

A megalithic Dowsing Pilgrimage

By Sare D Bassett

Anything involving Avebury, Stonehenge, sacred landscapes and ancient tracks is a big pull for most dowsers. When we heard about The Great Stones way (GSW) a walk that combined these we decided to book a



called Marl Borough because of its chalky clay soil known as Marl.

Barbury Castle to Avebury, 12 miles, day 1

We took a taxi to the start at Barbury Castle, a large ringed Iron Age hilltop settlement with far reaching views. The enclosure itself is worthy of much more time than we could spare but we had many miles ahead.

We followed The Ridgeway path to Hackpen Hill with its White Horse cut into the hillside, the mornings miles came easy in the area of outstanding natural beauty, with charming round woods and views. The ridgeway crosses Overton Downs and onto Fyfield Downs with its tracks dotted with Sarsen stones.

We reached Avebury Down and from that vantage point, one could truly appreciate the magnificence of the Avebury complex and stones, appearing in a miniature panorama.



We came into Avebury via a tree lined track from the East side. At the gate, the rods directed me around the first stone, to the hedge side and there was a perfect sunny place to perch, rest and attune hidden from sight (see picture).

I asked only for the rods to 'show me whatever needed to be done that would help the energy of place'. The dowsing rods directed us anti-clockwise around the outer ring following a weave around the stones, concrete markers and invisible points which we completed as best possible. It is a pleasure to be a dowser following rods and shown a task, and maybe the counter clockwise direction was rebalancing. The inner sanctuary cove area is quite separate to the flowing pattern that weaves around the ring and much more part of the ley and ritual space.

After a break we took the path alongside the Kennet stream to Silbury Hill and just enjoyed the atmosphere

by the spring. Next the track led the over the road to West Kennet Long Barrow. It was peaceful in the early evening, dowsing around the barrow showed an alignment in the landscape to a 'V' notch in the far horizon which I later researched as being on the Wansdyke ridge path on Pewsey Downs.

Ready to rest, we followed a field footpath to East Kennett, a hamlet where we were staying.

East Kennet, Alton Barnes, Marden Henge to Upavon, 14 miles, day 2

Blessed with another bright sunny day, we left Avebury valley passing distant tumuli, following a track crossing over the Wansdyke ridge path. At the brow of the hill we were met by an astonishing field dotted with round barrows. The trackway led us on, up terraces to the Neolithic long barrow of Adams Grave on Walkers Hill. The vista over the Vale of Pewsey's countryside is breathtaking from here, it felt we were back in time, with no houses, people, roads or cars in sight except distant tractors bringing in the harvest.

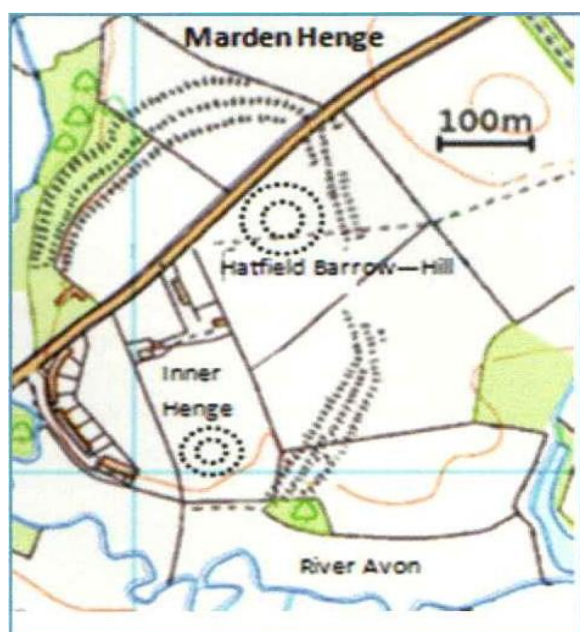
We descended the hilltop, looking back for a better view of the White Horse cut into the Avebury downs. The path walked us through the hamlet of Alton Barnes with a Sarsen stone crossroad, we followed a narrow stone footpath through a meadow to the atmospheric All Saints Church, with sarsen stones under its floor and an ancient yew in its yard.

Next we headed to a place called Honey Street, a road alongside the Kennet and Avon canal and near The Barge Inn. Close by, we found the route to Marden Henge, a lengthy wild route around field boundaries. Miles later we stumbled into the henge initially not knowing we had arrived.

