

AERIAL ARCHAEOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP

Outline programme and timetable for a meeting to be held at the Mond Building, Free School Lane, Cambridge on 26 - 27 March/2 - 3 April or 9 - 10 April, 1984.

The interpretation of archaeological air photographs: how and why

Monday

10.45 - 11.00 Assemble at the Mond Building for coffee.

11.00 - 12.45 THE INTERPRETATIVE PROCESS: AN INTRODUCTION

A member of the group will be invited to define the essential nature of archaeological air-photo interpretation; to define the different levels of information that can be sought, and to distinguish the range of purposes to which that information can be put. Two other contributors will then be asked to provide critical objective accounts of the ways in which they have approached the problem, in one case in a lowland environment and in the other in an upland landscape. In particular, each will be encouraged to explain and demonstrate:

a. How he or she distinguishes and isolates archaeological features from their background through the disciplined perception and assessment of pattern, tone, colour and scale

b. How non-archaeological background information can be used to elucidate or qualify the archaeological component of a single photograph or group of photographs.

12.45 - 2.00 LUNCH

2.00 - 3.45 SOILS, CROPS AND AIR-PHOTO INTERPRETATION

During this second session, two non-archaeological specialists will be invited to define the ways in which soils and crops respond or fail to respond to buried archaeological and non-archaeological features. They will be asked to place particular emphasis on potential dangers and pitfalls that may be encountered by unwary archaeological interpreters. At the same time, they will be encouraged to identify sources of positive environmental insight that may not have been fully exploited by archaeologists in the past.

3.45 - 4.15 TEA

4.15 - 6.00 WORKSHOP 1: CASE STUDIES IN INTERPRETATION

Following on from the previous session, six speakers will be asked to present analytical accounts of their own interpretation of a particular photograph or group of photographs that have been carefully chosen to represent the kinds of problem encountered amongst material from their region. The whole group, together with the invited non-archaeological specialists, will then be encouraged to discuss and comment upon these analyses.

7.30 - 8.30 DINNER

8.30 - 9.30 DOCUMENTATION, TRAINING AND PHOTOGRAPHIC QUALITY

A short evening discussion will be devoted to three themes relevant to the day's proceedings:

a. Documentation: At its previous meeting, the group agreed that maps and plans derived from air photographs should, in principle, be accompanied by verbal notes describing each stage in their compilation. Is it possible or desirable to devise a standard procedure for documentation of the interpretative process?

b. Training: At present there are few facilities for the training of archaeological photo interpreters. Are they needed and how could they best be provided?

c. Photographic quality: To what extent are those responsible for photo-interpretation satisfied with the photography available to them? What are the advantages and disadvantages of: oblique versus vertical; colour versus panchromatic; 35mm versus medium and large format imagery?

Tuesday

9.00 - 10.45 CARTOGRAPHIC CONVENTIONS

At the previous meeting of the group it was agreed that discussion papers on the subject of standard cartographic conventions should be prepared. During this session these will be presented for open discussion and comment.

10.45 - 11.15 COFFEE

11.15 - 12.00 COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

A prepared discussion paper on the principles, applications and costs of current computer-aided mapping procedures. The group will be encouraged to suggest ways in which these systems might be improved and developed and to consider how such resources might best be deployed in future. Should each county unit seek to maintain its own independent facilities, or should they be pooled within national or regional centres?

12.00 - 12.45 WORKSHOP 2: SURGERY

An open session in which members of the group will be invited to raise any particular issues of interpretation, mapping or presentation on which they would welcome the opinion of their colleagues. Sessions of this kind will be a regular element within each meeting of the group and should, if properly used, provide a valuable mechanism for identifying common problems and for disseminating practical ideas about ways in which they might be resolved.

12.45 - 2.15 LUNCH

2.15 - 3.45 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

An appraisal of the meeting will be followed by a discussion designed to identify those aspects of air-photographic interpretation that require further consideration by the group. Finally, members of the group will be asked to decide upon the date, place and central topic of their next meeting.

3.45 - 4.15 TEA AND CLOSE OF MEETING