

# Stonehenge World Heritage Site



The landscape around Stonehenge has been thoroughly explored on the ground over the last couple of centuries. Parts of the project area had also been surveyed from aerial photographs on several previous occasions. However, the NMP project still resulted in considerable detail being added to our knowledge of the archaeology of the area.



Stonehenge as photographed from a balloon belonging to the Royal Engineers in 1906, probably September, by 2nd Lt PH Sharpe. Courtesy Society of Antiquaries

Prior to the NMP project, the Historic England Archive database contained records for 2,062 sites of all periods and types within the survey area. NMP added a further 539.

Around a third of the new sites were of prehistoric or Roman date – mainly ring ditches (plough-levelled round barrows), enclosures of various forms, and field systems. These additions confirmed that the Stonehenge landscape was an extremely busy one during prehistory.

An even greater number – more than half – belonged to the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods. This is partly a reflection of the fact that previous investigation in this landscape has been heavily focused on the prehistoric remains.

The bulk of the new sites for these periods were either agricultural – strip lynchets, ridge and furrow, water meadows – or military – aside from the First World War aerodrome and the sizeable camps on the southern edge of Salisbury Plain, there were assorted trenches, rifle butts, barrage balloon sites and much more.

The military presence in the landscape has provided us with some of the best of the historic photography of the area. Not only did RAF and USAAF training flights incidentally record a wealth of archaeological detail, sometimes photographing as earthworks sites that today can be seen only as cropmarks or soilmarks, they have also captured the changing face of the landscape over the course of the 20th century.



Stonehenge, as photographed from the northeast by the RAF on 12-JUL-1928. In the background are the remnants of the First World War aerodrome buildings. The huts closest to Stonehenge were provided by the Ministry of Works for Colonel Hawley, whose long campaign of excavation within Stonehenge was now nearing its end (CCC 11796/4519) © Crown Copyright HE - Crawford collection.

## Stonehenge World Heritage Site NMP

The landscape around Stonehenge has been thoroughly explored on the ground over the last couple of centuries. Parts of the project area had also been surveyed from aerial photographs on several previous occasions. However, the NMP project still resulted in considerable detail being added to our knowledge of the archaeology of the area.

Prior to the NMP project, the NMR database contained records for 2,062 sites of all periods and types within the survey area. NMP added a further 539. Around a third of the new sites were of prehistoric or Roman date – mainly ring ditches (plough-levelled round barrows), enclosures of various forms, and field systems. These additions confirmed that the Stonehenge landscape was an extremely busy one during prehistory.

An even greater number – more than half – belonged to the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods. This is partly a reflection of the fact that previous investigation in this landscape has been heavily focused on the prehistoric remains.

The bulk of the new sites for these periods were either agricultural – strip lynchets, ridge and furrow, water meadows – or military – aside from the First World War aerodrome and the sizeable camps on the southern edge of Salisbury Plain, there were assorted trenches, rifle butts, barrage balloon sites and much more.



Stonehenge and its immediate landscape as photographed by the USAAF on Christmas Eve 1943. The low, clear sunlight has caused even the slightest features to cast a shadow, allowing them to be identified. The earthwork remnants of the First World War aerodrome are particularly noticeable. (US/7PH/GP/LOC122/1022). © English Heritage (NMR) USAAF photography.

## Continued survey and exploration

As with other NMP project areas, reconnaissance photography continues to add new detail, while other organisations continue to undertake ground-based fieldwork, both utilising the NMP data and allowing renewed analysis of it in the light of their results.

One interesting site mapped in the course of NMP was not new, but the project added significant new detail. Located just outside the WHS boundary, but close enough to the A303 to be affected by planned alterations to the road, the enclosure known as Scotland Lodge turned out on excavation to be an Iron Age enclosed settlement.

Currently, historic and new aerial photographs are being studied again in order to support ongoing investigations on the ground in the Stonehenge area by English Heritage's Archaeological Survey and Investigation team. Already, important new detail is beginning to emerge from this renewed exploration of the landscape.



Part of the Normanton Down barrow group photographed on 04-FEB-2003 with the individual monuments appearing as grassy islands in a sea of arable. Typically for the area, this barrow group contains a range of Bronze Age barrow forms. One of the best known – Bush Barrow – is third from the right (the one with a bush on it) (NMR 21960/01)

© Historic England