Marden Henge is reported to have had perimeter stones with a great enclosure larger than Stonehenge with a 45 ft mound now destroyed but reminiscent of Silbury hill. Recent findings indicate postpost. Recent findings indicate posts for a Woodhenge, a circular pit of unknown purpose, traces of a lodge, a water filled moat and landing stage from the river Avon.

Marden Henge was intriguing with its hidden features, so I remote viewed the site when home. What I received was fleeting impressions suggesting that the henge was enclosed for secrecy and utilised for preparation and ritual by a revered group of astronomers who readied themselves at Marden before traveling by boat to Stonehenge and other

locations. The circular pit seemed to function as a reflective water pool for celestial observations, and there were also birds and a few individual animals in cages, likely serving as familiars or pets.



The site intersects The Rosslyn ley line and an alignment to the planet Mars.

We crossed the River Avon and past the Millstream pub and All Saints Church (12th Century) built from sarsen stones. Our determination to walk the entire GSW route was severely tested this day.

The final section of the walk from Marden to Upavon was challenging, hot, un-signposted and we sorely wished we were in the Millstream Pub with a taxi on order. We were so delighted when we found Upavon's edge, marking our days end in the late afternoon.

However, 2 days of walking also levelled us out to a real sense of being at one with the landscape, we were utterly worn out yet buzzing and recharged.

Casterley Camp, Salisbury Plain to Netheravon, 10 miles, day 3

We found the track heading for the hillfort of Casterley Camp on Salisbury plain. What a difference a day makes, gone was the risk of sunburn and dehydration, as we reached Salisbury plane, it was raining and cold. With our hoods up we turned off at the chalk cross roads and nearly walked straight past Casterley Camp, a huge 62 acre banked enclosure. A reminder that the everyday we pass by land without knowing its historic secrets.

This site is known as an Iron Age hill settlement, but archaeological evidence shows Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman finds on site. Its size, central ceremonial area, longevity and farming enclosures indicate it would have been a substantial community. We viewed Casterley Camp from the path as it had a freshly planted field within it. The map shows the outline of banks and remaining earthworks.

Moving on, I felt a strong dowsing pull away from the GSW route and over to the boundary fence into MOD land. This indicated that there was a different path for the original route to Stonehenge. Later I map dowsed for the location of ancient track which appears to go West over Salisbury plain then South to Stonehenge. Further map dowsing on Salisbury Plane has given up more information, clearly there are tracks, paths, 900+ barrows, and major long barrow and sacred site deeper within this area.

The following year, at a workshop I ran for London Dowisers, we dowsed together over a map of Salisbury Plane. The group concurred on the area of high interest within the MOD land West of Casterley.

However, most of Salisbury plain is inaccessible to walkers and a 'no go' area. On our day, the red flag was flying to warn of live military exercises and the permissible GSW path ahead closed with a warning sign blocking our way onwards. Luckily we met a local man who helpfully pointed out an alternative route heading along field edges to a distant metal barn, where an overgrown an ancient sunken track led down from the plain.

Down in the valley we crossed the River Avon to Enford village, noticing the shift back to houses and people. We visited the Saxon All Saints Church. The land in this area was given by King Aethelstan to Winchester Cathedral. The ancient thatched Swan Inn on Long Street was perfectly placed for a dry out and lunch. After which, we followed the GSW besides the River Avon, walking through the hamlets of Coombe, Fifield, Fittleton and Netheravon taking us ever closer to Stonehenge.

The Stonehenge landscape, Neatheravon to Amesbury 12 miles, day 4

Our route took us back up onto the edge of Salisbury plains, West of the river Avon (not on GSW), we arrived close to Larkhill Camp to meet Stonehenge's enigmatic landscape via Durrington Walls and The Woodhenge.

The incredibility of Stonehenge is not just the henge itself, but more the whole of its landscape. We spent

time walking Durrington Walls, a Neolithic site where hundreds of structures and evidence of winter occupation have been excavated, making it potentially the largest winter settled henge in Northern Europe.

Alongside was Woodhenge, originally 6 huge wooden nested circle coves. We stopped at the tip of the Cursus earthworks, then walked past the 'Old Kings Barrows' to follow the ceremonial avenue right up to Stonehenge.

We felt a tangible disconnect, as we peered at the henge through the fence at circling tourists, both of which seemed separated from this ceremonial gateway and sacred landscape. The whole environs felt dissipated and almost desecrated yet there is still something special about the place.

Both Stonehenge and Woodhenge had formation of clouds that hovered precisely in the air above them, like grey hats and giving them a supernatural appearance, as if some anomaly was occurring in the atmosphere.

