southern and northern edges of the stripped area were not investigated.

Table 1: Main features in the entrance area

Feature No.	*Description*	*Dimensions (m)*	*Relationships*
5	large sub-rectangular pit with external and internal postholes	4.7 x 3.5 x 0.15	cut by 16, 20?
16	oval/sub-rectangular pit	2.2 x 1.4 x 0.20	cuts 5?
20	irregular oval scoop(s)	2.5 x 1.8 x 0.25	cuts 5?
30	curvilinear gully	2.5+ x 0.7 x 0.27	cuts 71, cut by 72
37	sub-rectangular pit	1.6 x 0.8 x 1.1	cut by 72
40	oval feature (partially exposed)	0.18 deep	-
61	sub-circular pit	0.6 x 0.5 x 0.11	-
71	feature (partially exposed)	0.11 deep	cut by 30
72	foundation trench with wall footing	3.8 x 0.6 x 0.17	cuts 30, 37
132	terrace with wall footing	2.4+ wide x 0.10	-

Two machine trenches (*Table 2*) were excavated across the line of the hollow-way, which was found to contain three fills (75-77 in the western trench; 94/96, 93 and 92 in the east). The western trench revealed several ruts in the base of the feature, which was cut through two deposits interpreted as buried ploughsoils (74, 79).

The western trench also uncovered two linear features parallel to the hollow-way on its north side (87 and 110/88) and four postholes of a possible fence line. Ditch 87 had two fills (111, 85), ditch 110 one (108) and its recut three (109, 89, 86). The eastern trench revealed the continuation of one of these ditches (100), another linear on a slightly different alignment (102), a later terrace feature cut into the hollow-way and a shallow oval pit. Ditch 100 truncated 102; both had a single fill (98 and 101/103 respectively). In the same area was pit 106, which had a single fill (102/103) and probably post-dates both 100 and 102. The ditches were also cut by terrace feature 99, which is at least 5m long with two fills (107, 97). This represents the visible earthwork platform in the northern part of the site and is cut into the

back of the hollow-way; Borthwick (1985) interprets the fill as post-medieval dumping but, as Montague (nd) notes, this dating is not mentioned in the site archive.

The relationships between features in the stripped area and the machine trenches were not established.

Table 2: Main features in the machine trenches

Feature No.	*Trench*	*Description*	*Dimensions (m)*	*Relationships*
78	W	hollow-way	width 3.0 (top), 1.8 (base); depth 0.75	cuts deposits 74, 79
87	W	ditch	1.3 wide x 0.50 deep	-
88	W	ditch	1.0 wide x 0.41 deep	recut of 110
99	E	terrace feature	0.40 deep	cuts 100, 131
100	E	ditch	1.2 wide	cuts 102, cut by 106?
102	E	probable ditch	0.8 wide	cut by 100, 106
106	E	oval pit	1.7 x 0.5 x 0.17	cuts 102, ?100
110	W	ditch	1.0 wide x 0.46 deep	recut by 88
131	E	hollow-way	width 4.0 (top), 2.3 (base); depth 0.75	-

Three hand-dug test pits (112-114) were excavated to the north and east of these trenches, through the 'platform'. The first of these revealed a sarsen and flint footing (117), perhaps the foundation for a cob or daub wall, at a depth of 0.52m. The second pit had a series of deposits to a depth of 1.8m, including a layer of chalk rubble (120) above a layer interpreted as a buried soil (121); these may actually represent fills of a large feature. The third pit cut through material dumped during landscaping of the adjacent playing field (123; see above) but also encountered the probable continuation of one of the ditches recorded in the machine trenches (126).

National Trust (Minor Investigations)
Six holes for the legs of information panels and a sign post were excavated by hand on the eastern edge of the overflow car park in 1995. In four cases topsoil and subsoil layers overlay solid chalk at a depth of 0.2-0.3m and there were few finds (three sherds from subsoil); in the other two, on the path leading to the High Street, the natural was deeper, possible feature fills were encountered and finds were more common (in one of them a layer of flint cobbles was encountered at a depth of 0.41m). A total of 21 sherds of pottery were recovered, all of medieval date (the likely range for the features is 12th to 14th century) as well as a few animal bones and struck flints, these perhaps deriving from medieval cobble dressing.

