

Meeting of the Landscape Survey Group

Humanities Research Institute, Sheffield, and Chatsworth Park 13th-14th April 2013:
Minutes and Actions

Attendees:

Stewart Ainsworth (Saturday Only), Magnus Alexander, John Barnatt (Sunday only), Jan Blatchford, Nathalie Barrett, Mark Bowden, Eve Boyle, Judie English, Angela Gannon, Strat Halliday, Sue Haynes, Rosemary Hooker, Abby Hunt (Saturday only), Elaine Jamieson, Marcus Jecock (Saturday only), Oliver Jessop, Bob Johnston, David Lea, John Lord, Phil Newman, Sarah Newsome (Saturday only), Al Oswald (Saturday only), Trevor Pearson (Saturday only), Mitch Pollington (Saturday only), Becca Pullen (Saturday only), Nicky Smith, Sharon Soutar, Adam Welfare, Dave Went (Saturday only)

Apologies:

Graham Brown, Piers Dixon, Graham Fairclough, Dave Field, Sandy Gerrard, Derwin Gregory, Alex Hale, John Hodgson, Rebecca Jones, Graeme Kirkham, David McOmish, Kate Page-Smith, Paul Pattison, Hazel Riley, Paul Stamper, Andy Wigley

1. Introduction and apologies

The meeting began with a round of introductions and Mark Bowden (MB) thanked Mitch Pollington (MP) and Bob Johnston (BJ) for their help with arranging the meeting. MB briefly summarised the last meeting for those who had not attended.

2. Affiliation with an existing body?

MB began by outlining some of the pros and cons of affiliation with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) as a Special Interest Group (SIG), and noted he had contacted the organisation requesting further information but none had been forthcoming. Dave Went (DW) asked what help the group would receive from the IfA and pointed out that to join a SIG you did not have to be a member of the IfA; MB confirmed this but said that to be on the committee of a SIG you did. Angela Gannon (AG) raised a point about exclusivity, suggesting affiliation with the IfA may put people off joining – pointing out the Institute was not widely recognised/supported in Scotland. Strat Halliday (SH) viewed the opinion that affiliation should be considered at a later date when the group was established.

A general discussion then followed about the possible influence the IfA could have (if affiliated) on shaping the policies of the group, with Magnus Alexander (MA) and DW pointing out the possible constraints on training if IfA methods/guidelines had to be adhered to. MP expressed the need for the group to be in a position to influence the IfA, not the other way round. Al Oswald (AO) reiterated his point from the previous meeting that affiliation with the IfA could provide leverage, particularly over individuals training community groups. The point was then raised by MB about the possibility of affiliation with another organisation, with MA suggesting the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) may have a lighter touch. The benefits of affiliation with CBA were thought to be unclear, but could possibly help in engagement with groups at a local

level. MB concluded that the group would not seek affiliation at the present time but would revisit the question at a later date when the group was established.

3. Purpose/terms of reference

A copy of the draft mission statement was circulated to the group and AO outlined the background to the document. A discussion then followed about the nature of the group and whether it should be focused on earthwork survey or take a much broader approach to landscape investigation.

Steward Ainsworth (SA) highlighted an IfA article about measured survey, and expressed the feeling that the group should separate itself from this perception of 'measured survey'. AO emphasised the contribution of analytical skills to landscape investigation and SH expressed his desire for the group to be a forum where like minded people could exchange views and ideas. AO pointed out the importance of providing training for others and Elaine Jamieson (EJ) put forward her view that the group should actively promote the skills and benefits of earthwork survey. SA highlighted the importance of using different investigative techniques when studying landscapes, and MA suggested the group could form a point of focus for all techniques.

Adam Welfare (AW) highlighted landscape analysis as the core skill which should be promoted by the group, with SH pointing out that observation was the key and taking people out to look at the landscape was fundamental in promoting good practice. MP stated that commercial units do not have the ability to do walk over surveys well, and if done, they rarely involve any analysis of the landscape. AO re-emphasised the importance of promoting the benefits of analytical survey to curatorial archaeologists. A discussion then followed centred round the problems of giving training to the curatorial sector. There was a general consensus that there was a need to make them aware of the potential uses of analytical survey, and to persuade curators to ask for this approach as part of the planning process.

4. Name of the organisation

There then followed a short discussion on the name of the organisation. There was a general consensus that the name 'Landscape Survey Group' was fit for purpose, though the addition of 'Historic' or 'Historic Environment' was discussed. AG highlighted the dangers of spending too much time debating the name, and SA suggested that a 'Landscape Archaeology Group' already existed within the IfA. [It was subsequently noted that the 'Landscape Archaeology group' mentioned in a picture caption in *The Archaeologist* refers only to a group of students on a Landscape Archaeology MSt course.]