As an earth energy dowser, at Stonehenge I find I always ask the same sort of questions. It's a matter of what am I missing? What has gone? What can I be shown that I might be able to understand? Visiting the ticketed section of the stones would have meant a big detour, so we continued on the GSW footpath.

Off we went over the fields (see the picture looking back at Stonehenge with the Stonehenge Bowl Barrow) and perched for a while hidden atop the 'New king barrows'.

The next stage was a two mile walk to Amesbury, crossing the A303, down into the town to pass South of an ancient site known by its roman name of Vespasians Camp, where we stopped to gaze up to the private woodlands that enshroud it and connected in for later dowsing. Amesbury town was first settled in 8820 BC and it has a long association with Stonehenge, the legend of King Arthur, site of a lost abbey and also a known Benedictine Abbey.

Amesbury, Old Sarum, Salisbury 12 mile, day 5

Leaving from Amesbury we crossed the river Avon and its water meadows and up onto Normanton Down to rejoined the GSW 'Stonehenge loop' a long pleasant undulating walk past many tumuli and hills. Following farm tracks up and then downhill to Great Durnford, with its beautiful waterside mill, then following the Avon to Upper Woodford. We stopped at the Bridge pub at Woodford for a much needed refresh break.

We continued along the uphill road onto the downs and crossing the Monarch's Way track, heading for a distant hilltop woods, I was amazed by the number and diverse range of bird feathers covering the woodland path, a big roosting spot.

Clearing the hill, we were met with a great vista and the distant ramparts of Old Sarum and long ley track over the fields. Old Sarum grew bigger as we slowly got closer. The final push was a climb to its outer ditches and we walked into the site through the back to explore.

From the middle of Old Sarum we could see the spires of Salisbury Cathedral and the final leg into town which we followed to the river Avon and Salisbury. We finished with a blessing of thanks for the energy of the way and safe journey in the Cathedral grounds. The next day we enjoyed time in Salisbury, visiting the Cathedral, exploring and taking a history tour

Notes

The Great Stones way by Steve Davison, ISBN 978-1-85284911-5
OS Explorer maps 130 & 157 - essential
Penwith Press <https://penwithpress.co.uk> - ley line maps
Marden & Stonehenge sites have an independent archaeology website with a link to the excavations <https://www.silenteadh.org/> •
Marden Henge can be reached by car, postcode SN10 3RH. •
<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/great-stones-way/>
For more information, you can email Sare for her full blog on the walk at Saredbassett@gmail.com

If you are not a walker, many of these places are on the route of the X50 bus between Salisbury and Swindon.

Places to stay

Salisbury, Charter House
Marlborough, stayed at Crown & Castle.
East Kennett, stayed at The Old Forge (closed)
Upavon, Antelope Inn
Netheravon, The Dog and Gun
Amesbury, Fairlawn House
Salisbury/Highpost, The Stones Hotel

We parked our car in the White Heart Hotel in Salisbury for the week.

Amber Cars (based in Marlborough) prebooked for the 5 days to move our bags each morning.

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Marden Henge

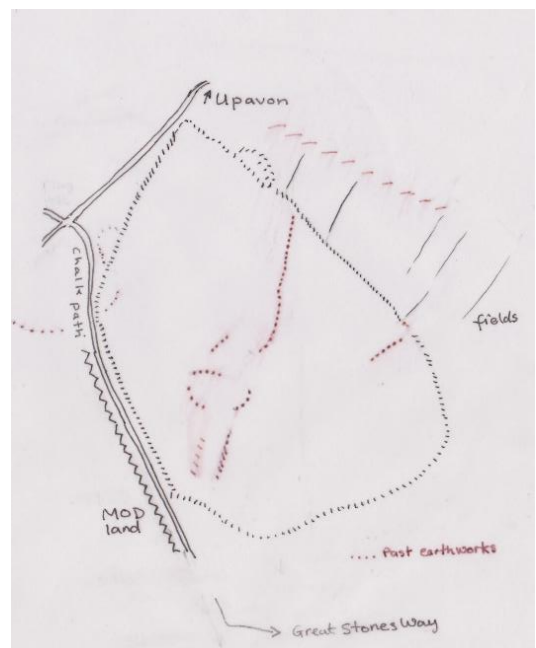
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ded an artificial hill
ury Hill, near Avebury)
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View to Old sarum



Stonehenge – view back from Kings Barrows



Casterley Camp, Salisbury Plane