ALEXANDER KEILLER MUSEUM, AVEBURY
ANNUAL REPORT
1 March 2015 – 29 February 2016

The report of the Advisory Board to the Local Management & Loan Agreement partners (The National Trust and English Heritage).

The Museum was founded in 1938 by Alexander Keiller, who excavated in and around Avebury in the 1920s and 1930s. The original building housing the Museum was bought by the National Trust in 1943 and almost immediately placed in the care of the state under a Guardianship agreement (under which the National Trust retained ownership of the building).

The collections were given to the nation in 1966 by the widow of Alexander Keiller. Since 1994 the Museum has been managed by the National Trust under a 25 year Local Management & Loan Agreement with English Heritage; all staff and volunteers are National Trust.

As part of the Agreement the National Trust and English Heritage set up an Advisory Board to ensure that the Museum was managed to a satisfactory standard and to discuss strategic and operational matters. A Report is prepared annually on behalf of the Board by the Museum’s curatorial staff. See Appendix 1 for the composition of the Board during 2015-2016.

The three elements of the Alexander Keiller Museum:

Barn gallery (left)

Racquets Court Store & Study Room (right)

Stables display - animals from Windmill Hill (below right)

During the year the Museum Curator was: Rosamund Cleal Ph. D., F.S.A., M.C.I.f.A.

The Curatorial Assistant (Museum & Manor) was: Michele Drisse M.A.

the National Trust Archaeologist for the Stonehenge & Avebury World Heritage Site was Nicola Snashall Ph.D., M.C.I.f.A.
1 Introduction
This report covers the operation of the Alexander Keiller Museum in the reporting year 1 March 2015 to 29 February 2016. The Museum Curator’s role also includes the line management of the Avebury Manor House Manager; she is also Education Officer for the site under the terms of the agreement with English Heritage. In addition she oversees interpretation within the Museum, Manor and across the archaeological sites of the Avebury complex which are managed by the National Trust.

The role of the Curatorial Assistant is divided between the Manor and the Museum. The activities of the NT Archaeologist for the Stonehenge & Avebury World Heritage Site are reported where they are directly related to the operation of the Museum (including tours and events run from the Museum or by Museum staff).

2 Acquisitions
There have been no acquisitions added to the catalogue during the period of the report, but the finds from the 2015 season of the West Kennet Avenue excavation will enter the Museum after analysis as NT items (i.e. from NT land).

3 Documentation & collections management
Work continued during the year on preparing the collections to be migrated to the National Trust Collections Management System (CMS). The Curator and Curatorial Assistant also received training in CMS, receiving levels 1, 2 and 3 of the NT training programme which will enable them to manage the catalogue, including creating and enhancing entries, movements around the Museum and auditing.

4 Conservation
Monitoring of temperature, %Relative Humidity, pests and light continued through the year in the three buildings of the Museum (Stables, Barn, and Racquets Court Store & Study Room).

5 Security & Emergency Planning
There have been no recorded security issues or emergencies during the reporting period.

6 Human Remains in the Museum Collections
One request for study of human remains was received during the year, for an undergraduate dissertation; invigilated access was permitted.
EDUCATION, INFORMAL LEARNING & RESEARCH

The Local Management & Loan Agreement with English Heritage (1994) requires that the Curator ‘act as the Education Officer of the Museum and the other sites in Avebury in the day to day care of the Trust.’

7 Primary, secondary & tertiary education

Numbers of students visiting in formal educational groups continued to rise as against previous years, the number of primary school visits in the year exceeding any previous year since 1994 (the first year of the NT and EH Local Management & Loan Agreement).

Figure 1: Students visiting in primary, secondary and tertiary education visits

Summary of individual entries compared to 2014-15:

Primary education numbers continued to rise during 2015/16 and were up 35% against 2014/15
Secondary were 33% down over the same period
Tertiary were 19% down over the same period

Overall, 5,121 individuals visited in formal educational groups — a 9% increase on 2014/15.
A slight alteration in the pattern of visiting was observed in the academic year beginning September 2016, with peak visiting altering from Term 2 to Term 1 (Figure 2a, below). This would seem likely to be due to schools becoming used to the new subject and to the nature of the visit and appreciating that a visit to Avebury would be easier earlier rather than later in the autumn.
Delivery of primary education at Avebury:

The Curatorial Assistant delivering an introductory talk to a class of Year 4s

A small selection of the 'thank you' letters the Museum receives from primary schools, many of which, like these, mention the Museum volunteers who deliver most of the henge tours.

Number of individuals receiving education talks: 3,653
Number of individuals receiving education tours: 2,994
8 Walks, talks & workshops

This includes walks, talks and workshops/day schools held at the Museum or led from the Museum by staff or volunteers, and talks/walks off-site by Museum staff or volunteers.

