

Marlborough Circular (via Avebury World Heritage Site)			Marlborough Circular (Extension Loops)		
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Marlborough Circular (via Avebury)

Start & Finish: Bus Stops on Marlborough's High Street (Ladbroke's and Lloyds Bank respectively). Marlborough, Ladbroke's Bus Stop, map reference SU 187 691, is 112 km west south west of London, 132m above sea level and in **Wiltshire**.

Length: 24.2 km (15.0 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 297m.

For a shorter or a longer walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 5 out of 10

Time: 5 ½ hours walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 9 ½ hours.

Transport: Marlborough, Ladbroke's bus stop is served by lines 20 and 22 from Bedwyn Station or from the nearby Great Bedwyn Square. The buses stopping at the station will wait for up to 10 minutes for a delayed train. A valid train ticket reduces the cost of the bus to £1.30 each way [06/2022]. There is also the occasional Express Bus X22 from Hungerford Library (Mon-Sat, 5 minutes from the Station), which may offer a connection from the train when Bedwyn doesn't.

Bedwyn and Hungerford Stations are on the Berkshire and Hampshire line from London Paddington. The journey times are from 50 minutes to Hungerford and from 65 minutes to Bedwyn.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take the train closest to 09.00 hours.

OS Landranger Map: 173 (Swindon & Devizes)

OS Explorer Map: 157 (Marlborough & Savernake Forest)

Walk Notes:

This is a fascinating excursion into the heart of Neolithic Wiltshire, a mysterious landscape full of pre-historic earthworks, standing stones, sarsen fields and barrows – burial mounds of kings and warriors. The route passes through two of the most important prehistoric sites in Britain: Avebury Standing Stones and Bank & Ditch Earthworks and Fyfield Down Sarsen Stones Field. Other significant sites nearby (Silbury Hill, West Kennett Long Barrow, The Sanctuary and Windmill Hill) can be explored on extension loops.

You walk out of the historic market town of Marlborough with its extra-wide High Street onto the Marlborough Downs, passing some horse gallops of the famous Manton Park stud and go through some small and medium-sized fields scattered with sarsen stones. Briefly follow the Ridgeway and turn down it scenically to Avebury, where the route passes all notable features within the village boundary, as well as a short stretch of the West Kennett Avenue of Standing Stones.

The return route retraces the route back to the Ridgeway and descends through the Fyfield Down Sarsen Stones Field, which contains the largest train of sarsens in Britain (about 25,000). You then pass the Devil's Den, the impressive remnants of a dolmen burial chamber, before crossing the Kennet River a couple of times and passing Marlborough College with a mini Silbury Hill and a shell grotto in its grounds.

Walk Options:

Buses 42 and 49 serve Avebury, enabling a start or finish there:

- **Line 42** (Calne - Marlborough) runs 7 buses on weekdays and 6 on Saturdays (in Marlborough connect to lines 20/22/X22 to Bedwyn or Hungerford Stations);
- **Line 49** (Devizes-Swindon) runs hourly Mon-Sat and two-hourly Sun (Swindon is on a different train line than Bedwyn and Hungerford!).

Two Extension Loops from Avebury village to outlying sites are possible:

- **Avebury to Windmill Hill** adds 5.3 km and 52m ascent/descent;
- **Avebury to Silbury Hill, West Kennett Long Barrow and The Sanctuary** adds 5.2 km and 75m ascent/descent.

B&B's close to the route (details last updated 09/08/2020)

Avebury Lodge High Street, Avebury (01672 539 023, <http://aveburylodge.co.uk/>)

Dorwyn Manor Swindon Road, Avebury (01672 539 098, <http://dorwynmanor.com/>)

The Haven 13 Truesloe Cottages, Avebury Truesloe (01672 539 846)

Avebury Life 5 Truesloe Cottages, Avebury Truesloe (01672 539 644, <http://aveburylife.com/>)

The Old Forge East Kennet (01672 861 686)

Lunch (details last updated 06/06/2022)

Circles Restaurant (at Avebury Museum) Avebury, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 1RF (01672 539 250, <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury/features/circles-restaurant>). The Circles Cafe is located 11.2 km (7.0 mi) into the walk. Opening Times: Wed-Mon 10.00-16.30 in summer and 10.00-16.00 in winter.