Further medieval sherds were collected from the surface of a large number of molehills noticed along the southern and western edge of the overflow car park in 1996.

In 1997, during the installation of 'dragon's teeth' posts on the south-eastern side of the overflow car park, weathered chalk was observed at a depth of 0.2m, under topsoil with modern finds; one hole where the depth of the natural was 0.28m may indicate the presence of a feature. In December 1998 more postholes excavated close to the 'dragon's teeth' found the former ploughsoil beneath 0.15m of tarmac and gravel makeup.

Main Car Park
Three separate investigations have taken place at the southern end of the main car park, some 75m south of the overflow area. These comprise an excavation by Faith Vatcher in 1976, a watching brief by Mike Pitts in 1979, and an excavation by Wiltshire Rescue Archaeology Project (WRAP) in 1988 (*Fig 2*). All await publication. More recently, there has been observation of some minor interventions by the National Trust. Both Vatcher's and the

WRAP excavations revealed sunken-floored buildings of Early Saxon (probably 6th century) date.

Vatcher
Excavation of the area of hard standing for the main car park took place between March and April 1976. Summary reports (DoE 1977, 32-3) suggest that three Early Saxon *Grubenhäuser* and occupation debris were found. However, scrutiny of the original records suggests that while one of these (Hut A) has the classic rectangular form with two end-posts, the others (Huts B and D, to the north and north-east respectively) look more like complexes of pits, with rounded bases and maximum depths greater than 1m. It may be better to think of the site as one building with associated domestic/working features.

Pitts
A watching brief on a sump trench adjacent to the west side of the 1976 excavations and extension of the hard standing to the north was carried out by Mike Pitts in April 1979 (archive in Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury). The sump trench revealed an east/west-aligned ditch at its southern end (the plan in Montague & Gingell [1996] suggests this should have continued into Vatcher's trench, south of the Saxon features), sealed beneath *c* 0.5m of dark brown topsoil, becoming lighter with depth; the upper part of this soil contained 19th-century sherds. Two possibly Saxon postholes were the only features in the northern extension.

WRAP
In 1988 an area of *c* 200 sq. m was examined immediately to the east of the 1976 site by the Wiltshire Rescue Archaeology Project/Chippenham College (Leah 1988). This work distinguished an upper topsoil from a lighter, chalkier subsoil, up to 0.2m deep, with post-medieval and medieval (12th to 14th century) sherds as well as a residual Roman coin. A number of postholes, most on a north/south alignment, were cut through the subsoil, which sealed earlier features. The latter included a subrectangular feature containing organic-tempered Saxon pottery - like Vatcher's 'huts' - animal bone and two metalwork fragments. Although there were no end-posts the feature had a similar form and north-east/south-west orientation to Vatcher's Hut A, implying the settlement did comprise more than a solitary house. Adjacent were a number of smaller features, including a pit 0.85m in diameter, just to the north of the *Grubenhaus*, with a cattle jawbone apparently placed on its base. Also visible cutting the chalk was a series of possible plough-marks, aligned north-west/south-east.

National Trust (Minor Investigations)
More recently, National Trust observations of resurfacing work found medieval sherds in the topsoil in the northern half of the main car park, the only direct evidence for archaeology in this area. Observation of postholes by the road on the east side of the car park found, beneath 0.4m of topsoil/makeup, a 'former topsoil' (0.12m thick) overlying a subsoil interpreted as a possible medieval ploughsoil (0.16m).

Adjacent Areas
Other nearby sites include work in various parts of Butler's Field to the west of the car park (Evans *et al*. 1993; Powell *et al*. 1996) and excavations prior to the construction of the new primary school, 75m to the north-east, by Vatcher in 1969 (unpublished). A small-scale excavation at one of the properties on the High Street is the closest investigation to the proposed service route.

