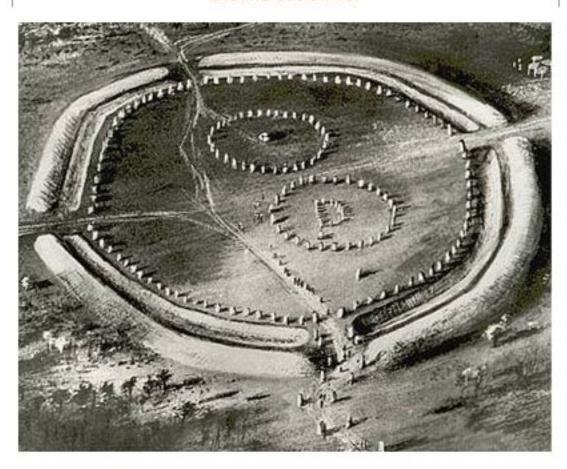
Avebury: A mysterious present from the past

By Karen Dabrowska

Stonehenge step aside – Avebury is here. Its inner circles are much larger than the circles of stones at Stonehenge. In fact the area occupied by the stone circles at Stonehenge, 32 kms to the south, would fit into the outer stone circle at Avebury around 130 times.



henge (ditch) and several stone 2400BC. circles surrounding the village of The site consists of a circle of Avebury in countryside of Wiltshire. It is one and bank. The area covered by of the finest and largest Neolithic the circle is about 28.5 acres monuments in Europe about and the circumference is 5.000 years old.

several final form was completed when originally consisted of 27 stones

Avebury is the site of a large avenues were added about

the English land surrounded by a ditch and approximately 0.8 of a mile. Around the outside of the circle Its construction spread over once stood 98 large sarsen centuries beginning (natural sandstone) stones some about 3000BC when the cove of which weighed as much as 60 and the earliest stage of the tons. Within this large outer ring sanctuary were built. It was are the remains of two smaller another 600 years before the stone circles one of which





and was about 320 feet in The obvious 29 stones (southern circle).

circle each cardinal points of the compass. From the south and west formed Avenue Avenue

source diameter (northern circle) and stones used in the construction the other, which was about 340 of the Avebury monuments was feet in diameter and consisted of the Marlborough Downs about two miles to the east of Avebury itself where thousands There are four entrances to the naturally occurring stones lay roughly at the scattered on the landscape. The stones are believed to have from sedimentary entrances going away from the deposits that accumulated on henge are the remains of two top of the underlying chalk layer. avenues: Beckhampton Many of these downland stones and West Kennet have now been broken up and removed for modern building

and the period.

In the early years of the 18th century, the general outline of the Avebury temple was still visible. Dr. William Stukeley, an antiquarian who frequently visited the site in the 1720's, watched in dismay as the local

material but the National Trust farmers, unaware of the cultural plantation at Lockeridge Dene and archaeological value of the small valley at ancient temple, continued with Piggledene preserve many of its destruction. For over thirty the stones and gives some idea years Stukeley made careful of the abundance that was measurements and numerous available to the builders of the drawings of the site, drawings henge during the neolithic that are today our only record of both the immense size and complexity of the ancient temple. Stukeley was the first observer in historical times to recognize that the original ground plan of Avebury was a representation of the body of a serpent passing through a circle and thus forming a traditional





'sanctuary'. Continuing his mystery. explorations and mapping of the A large part of the village of earth and stone monuments. stagecoach runs local bus

alchemical symbol. The head About a mile to the south of and tail of the enormous snake Avebury circle lies the biggest were delineated by 50-foot wide man-mound in Europe - Silbury avenues of standing stones, Hill. It is a 130 feet high wonder each extending 1 and 1/2 miles of prehistoric engineering whose into the countryside. One of the raison d'etre, like that of avenues terminated at another Stonehenge and the stone stone ring known as the circles at Avebury, remains a

countryside surrounding the Avebury is enclosed with in the stone serpent, Stukeley monument. There are First gathered evidence that the Great Western railway stations sacred complex of Avebury at Pewsey (7 miles away) and included many other massive Swindon (ten miles away) at

services. Two local roads information can walk on the practices. visitors earthworks. The two stone Avebury is seen as a spiritual (Kennet avenues Beckhampton) that meet at Avebury define the two sides of a triangle that is designated a World Site which Heritage includes The Sanctuary. West Kennet Long Barrow.

A gift and souvenir shop, simply called the shop, has stones, post cards and

about Britain's intersect with the monument and ancient religious and spiritual

and centre by many spiritual groups, especially the Druids and for some it is regarded more highly than Stonehenge. Their festivals. especially the summer solstice, draw large crowds. The village Windmill Hill, Silbury Hill and the stands on the St Michael ley line (a hypothetical alignments of a places number of geographical interest, such as a ancient monuments) fascinating collection of books, crosses England from Cornwall to East Anglia.