The Red Lion High Street, Avebury, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 1RF (01672 539 266, <https://www.chefandbrewer.com/pubs/wiltshire/red-lion/>). The Red Lion is located 11.8 km (7.3 mi) into the walk. Open all day every day. Food served all day every day. The Red Lion was first licensed in 1802 and is nowadays part of the Chef and Brewer-chain. It is famous for its 26m deep well inside the pub which dates back to the 1600's. The Well Room is named after Alexander Keiller who excavated the ancient stone circle surrounding the pub.

Tea (details last updated 06/06/2022)

The Oddfellows 71 High Street, Manton, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 4HW (01672 512 352, <https://www.theoddfellowsmanton.co.uk/index>). The Oddfellows is located 2.4 km from the end of the walk. Open all day every day. Food served 12.00-15.00 and 17.30-21.00 Mon-Thu, 12.00-15.30 and 17.30-21.30 Fri-Sat and 12.00-18.00 Sun.

Numerous Options along Marlborough's High Street, see the walk directions for more details.

Notes:

Marlborough

Marlborough is a market town in Wiltshire on the Old Bath Road, the old main road from London to Bath. The town is on the River Kennet, 39 km north of Salisbury and 16 km southeast of Swindon. The earliest sign of human habitation is the Marlborough Mound, a 19m prehistoric tumulus in the grounds of Marlborough College, dating from about 2400 BC. It is of similar age to the larger Silbury Hill about 8 km west of the town. In 1067 William the Conqueror assumed control of the Marlborough area and set about building a wooden motte-and-bailey castle, sited on the prehistoric mound. This was completed in around 1100. Stone was used to strengthen the castle in around 1175.

On 28 April 1653 the Great Fire of Marlborough started in a tanner's yard and spread quickly, burning the Guildhall, St Mary's Church, the County Armoury, and 244 houses to the ground. During the rebuilding of the town after the fire, the high street was widened and it is now the second-widest in England after Stockton-on-Tees.

In 1804 the Marlborough White Horse was cut on a downland slope southwest of the town.

Cardinal Wolsey was ordained as a priest at The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in 1498.

On the north side of the high street is the Merchant's House, built following the Great Fire of 1653. It was the property of a silk merchant and, rarely for a house of this type in a town centre, retains its original room pattern. Notable are the wall paintings. One room painted in a striped pattern, copying silk hangings, is perhaps unique in Great Britain.

Although once served by two railway lines, the town no longer has any direct rail access.

Former famous residents: Nick Drake (folk singer/guitarist), William Golding (Noble Prize-winning author).

Wessex Ridgeway

A waymarked linear 220 km (137 mi) long-distance footpath, part of The Great Ridgeway, a prehistoric trade route which once stretched right across England linking the Norfolk coast to the Devon coast. It basically extends the Ridgeway National Trail to the south-west, crosses the glorious downlands of Wiltshire and Dorset and links the ancient stone circle at Avebury to the sea, following as near as possible the line of the ancient route. Passed on the way are the stone circles at Avebury, the Vale of Pewsey, the northern edge of Salisbury Plain, the Wylde Valley and Win Greene Hill in Wiltshire and Cranborne Chase, Cerne Abbas and Pilsden Pen in Dorset.

White Horse Trail

The WHT is a 146 km (90 mi) waymarked circular Long Distance Path. It provides views of eight white horses which are cut into the turf of the chalk hillsides of Wiltshire, as well as visiting many other historic and prehistoric locations.

Ridgeway

The Ridgeway National Trail follows parts of the ancient Icknield Way for 139 km (87mi) from Overton Hill (near Avebury) in Wiltshire to Ivinghoe Beacon in the Chilterns.