Butler's Field
As well as the palaeoenvironmental data (see above, Section 4), archaeology was also recorded during the investigations in Butler's Field (Evans *et al*. 1993). Cuttings in the northern part of the field (*Fig 1*, *site 2*) produced Mesolithic and Neolithic remains consisting of tree-throw pits, a mixed flint assemblage, a sarsen disc and a few sherds; some intrusive medieval sherds were recovered as well. A complex of Saxon and medieval features was also encountered (excavated by R. Mount; see also Powell *et al*. 1996), probably dating from the late 9th to 13th centuries: the earliest radiocarbon determination calibrates to AD 680-1030 (OxA-1220; 1160+80 BP; for the full series see Evans *et al*. 1993, table 1). These are probably contemporary with the earthworks of the deserted village at Avebury Trusloe (or Truslow), west of the river.

Foul Sewer Pipeline
In 1993 the construction of a foul sewer pipeline allowed further archaeological observations in Butler's Field, close to the east bank of the Winterbourne (Powell *et al*. 1996). A number of medieval features were found (*Fig 1*, *site 8a-b*), one of which also contained three sherds of Early/Middle Saxon pottery. These features comprised a foundation trench with a sarsen wall footing, a pit and four or more ditches, all probably of 13th to 14th-century date. Molluscan samples, animal bone and charred plant remains were also recovered. The work served to extend the area of known settlement to the south; the pottery dates are at the late end of the range suggested by the larger assemblage and radiocarbon dates from Mount's excavations. Several undated ditches were also found, either more medieval features or related to the water meadow system. The environmental evidence suggests that there was seasonal flooding in areas adjacent to the medieval settlement. It appears that when the medieval occupation came to an end Butler's Field was put under the plough.

Primary School
On the school site (mainly in the playing field area south of the new building: *Fig 1*, *site 9*), excavations over an area of *c* 1000 sq m revealed dense and successive occupation of Saxon and medieval date, with timber structures, fenced enclosures and boundaries roughly perpendicular to the High Street. Finds included pits containing charred grain, one of which yielded a radiocarbon date of AD 660-1020 (HAR-1696; 1200±80 BP), very similar to the early date from Butler's Field (above); another feature contained a complete 12th to 13th-century pot (Wilson 1970).

'Rosemead'
A small piece of work in the vicinity of the High Street was carried out by the Central Excavation Unit of English Heritage in 1982 at the rear of 'Rosemead' cottage (*Fig 1, site 10*; Harrington 1986). The site, on the south side of the line of the Beckhampton Avenue, revealed two large features containing sarsen fragments, flint nodules, charcoal and animal bone. No pottery was found and the report suggests they could be prehistoric (presumably they could equally well be Saxon). Also found were three post-medieval pits, a gully and a brick-lined well. All of these produced 18th to 19th-century pottery except for the gully, which has a 15th to 17th-century date. The site of Rosemead was still open land at the time of Stukeley's work at Avebury.

8 Deposit Model

Stratigraphy

Montague and Gingell (1996, appendix 2) summarise the depth of overburden encountered during the various archaeological interventions in the car park. These range from 0.3m during the NT work to 0.6m in the work by Vatcher and Pitts. In general it seems that there is more evidence for a distinct subsoil (albeit of variable depth) in the main car park site than in the overflow area, where the Wessex Archaeology excavations recorded 0.3-0.45m of topsoil and turf over chalk. The exception is the raised 'platform' area where there is a deeper and more complex stratigraphy, though of relatively recent origin.

The subsoil in the main car park presumably represents a buried medieval or early post-medieval ploughsoil, which may also survive under the 'platform'. There may be a colluvial element too, although it is not comparable to the 1m or more of hillwash that sealed many of the Roman features at the Winterbourne settlement (Powell *et al*. 1996). There is no sign either of the deep alluvial deposits encountered to the west, which are apparently of limited extent: Evans *et al*. (1993, fig 2) suggest they do not extend beyond Butler's Field and they were apparently not consistently present in the Foul Sewer Pipeline sections on the east side of the field (Powell *et al*. 1996, 67 & 84).

The High Street sites also show a relatively complex stratigraphy. Section drawings show 'dark soil' and 'subsoil' deposits of 0.5-0.6m total depth underlying the topsoil at the primary school; the major ditches seem to be cut through these layers but other features are sealed by them. The Rosemead features were sealed by a 'fairly clean grey loam' beneath darker layers with post-medieval material (Harrington 1986).