The Museum Curator and NT Archaeologist for Stonehenge & Avebury led a one day workshop on Avebury: the henge years in July as part of the Avebury events programme. This was attended by 12 people in the Education Room. The NT Archaeologist led two Winter Warmer tours of the henge in December, to 40 people. The Museum Curator led a group of 25 people from the Wessex Region Council for British Archaeology AGM on a henge tour, and, with the House Manager Cathrien van Hak, led a tour of Avebury Manor for the Wiltshire Building Record as part of its AGM; this was attended by approximately 30 people.

The NT S&A WHS Archaeologist gave four lectures to outside groups, including the Avebury Society and the Kennet Valley National Trust Association and also gave a presentation to the NT Regional Archaeology Day (for staff and volunteers).

During excavations on West Kennet Avenue tours were provided to local residents, members of both World Heritage Site Steering Committees, the WHS Partnership panel and the Avebury & Stonehenge Archaeological & Historical Research Group: a total of around 150 people.

In addition, henge guide volunteers provided tours to the public to the excavation and other volunteers acted as 'meeters & greeters' on site.
### 9 Researchers and enquiries

The number of research visits in person was 23 visits, an increase on the previous three years. As each visit represents a day or part day where invigilation is required, and material brought out and put away, this represents the equivalent of a working month in which the Museum Curator and/or Curatorial Assistant were working with visiting researchers.

A further 12 enquiries were answered remotely, a slight increase on the previous three years.

#### Enquiries - summary

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<td>Enquiries in person to use reserve collection or library</td>
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<td>Enquiries by email, phone or letter, or in person in gallery (answered by Mus. Cur., Cur. Assistant or by NT S&amp;A WHS Archaeologist)</td>
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Subjects of research

These included:

- Education visits to Avebury: Chisel arrowheads from West Kennet Avenue
- Flint axes and arrowheads: Prehistoric pottery identification
- Neolithic human remains: South Street and Horslip excavation archives
- Windmill Hill chalk objects: The Ring Stone
- Early Beakers: Keiller correspondence (particularly relating to Doris Emerson Chapman)
- Heights of stones: Use-wear analysis on Windmill Hill flint
- Oil painting of henge: Neolithic pottery
- Iron Age Avebury: Alexander Keiller’s Sizaire Berwick

Doris Emerson Chapman during the 1937 excavation of the NW sector of the henge.

Researcher examining Windmill Hill flint for microwear in the Museum archive.

Chisel arrowhead from West Kennet Avenue (Keiller excavations)

10 Research Requests

Only one request for destructive sampling was received during the year, for animal bone from long barrow assemblages at Horslip and South Street, but this was later withdrawn by the Ph.D. student. The student does not intend to re-submit the request.
PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE COLLECTIONS

11 Planning & Development

The Museum Curator led on the creation of a *Spirit of Place* statement for the National Trust property at Avebury. This is a National Trust initiative to create statements for each property which will, in conjunction with Statements of Significance, create a framework in which properties will be cared for and interpreted in the long term and is a necessary step towards developing the interpretation of the Avebury complex for the public, including the presentation of the collections. (The property already has a Statement of Significance, written by the Museum Curator in 2009 and minimally revised during the Spirit of Place process). Questionnaires for visitors, staff and volunteers were devised and disseminated by the Museum Curator, the Marketing & Communications Officer and the Visitor Services Manager. A workshop was held in November, facilitated by the regional advisor on Spirit of Place; following this a draft Spirit of Place statement was written by the General Manager based on the outcomes from that workshop. This led to the completion of the process ahead of the required timetable.

12 Promotion of the Collections

The Museum Curator and Marketing & Communications Officer (Abby George) spent a day promoting the Museum at the launch of the *Wiltshire in 100 Objects exhibition* at County Hall, Trowbridge, in May. The event was covered by local press and radio and because the promotional event was adjacent to the entrance to the local library there was considerable interest from members of the public. No items from the Museum collection were lent to the exhibition, but Avebury was represented by a photograph of the Harold St George Gray excavation of the ditch in 1922 and by a sarsen sett.

*The Museum ‘stall’ at the launch of Wiltshire In 100 Objects exhibition at county Hall, Trowbridge*
‘Curator’s Choice’, a weekly feature on BBC Wiltshire, ceased during the year as the presenter for that slot moved to a different place in the station schedule, but it has been replaced by a Museum slot in the same show. The Curator was interviewed for the Marie Lenon show and five objects were recorded to be used over a number of weeks as this slot is recorded rather than live. These objects included a dog skeleton from Windmill Hill; Beakers from West Kennet Avenue; a probably Late Bronze Age bracelet from Silbury Hill ditch, and medieval scissors found in the henge (with the ‘Barber Surgeon’).