Avebury World Heritage Site/Stone Circle/Manor/Church

Avebury is the largest, most impressive and most complex prehistoric site in Britain, enclosing an area of 11 ½ hectares. The bank and ditch and the stone circles were constructed between 2600 and 2400 BC, during the Neolithic, or 'New Stone Age', which is around the same time as the first phase of Stonehenge. As originally constructed, Avebury Henge consisted of a large stone circle (the largest in Britain) of at least 98 stones (but now having only 27) inside a grass-covered, chalk-stone bank and ditch, having four entrances at the cardinal compass points, and with two smaller inner circles. The northern circle is 97m in diameter and originally had 27 stones of which only 4 remain; the southern circle is 104m across and once contained 29 stones, of which only 5 remain. Inside the Northern Inner Circle was the Cove (3 very large megaliths), which may have been aligned on the summer solstice sunrise. The Southern Inner Circle had a great Obelisk in the centre (now lost).

The ditch was originally 21m wide and 9-11m deep. The sarsen stones can exceed 40 tons weight. There were also two ceremonial avenues: the West Kennet Avenue (made of 100 pairs of stones), entering on the south side; and the Beckhampton Avenue, entering the west causeway. It would have taken as many as 1.5 million man-hours to construct the bank and ditch and place the sarsen stones. Phases of construction are not known, but the outer circle and West Kennet Avenue may have been a later addition. By the Iron Age, the site had been effectively abandoned, with some evidence of touristic activity on the site during the Roman occupation. By about 600 AD, in the early Saxon period, a settlement had been built inside and just outside the henge. The site was probably seen as a convenient, semi-fortified site for a settlement. In 1114 AD, a small Benedictine priory and church was built on the site. Many of the 'pagan' stones were toppled and buried for this. From the 17th century the villagers began breaking apart the standing stones and using them for walls, houses and churches, possibly spurred on by a resurgent religious puritanism. Only the marmalade heir Alexander Keiller, in the 1930s, while excavating the site, extensively restored it by putting buried and fallen stones back into their original upright positions.

The Avebury Henge is in the freehold ownership of The National Trust and in English Heritage guardianship and part of a much larger prehistoric sacred complex, which includes Silbury Hill, the West Kennet Long Barrow, Windmill Hill and the Sanctuary.

'It does as much exceed in greatness...the so renowned Stonehenge...as a Cathedral doeth a parish church.'

John Aubrey, Monumenta Britannica, 1663

Windmill Hill

Windmill Hill is the largest known causewayed enclosure in Britain (8 ½ hectare/21 acres) and one of the earlier monuments in the Avebury landscape, probably from around 3800 BC. Evidence from excavations here suggests it was not a permanent settlement, but was used as a ceremonial and feasting site during the earlier part of the Neolithic period. During a later phase, c. 3300 BC, three concentric segmented ditches were placed around the hilltop site; they can still be detected from the air. The area was reused as a cemetery in the Bronze Age and several prominent burial mounds here can be seen from miles around.

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/windmill-hill/>

Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve/Sarsen Stones/Grey Wethers

This is one of the country's oldest National Nature Reserves, created in 1955. The site is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of the landforms it contains and the wildlife it supports. The whole site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and its historical importance was recognised when it was made part of Avebury World Heritage Site. The sarsen "train" dominates Fyfield Down, which has the best assemblage of sarsens in England. The stones support a nationally important lichen flora and are sometimes called grey wethers as from a distance people have mistaken them for sheep. These stones were used to build famous monuments like Avebury Stone circle and Stonehenge, getting there using levers, rollers and sledges. They are the post-glacial remains of a cap of Cenozoic silcrete that once covered much of southern England – a dense, hard rock created from sand bound by a silica cement, making it a kind of silicified sandstone. The

word 'sarsen' is a shortening of "Saracen stone" which arose in the Wiltshire dialect. "Saracen" was a common name for Muslims, and came by extension to be used for anything regarded as non-Christian, whether Celtic, Mohamedan, or Pagan. What remains has been heavily quarried in antiquity through to recent times leaving us with a much-reduced scatter in the landscape.

Kennet River

The Kennet is a 72 km (45 mi) long Thames tributary and has an extensive range of rare plants and animals that are unique to chalk watercourses. One of the sources is Swallowhead Spring near Silbury Hill in Wiltshire, the other being a collection of tributaries north of Avebury near the rural settlements of Uffcott and Broad Hinton which join up with the waters from Swallowhead Springs near West Kennett Long Barrow.