Underlying these deposits the natural chalk seems consistent across the car park. The WRAP report (Leah 1988) suggests that the upper horizons of the chalk, being disturbed and not entirely solid, represent pre-Saxon hillwash, but this may be a misunderstanding, since the colluvial deposits identified in Butler's Field and elsewhere appear to be of an entirely different nature (Evans *et al*. 1993; Powell *et al*. 1996). It seems more likely that the chalk here has weathered *in situ*.

Feature Density & Dating

Montague and Gingell (1996, section 8) concluded that it was highly likely that archaeological remains may survive in the unexcavated parts of the main and overflow car parks. The density of features is moderately high at both ends of Glebe Field - though not comparable with the primary school site, where linear features, many intercutting, predominate. None of the finds assemblages from the car park have been fully analysed so the dating of most features remains provisional, but it is clear that the Early/Middle Saxon organic-tempered wares associated with the *Grubenhäuser* and occupation features in the southern sites were not present in the Wessex Archaeology trenches. The feature interpreted there as a *Grubenhaus* does not appear to contain any early material (Montague nd), though it has been truncated, as mentioned above. Definitely attested at both ends of the car park are features or deposits of 12th to 14th-century date.

Preservation

The survival of features is likely to be good across the car park - the subsoil, where present, has clearly protected earlier archaeology, and maximum feature depths of 1m or more at both the north and south ends of the field suggest truncation has not been too severe. However,

features may have been damaged by rutting caused by cars, and the infilling of these (noted during resurfacing work in the main car park), as well as by the mole runs mentioned above.

9 Research Issues

General Strategies

The Management Plan (Pomeroy 1998) stresses the importance of archaeological research within the WHS and this is promoted by the AAHRG, whose Research Agenda aims to 'actively encourage research into all periods and all relevant aspects of the WHS and its near environs, in order to improve archaeological understanding, to better inform other academics, and to allow informed archaeological resource management' (AAHRG 2001, section 1.3). Although the Management Plan and Research Agenda are separate documents, no clear distinction can be made between academic and management-led research (Pomeroy 1998, section 9.3.4; AAHRG 2001, section 1.1).

The Research Agenda has served to outline the principal gaps in current knowledge and suggest strategies for the future. These will ensure that work is conducted on a sustainable basis (i.e. with the aim of preserving enough to allow future investigations to improve our understanding further), in accordance with the management plan, and that it is prioritised, co-ordinated and published or otherwise disseminated to both the academic community and the wider public. The last of these is vital but not necessarily straightforward: as Barrett (1994, 11-12) has acknowledged, archaeological responses to Avebury differ from that of the visitor because of the ways in which the site is experienced by these different groups. Future publications could perhaps overcome this academic/popular divide by looking at how the architecture guides encounters and discourse. The siting and content of information boards also need to be considered in this light.

Excavation and surface collection are acknowledged as necessary but destructive aspects of research and they should therefore be kept to a minimum (Pomeroy 1998, section 9.3.3). On the other hand, it should not 'be considered reasonable to sacrifice the needs of research to the preservation of small areas of archaeological deposit if such an investigation is undertaken to the highest standards of the time and has a reasonable chance of answering clearly defined questions' (AAHRG 2001, section 5.6).

Anglo-Saxon & Medieval

Given that the toilet block and services, wherever they are placed, are almost certain to impact on archaeology it would seem appropriate to use the opportunity (other considerations being equal) to address research issues relevant to our understanding of the car park site. In particular, the uncertainties remaining from the 1985 excavation should be addressed:

> 'The 1985 excavations revealed further features which were not excavated owing to time constraints - a situation to be very much regretted given Avebury's potential for understanding settlement processes in the pre-Conquest period' (AAHRG 2001, section 2.8).

As Reynolds (*ibid.*) also states:

> 'the Anglo-Saxon and medieval archaeology of Avebury and its environs is complex and varied, but also of a high quality and with significant potential for addressing national research questions in addition to local and regional issues.'