The discussion returned to the content of the mission statement and some suggestions were put forward regarding changes to the wording of the document. SA suggested the group should do more than 'provide a discussion forum', it should be a source of information for the wider sector. Trevor Pearson (TP) and AO then discussed whether the statement should recognise the loss of skills in the sector, with the consensus being that this was not required. DW pointed out that there was no need for the mission statement to be too specific. SH suggested the last eight words of the first sentence

were not required, with more detail needed to validate the final sentence of the second paragraph.

Action: AO will do some minor redrafting of the mission statement

5. Training, education and advice/outreach/website

There then followed a discussion about sources of start-up funding for groups, with AG suggesting the possibility of obtaining a grant for group initiation.

The discussion then moved to options for a group web presence and the document produced by Katie Page-Smith (K P-S) was circulated. MB began by suggesting the creation of a group web page could be done more cheaply than suggested by K P-S and a general discussion on the practicalities of this followed, including the avoidance of adverts and the possibility of the University of Sheffield hosting the site. Bob Johnston (BJ) indicated it was a possibility that the University of Sheffield could host the group web page but concerns over editorial access, etc. were raised. The need to keep things simple was raised by MA who also pointed out the need for an outreach strategy for the group.

MP then raised the options of using twitter and facebook, with Abby Hunt (AH) pointing out that from her experience that though these social media are valuable it takes a lot of work to keep people engaged with these form of outreach; she also highlighted the need to carefully manage content. The need to create a web page before engaging with twitter or facebook was pointed out by Rebecca Pullen (RP). The need to market the group effectively was raised by MP, and MB indicated that AO had approached the journal *Landscapes* about advertising the group in an editorial. MB noted that the editors of *Landscapes* had been very supportive.

6. Committee or Steering Group

The form of the Steering Group was then discussed, with a call for volunteers to fill the main posts. The volunteers are as follows:

Chair	Mark Bowden
Secretary	Elaine Jamieson
Membership Secretary	Sharon Soutar
Treasurer	Magnus Alexander (to be confirmed)
Members	Mitch Pollington, Bob Johnston, Rosemary Hooker, Al Oswald
Web Steering Group	Sharon Soutar, Oliver Jessop, Jan Blatchford, Abby Hunt, Kate Page-Smith

The need for an agreed Group constitution was highlighted and a discussion on the practicalities of setting up the group followed, including membership lists, etc.

Action: MA will approach bank/building society for information on what is required to open a group account.

Action: AO to draft constitution

Action: Web Steering Group to acquire domain name [completed]

A discussion on possible training events was then initiated by MB, with Nathalie Barrett (NB) suggesting the need for short training events for commercial units to minimise the financial impact. Eve Boyle (EB) then highlighted some of the problems with engaging with commercial units, and AW pointed out the reluctance of commercial units to engage in landscape survey. MP reiterated the point that one of the main objectives of the group should be to push the agenda forward with commercial archaeologists. The practicalities of training delivery were highlighted by AH, and AG pointed out that the group was not yet in a position to offer training.

The need to educate curatorial staff was again highlighted, with BJ pointing out that education has to start at university level as these students are the heritage professionals of the future. A three-pronged approach to dealing with the problem was advocated by AO which involved: contacting curators; forcing units to skill up; community training. The difficulty in trying to get universities to acknowledge the need for skills in analytical earthwork survey was highlighted by AG, with SH questioning whether the group should be teaching techniques or simply sharing knowledge. MA suggested the group should wait to see what requests for training/information it received.

AO moved the discussions on to the needs of community groups, suggesting they could be the starting point for training activity. EB shared her experience of working with community groups, highlighting the need to keep methodology simple and accessible. A general discussion followed on practicalities of engaging local groups.

The 'launch' of the group was then discussed, with TP suggesting a conference and field day could be used, and AO pointed out the potential of using a session at the IfA conference. The benefits of using more locally-based events was then discussed, with MA suggesting it may be a way to reach a bigger or more diverse audience. TP suggested this may be achieved through the CBA. AG brought the discussion back round to a single 'big' event to launch the group, but pointed out that national archaeology month/week could be targeted for the smaller local events. The decision was made to hold a single large launch event, with the possibility of smaller, local events to follow. MB also suggested other events, such as English Heritage members' tours, could be used to advertise the group.

The date of the next group meeting was agreed as the 5th & 6th July 2013, and will involve a late afternoon meeting followed by a field trip on the second day. It will be held in York and AO and MP have agreed to deal with the arrangements.

Prior to the meeting:

Action 1: AO will do some minor redrafting of the mission statement and circulate

Action 2: AO will compile and circulate constitution initially to the Steering Group for comment.

Action 3: The Web Steering Group will acquire domain name, collate web proposals and circulate

Action 4: The Steering Group will consider a launch conference and circulate proposals

Action 5: MA to consider post of treasurer and gather information from bank/building society