Silbury Hill

Silbury Hill is a prehistoric artificial grass-covered chalk mound in the shape of a flat-topped cone near Avebury in Wiltshire. It is part of the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites UNESCO World Heritage Site and the biggest prehistoric artificial mound in Europe, similar in size to some of the smaller Egyptian pyramids of the Giza Necropolis. Access to the hill is not permitted. The height of Silbury is 40m, the diameter 160m at the base and 30m at the summit and the monument covers 2.2 hectares. Archaeologists calculate that Silbury Hill was built about 4,500 years ago and that it took 18 million man-hours, or 500 men working for 15 years to deposit and shape 248,000 m³ of earth and (chalk) fill on top of a natural hill. Various tunnels and excavations over the years have failed to produce any solution as to the purpose of Silbury Hill and its context within the associated sites (West Kennet Long Barrow, the Avebury henge, The Sanctuary and Windmill Hill), from which the summit of Silbury Hill is visible, but they have revealed that the hill was built in three stages. The first phase, carbon-dated to 2400 BC ±100 years, consisted of a gravel core with a revetting kerb of stakes and sarsen boulders. Alternate layers of chalk rubble and earth were placed on top of this: the second phase involved heaping further chalk on top of the core, using material excavated from an encircling ditch. At some stage during this process, the ditch was backfilled and work was concentrated on increasing the size of the mound to its final height, using material from elsewhere. The step surrounding the summit dates from this phase of construction, either as a precaution against slippage, or as the remnants of a spiral path ascending from the base, used during construction to raise materials, and later as a processional route.

Remnants of a Roman village the size of 24 football pitches have been found at the foot of Silbury Hill.

West Kennett Long Barrow

The second longest, most impressive and most accessible Neolithic chambered tomb in Britain, situated on a prominent chalk ridge, near Silbury Hill. Built in around 3650 BC, which is centuries before Stonehenge or Silbury Hill, it was in use until around 2500 BC. Nearly 50 people have been buried here before the chambers were blocked. Aligned to the east, the interior would've been illuminated by the morning sun. Originally, two ditches 3m wide and 6m deep flanked the length of the barrow. In total it is estimated that 15,700 man hours were expended in its construction.

The Sanctuary/Overton Hill

The Sanctuary is a monument believed to date back to around 3000 BC, but constructed and modified in a number of phases, with eight rings in total (six wooden post rings and two stone circles). The last of these were destroyed in approximately 1725, their original locations now marked by concrete posts and blocks. As with Stonehenge, the function of the Sanctuary remains a mystery, although archaeologists believe it was a ceremonial site, probably used for burial rituals. This theory stems from the fact that large quantities of human bones and food remains have been found at the site.

A barrow cemetery known as Overton Hill sits right next to the Sanctuary and consists of 7 barrows.

A further stone circle (now destroyed) was reported in the field behind it – the site can still be seen when the field has been ploughed. <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/the-sanctuary/>

WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the bus on the High Street (the **A4**) in **Marlborough** at the **Ladbrokes stop**. [This is the second widest high street in Britain, after Stockton-on-Tees.] Cross over the road and *turn right* along its opposite pavement, in a north easterly direction. In about 100m you pass the **Lloyds Bank bus stop**; the return buses will depart from here. Continue in the same direction along the pavement towards the imposing **Town Hall** with **St. Mary's Church** rising behind and to the side of it. In 60m you pass the 17th century tile-hung (silk) **Merchant's House** (and garden) on the left (open for visitors). In 100m *turn left* with the pavement, to continue uphill along **Kingsbury** (road). In about 250m, at the top of the rise, the main road turns to the right and a minor lane (Free's Avenue) continues ahead.

Bear right between the roads onto the wide grassy expanse of **Marlborough Common** (Access Land) to an info panel. There are a several historic features on the Common, including some earthworks to the right; they are remnants of a medieval bowling green. At the northern end there are some Bronze Age burial barrows. Continue along the avenue of trees along the left-hand boundary of the Common, parallel to the road, all the way to the far end. [The trees were planted in 1910 on the initiative of the then Mayor, Thomas Free upon the **accession of George V** to the throne.]