However, much of the work carried out so far does not meet current standards for fieldwork in some respects, for example on environmental sampling, and problems with the Vatcher archives are widely acknowledged (AAHRG 2001, section 3.7). Hence renewed fieldwork in the car park could specifically address a number of 'gaps in knowledge' for the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods.

A key question is the relationship of the known Early Saxon settlement to preceding Roman occupation - given the suggestion that Saxon settlement tended to occur on the edges of existing estates (AAHRG 2001, section 3.7). (The possibility of finding Roman evidence is also strengthened by the discoveries at Silbury Hill and around the henge, as mentioned above.) It will be important to understand the relationship of the Saxon settlement to both the henge and the village church. The extent of the settlement excavated by Vatcher is clearly in question, given the doubt cast on two of her '*Grubenhäuser*' and the absence of definite Early/Middle Saxon features from the overflow car park excavations in 1985. Recovery of material culture assemblages and organic samples suitable for radiocarbon dating are of equal importance, given the need to establish a better chronological framework for the period (AAHRG 2001, section 3.7).

For the later Saxon period, it will be important to contribute to establishing the spatial and chronological extent of the settlement at Avebury, particularly with regard to Reynolds' hypothesis of the *burh* (for instance, the dating of the primary fills of the hollow-way sections excavated in 1985 does not seem to be clear; while further analysis of APs, as mentioned above, might aid interpretation of its westerly extent). Powell *et al*. (1996, 73) say there is 'little evidence that the [Saxon] settlement … on the western side of the Avebury Circle continued into the medieval period'. The importance of geophysical survey is suggested, although David (in AAHRG 2001, section 5.1) has outlined some of the problems with the use of geophysics in this area, as experience in the overflow car park has already shown (Section 7). The need for further scientific dates for the period is stressed by Reynolds (AAHRG 2001, section 4.8) who also specifically recommends excavation to establish the extent of the car park settlement (*ibid*., 3.8).

Prehistoric

Despite (or perhaps because of - see below) the proximity of the henge, no prehistoric features have been encountered in the car park; one pit originally interpreted as such during the 1985 Wessex excavations is now seen to be medieval (Montague nd). While one might expect small-scale activity in the environs of the henge, there are other prehistoric sites where settlement patterns seem to avoid particular areas - for instance at the henge monument complex of Thornborough, Yorkshire, lithic scatters are absent from the gravel plateau where the monuments are located and restricted to the fringes of this area (Harding 2000). Unfortunately, evaluation-type exercises are frequently poor at picking up Neolithic/Early Bronze Age occupation features, which often comprise apparently isolated pits that a randomly distributed trench plan is likely to miss (cf. AAHRG 2001, section 5.6). It has been suggested that Mesolithic and earliest Neolithic settlement around Avebury is restricted because of a lack of water (AAHRG 2001, section 3.3), though this is unlikely to be the sole factor. A proposed systematic fieldwalking exercise for the entire WHS should address the issue of occupation prior to and contemporary with the major monuments.

Although there is no known prehistoric archaeology in the Southern Car Park, the presence of Mesolithic and Neolithic material in Butler's Field (and the potentially prehistoric features at 'Rosemead') shows that it could turn up in the future. Some particular gaps in knowledge are

suggested by the AAHRG, especially for the Mesolithic period, which lacks structural and faunal evidence in the region, as well as chronological data (both typological and radiocarbon dates). Suggestions that Mesolithic features in the car park at Stonehenge represent a pre-existing ceremonial site (Allen 1995) have raised similar questions about the choice of location for sites such as Avebury, and relationships to possible Mesolithic or earlier Neolithic traditions. More broadly, the settings of the monuments at Avebury are poorly understood (AAHRG 2001, section 3.3) and any finds from the later Neolithic/earlier Bronze Age would begin to fill this gap. This particular problem will be addressed by a planned fieldwalking project which would ideally mirror the success of the Stonehenge Environs Project (Richards 1990). Environmental detail is also missing for the important Neolithic period at Avebury.

Cross-Period Issues

In all these periods, the influence of the great henge monument is a critical aspect of interpretation. It is important not to consider any period in isolation from what went before. All fieldwork at Avebury ought to contribute to the GIS Project (Pomeroy 1998, section 18.2), which is an important means of producing holistic and long-term views of the landscape - the present project should be exemplary in this respect.