13 Visitor figures
The total numbers of individuals visiting the Museum, entering either through the Barn or the Stables as their first entry point, was 67,173 for the year. This year the Museum opened on Boxing Day for only the third time since the NT took over management of the Museum in 1994 (i.e. it was open on Saturday 26th; it was also open on the ‘Boxing Day’ Bank Holiday Monday 28th and on Sunday 27th).
In addition to overall number of visitors, footfall in each gallery is also recorded (so, for example, a visitor who first enters the Museum through the Barn is counted only once for overall Museum entry, but would be counted for footfall each time they enter the galleries during the day). Footfall in Stables showed a 4.9% (2,080 footfalls) increase on the previous year), but the Barn a 2.2% decrease on the same period. Footfall in the Barn can vary considerably from year to year as the Barn is closed in very cold weather. The increased footfall in Stables may be in part due to the increase in education visiting, as most educational visits include the Stables because the majority of the displayed artefacts are there.

**Total footfall by gallery: 2009/10 - 2015/16**

![Chart showing footfall by gallery from 2009-2010 to 2015-2016.]

**Paying, National Trust member, and English Heritage member visitors**

![Chart showing paying, NT, and EH member visitors from 2009-2010 to 2015-2016.]

11
Children’s archaeology-related activities were run in the Barn for 8 half-days during the summer school holidays, reaching 187 children. The Curator and Curatorial Assistant delivered the activities—mini (sandpit) digs, pottery-making, a handling collection of flint and pottery, and a ‘Beaker’ burial activity—assisted by a small team of volunteers and a University of Southampton undergraduate from the Between the Monuments dig. Due to the popularity of the activities in the previous year (especially the Beaker burial) timed slots were introduced which ensured that children had a booked place and also meant they could avoid seeing the ‘burial’ being uncovered before it was their turn. Up to four children were allowed in each half hour slot and this worked well.

Festival of British Archaeology

With the assistance of additional Wiltshire Landscape staff and volunteers, the Museum Curator and Curatorial Assistant delivered a two-day family activity session at Salisbury Museum, as part of the Festival of British Archaeology. The Wiltshire Landscape trailer acted as the base and activities included our popular Beaker burial, flint and pottery handling collections from the Alexander Keiller Museum and replica artefacts from Stonehenge landscape, dressing up in ‘Bronze Age’ clothing, badge making and colouring. Approximately 200 children took part in the National Trust activities.
The Marketing & Communications Officer & NT Archaeologist continued to maintain the @AveburyNT Twitter account. The account had over three and a half thousand followers by year end.

The FragmeNTs blog, which concentrates on the history and archaeology of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, continued to be maintained by the NT Archaeologist.

15 Marketing, Publicity and Social Media

In the later part of the year a Facebook page was set up for the National Trust at Avebury, which includes the Museum. The page is maintained by the Marketing & Communications Manager and NT Archaeologist.

16 Museum Facilities

Both computer processors (which run the Landscape and People interactives in the Barn gallery) were replaced during the year as they had ceased to operate effectively. The projector (for the biographical film of Alexander Keiller) was also replaced for the same reason.

17 Retail

4,685 NT site guides were sold from all NT outlets on the site, including the Museum galleries, during the year, and 268 copies of the guide *Alexander Keiller, Avebury’s Unconventional Archaeologist*, were sold from the NT shop.

18 Staff and volunteers

This year 2,949 hours were contributed to the running of the Museum, by 48 volunteers, a slight increase in both hours and volunteer numbers from the previous year (2,881 hours by 37 volunteers).
ARCHAEOLOGY

The Museum Curator, Curatorial Assistant and Archaeologist contributed to the *Between the Monuments Project* excavation on West Kennet Avenue occupation site (in which the National Trust is a partner with the University of Southampton (Dr Joshua Pollard), University of Leicester (Dr Mark Gillings) and Allen Environmental (Dr Michael Allen).) The excavation took place for three weeks in July to August 2016.

Excavations on West Kennet Avenue, with, inset, a fragment of macehead found during the dig.

The excavations revealed more of the occupation site (following excavations in 2013 and 2014) but also included a large posthole which although undated at present may be of later Neolithic date.

The large posthole during excavation and recording.
The Archaeologist and Museum Curator attended meetings of the Avebury & Stonehenge Archaeological & Historical Research Group and the Museum Curator contributed to the Built Heritage section of the Research Framework (final additions and amendments).

The Museum Curator continued to work on Grooved Ware from Durrington Walls (Stonehenge Riverside Project) with the assistance of volunteer Jim Gunter. During the year she submitted finished reports on the pottery from Woodhenge and West Amesbury henge, for the same project.

The Museum Curator has responsibility for interpretation across the Avebury property.