In more detail: the terrain is gently rising and you have some fine views to the right in a north easterly direction across the common and down **Port Hill** across the valley of the **River Og** to some part-wooded downs. A road turns away to the left, and later where the terrain levels out by a small cemetery away to the left, the **Wessex Ridgeway** joins unmarked from the left. You pass a rugby pitch to its left and in another 150m a golf green to its left (the hole is played from the direction you walk into: mind any flying balls!). In 70m you start a gentle descent, now following a path to the left of the row of trees. In about 300m you pass the 15th Tee of the golf course and the path enters some trees. In 30m the path turns left to the road but you **[!]** *turn right* along a narrow grass path towards a footpath signpost 10m away, with a Wessex Ridgeway marker on it. *Turn left* at the signpost along a car wide field boundary.

You have fine views down **Rough Down** into and along a U-shaped valley ahead. **Maisey Farm** (on the OS map) is visible on the ridge opposite. In 350m curve to the left with the track towards the road, opposite the grand entrance gate to **Manton Park**, an historic and famous racehorse training facility. Cross the road and *turn right* with a bridleway signpost through a wooden gate ('Avebury', 'Hackpen', 'Fyfield Down'), ignore a public footpath turning left over a stile, and continue along a wide grassy strip between fences, broadly parallel to the road. In 30m go through a fence gap and *veer to the left* to continue across **Barton Down** along a car wide gravel track between some horse gallops, the one on the left unfenced grass, one on the right fenced grass ('Peat Moss Gallop') and a third one unfenced to the right of that ('Rockley Mile Gallop').

You follow the bridleway between the gallops for 1.7 km, marked by the furlong markers on the gallops. The many buildings of the estate are mostly hidden from view in the valley below to the left, although parts of Manton House can be seen at times. Eventually you have a belt of trees on the left, restricting further views to Manton House, then you pass a lone tree on the right, and not long after a lone standing stone, possibly remnant of a gateway. In another 70m a public bridleway joins unmarked from the right through gaps in the fence along the gallops, and in 160m another unmarked bridleway joins from right along a car wide track, as you pass the circular wood **The Warren** away on the right. The gallops have now discontinued and the track starts a very gentle descent. In 140m the far end of The Warren is passed.

[The OS map shows a historic 'Manton Circle' feature away to the right, but according to online sources that is a modern-day folly.] Some far downs can be seen on the half right, they ought to be **Hackpen Hill** and **Barbury Hill**, on the Ridgeway. In 230m a car wide grass track (another unmarked public bridleway) turns left to continue through a wide gap in the belt of trees; you get some views again here to some of the estate buildings. In about 500m the tree lines on the right and left close in on the track and another unmarked bridleway joins from the right along the treeline, by a 'Beeches Farm – Manton Park'-sign. You pass a redundant metal field gate and continue with a fenced pasture on the right. The track descends a little more steeply and in 100m you reach a fork in the track under a stand of mature beeches, by a two-way bridleway signpost.

Fork right (285°) gently uphill along the right-of-two car wide farm tracks, leaving the Wessex Ridgeway. You have a wood to the right ('The Beeches' on the OS map) and a rising arable field to the left, topping out in a raised reservoir (on the OS map). In 320m a public bridleway joins through the wood on the right along a car wide farm track at a three-way signpost (from 'Temple Bottom'). You continue in the same direction ('Avebury', 'Hackpen') and in 220m, at a junction with a farm track leading to a waste yard on the right, you go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate to the right of a locked metal gate into a large fenced pasture. You have a large sarsen boulder on the right and a small 'train' of sarsens beyond it, and follow a clear grass path gently ascending through the field, lightly covered by gorse and other bushes.

Ignore a faint right fork towards a metal gate and a metal field gate in the boundary fence to an arable field, and *veer to the right* with the path where the grassy area widens out and in 80m *bear right* at a T-junction with a car wide track (a byway and part of the **White Horse Trail** (WHT)). You are heading for a gate leading into **Totterdown Wood**, just to the right of a long stand of rhododendrons. You have fine views back to some downs on the far side of the Kennet Valley. In 100m go through a metal gate with a WHT marker and follow a meandering path through the wood. In 100m you pass a pond away to the left and in another 70m reach a signposted bridleway junction by a fence gap (a missing gate). [The route turns left here, but if you continue in the same direction for 100m or so, you'll see quite a few sarsen stones in the wood, many mossed over, just off path.]