The opportunity should also be taken to recover appropriate environmental samples, despite the exemplary work in nearby Butler's Field: Allen and Powell (in Powell *et al*. 1996, 88) stress the localised nature of the valley deposits, with single locations not wholly representative; hence the need to build as broad a view as possible.

10 Conclusions & Recommendations

The reasons for siting the toilet block in the overflow car park have been outlined above (Section 3), the known archaeology of the vicinity summarised (Section 7) and the relevant research issues considered (Section 9). This section brings together these conclusions to suggest a location for the building and an appropriate level of mitigation. At the time of writing the size and shape of the proposed building was not known, nor was the likely width and depth of the associated service trench.

Building Footprint

There are three ways in which an archaeological impact could potentially be minimised, but none stands up to scrutiny. The first would be to site the toilet block on the area of hard standing at the entrance to the overflow car park, previously evaluated by Wessex Archaeology. However, such a location would necessarily involve altering the traffic circulation and consequently laying more hard standing elsewhere, which would in turn require archaeological assessment (note that if the toilet block requires associated surfaced tracks or parking, archaeological assessment might be required anyway).

The second possibility would be to site the block on the raised 'platform' area of the overflow car park (to the north and north-east) which sits above the medieval archaeology. However, this is presumably unconsolidated and may therefore not be firm enough to have a structure placed directly on it. In that case locating the toilet block there would actually hinder archaeological assessment of the site because of the depth of deposit to be removed. It might also increase the visual impact of the building.

A third possibility would involve using geophysics to identify areas devoid of archaeological features. However, although technology has advanced since the 1984 survey it is not considered that such areas, if present, could reliably be detected (A David, pers comm). Hence further geophysical survey would not be particularly useful in the context of the present project.

An alternative strategy would be to make a virtue of necessity and use the opportunity to address specific research issues. A site to one side of the overflow car park, but close to the previously excavated area, would not affect traffic circulation and could build on existing archaeological knowledge because of this proximity. It would allow excavation to proceed with a brief aimed specifically at answering some of the questions left outstanding by the Wessex Archaeology work, as outlined above (the outstanding post-excavation for the 1985 fieldwork could then potentially be built into the project). In this case the fieldwork, though a response to development, would fit the criteria for a research excavation of having a reasonable chance of answering clearly defined questions. Given that the flow of visitors is towards the north-east, this side of the hard standing would seem the best location for the building.

The nature of the toilet's construction might mean that deep features would not have to be fully excavated since they would not be threatened by the 'raft'. However, the stripping of the site down to natural would require a program to recover material from the subsoil (if present) and plan and test the exposed features. The laying of hard standing had a similar level of impact but full excavation was required in that case.

Given the near-certainty of finding archaeology it would also make sense to follow the previous projects and dispense with an evaluation phase. A full strip of the site would anyway be required for the building construction, while a sample evaluation would probably not deal adequately with the question of isolated prehistoric features (see above).

Services

The proposed service trench raises separate issues. Although the existing footpath seems to be the only viable option for connecting to a sewer outlet in the High Street it would cut a narrow trench for 100m through potentially sensitive deposits (a property boundary perhaps since Late Saxon times). Potentially this could provide a view of the processes of settlement drift which sem to have been operating in the Saxon period (A Reynolds, pers comm; see above) but its orientation along a boundary suggets deposits are unlikely to be interpretable in a narrow exposure.

A possible alternative option (which needs to be assessed from an engineering viewpoint) is to have a self-contained septic tank adjacent to the toilet block - this would require a similar area of exposure to the pipe trench but would be far more manageable archaeologically, and would effectively form part of the same site as the building footprint.

Acknowledgements

For access to archive reports and other unpublished material the author is grateful to Ros Cleal, curator of the Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury. Rick Petersen kindly sent copies of Stukeley's drawings (inc. Fig. 4) and Wiltshire Records Office supplied Fig 5. The illustrations are by Sarah Cross (Fig 1) and John Vallender (Figs 2-3, 6) of CfA. The report was commissioned by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Avebury World Heritage Site Management Officer.

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