The first of a series of short foreign language introduction guides (which also promotes the Museum and Manor) was introduced in August; the English text was written by the Museum Curator and the translation was by Eva Steutzenberger (Visitor Engagement & Enterprises Manager). Other languages were in preparation by year end.

Live interpretation provided by room guides, henge guides and staff and volunteers in the Museum is an important part of interpretation at Avebury. During the Spirit of Place research with visitors the knowledge and enthusiasm of staff and volunteers came through very strongly as a positive aspect of the visitor experience at Avebury.

The Museum Curator worked with the House Manager and NT Archaeologist to provide content training to the staff and volunteers which provides them with background knowledge as well as the outline information and stories that are essential. In particular the Museum Curator delivered training sessions on The Chronology of Avebury; The Middle Neolithic (in preparation for Between the Monuments excavation); Round barrows; The contribution of the Windmill Hill ceramics to the identification of dairy products in early British ceramics; and Techniques for moving megaliths. Sessions were also developed for Manor Room guides.
The Museum Curator line-manages the House Manager and oversees research and interpretation in the Manor; the Curatorial Assistant works up to three days per week in the Manor. This section reports the work of those two members of staff only, not that of the House Manager or seasonal house staff except where working with the Museum Curator or Curatorial Assistant on interpretation, presentation and collections.

House Assistant Dawn Gill updated and expanded her small exhibition - *Dressing Mrs Dunch* - on the Manor’s Tudor costume project, for the Servants’ Hall. It opened with the spring opening of the Manor in mid-February 2016.

The Museum Curator researched and presented two training sessions to Manor room guides: *Who Was Who in Avebury Manor*, on the owners and occupiers of the Manor over its nearly 500 year history; and *The military career of General Sir Adam Williamson*. In addition she gave a lecture on 1 December (Alexander Keiller’s birthday) – ‘Four Weddings and a Henge’ - for Manor and Museum staff and volunteers on the subject of Alexander Keiller’s wives and female friends.

The House Manager prepared a series of training sessions on the social history of time periods relevant to the way the house is displayed.

Volunteers continued to research and present the history of the Manor. Toula Macmillan researched and presented two training sessions to volunteers on heraldry in the house, and Angela Ramsey contributed to the training session on the life of General Sir Adam Williamson; she also transcribed letters to the Williamsons regarding the running of the estate during their absence in Jamaica which will be used as a source of information for future interpretation.

The Museum Curator published a short article on apotropaic and other marks in Avebury Manor, in *abc (the National Trust Arts, Collections and Buildings bulletin, summer 2015)* and at year end had a longer article on the same subject in preparation.

![Apotropaic mark in Avebury Manor.](Photo: Roger Smith)
MISCELLANEOUS

The Museum hosted the first of three launches for the Management Plan for the Stonehenge, Avebury & Associated Sites World Heritage Site. This is the first joint management plan for the site and for Avebury replaces the Plan of 2005. The launch was well attended and attracted coverage from the local newspaper.

The Museum Curator worked with the Visitor Engagement & Enterprises Manager, Visitor Services Manager and House Manager to develop the presentation of the site for Christmas; in particular she proposed an installation of lit ‘stones’ for the Farmyard, which proved popular, and collaborated with Dawn Gill, House Assistant, in commissioning 18th century replica clothing to provide an activity for visitors in the Dining Room to complement the Dining Room's contribution to ‘Christmas through the Ages’ in the downstairs showrooms of the Manor.
Appendix 1
Composition of the Advisory Board in 2015-2016

Independent Chair:

Professor Timothy Darvill OBE, Director of the Centre for Archaeology and Anthropology, Faculty of Science and Technology, Bournemouth University.

Representing the wider museum community (approved by Arts Council (England))

Mr Stephen Bird (Head of Heritage Services, Bath and North East Somerset Council).

English Heritage nominees (2 positions)

Mr Michael Corfield (Chief Scientist, English Heritage, retired)
Vacant position

National Trust nominees (2 positions)

Dr Amanda Chadburn (Historic England, Senior National Rural and Environmental Advisor)

Mr Timothy Burge (Museums Officer, Wiltshire Council) (resigned prior to May meeting of Board); subsequently Vacant

Curator Board Members*

Mr Stephen Ponder (NT regional Curator)
Mr Martin Allfrey (EH Territory Curator)

*During 2014 it was agreed between the parties that regional/territorial Curators from each party would sit on the Board as Members in addition to the two nominees from each party.

Non-Member attendees during the year included Dr Rosamund Cleal (NT Museum Curator, Alexander Keiller Museum), Miss Michele Drisse (NT Curatorial Assistant AKM and Avebury Manor); Dr Sara Lunt (English Heritage, West Territory Curator, retired); Dr Nick Snashall (NT Archaeologist for Stonehenge & Avebury WHS) and Mrs Jan Tomlin (NT General Manager, Wiltshire Landscape).