Turn left ('Fyfield Down', the sign may be broken) and follow this narrow path, partly encroached by nettles and bracken, for 170m to emerge from the wood through a metal gate into an open area. You have fine southerly views across Fyfield Down to **West Woods** (famous for bluebells) and to the **Pewsey Downs** beyond (SWC Walks 127 and 255 – Pewsey Circular). *Bear right* to the right of an area of bushes, into **Access Land** to a three-way fork of grass paths. *Bear right* along the car wide grass track along the fenced wood. In 250m, at the far end of the wood, ignore a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate in the fence around the wood as well as a tracks curving to the right past that corner of the wood into a pasture and one turning left downhill. You start to gently curve downhill with the track. The field is lightly scattered with sarsens and has a smattering of low trees, and it is sloping away to the left as well as going into a dip ahead, with **Delling Copse** forming the left-hand boundary of the fenced Access Land.

In about 300m, by a lone hawthorn tree just to the left, you cross a faint path (on the OS map) and in another 150m you reach the bottom of the drop by a barbed wire fence corner on the right around a large sloping arable field. Continue in the same direction uphill along a clear track along the fence line. In 100m, *turn left* for 50m to a **Neolithic Polishing Stone**, a 'polissoir', this side of some gorse bushes. It shows several grooves and a smooth area, both formed by Neolithic people sharpening their stone axes on this boulder. Walk back to the fence and *turn left* along it further uphill. In 200m **leave the fenced Access Land** through a metal gate in the top-right corner, ignoring further gates to the right into the arable field and away to the left. In 15m you

reach a broad grassy track (a byway) at a T-junction along the edge of a ridge, this is the **Ridgeway** National Trail (and also National Cycle Network route 45), not far from its end a few kilometres to the left. *Turn left* along the Ridgeway. In 120m ignore a public footpath turning left over a stile in the fence and continue in the same direction with a Ridgeway (Byway) signpost to the right of the fence.

Soon the track starts to gently descend and you get first views of the easterly earth bank around **Avebury, World Heritage Site**, more than 2 kilometres away on the half right. On the downs behind stands **The Lansdowne Monument**, a 37m obelisk near Cherhill, built as an 'eye-catcher' in 1845 by the 3rd Marquis of Lansdowne in memory of Sir William Petty (1623-87), statistician and economist. To the left of Avebury, a grassy lump on the brow of an arable field is the **West Kennett Long Barrow**. In 600m, at a signposted four-way path and track junction on **Overtown Down** (the Wessex Ridgeway crosses), you *turn right* downhill along a byway and head for Avebury, more or less in a straight line. As you get closer, further details become noticeable: the church tower, the white-rendered pub in the middle of the village, a chalky path on top of the left-hand earth bank around the village. In 1.5 km ignore a left turning bridleway (signposted **Overton Hill** and **Bath Road**), before passing **Manor Farm** in 150m.

In 570m walk through the earth banks encircling **Avebury**. The banks and grassy fields with standing stones can be freely walked in most parts of the village, but **a suggested route covering ALL noteworthy sights** goes as follows: *turn right* through a gate (the fallen megalith 30m away on your left is what remains of the '**Eastern Gateway**') and either walk up the earth bank (it used to be 5.5m high and of exposed chalk, a stunning sight from as far away as the ridgeway) and follow it around or walk to the left of the still impressive ditch (originally twice as deep and 21m wide). There are only a few megaliths visible in this quartile, but at least 15 have been confirmed by geophysical survey to be buried under the soil, a practice encouraged by the medieval church in their campaign against any signs of paganism. Eventually walk to the two prominent megaliths standing at right angles to each other near the centre of the village. This is '**The Cove**', once made up of three stones set with the open side facing north-east, where the sun rises at its most northerly point.

An outlying stone is thought to have been aligned so its long shadow would penetrate The Cove at the moment of solstice. The broader of the two stones in fact reaches for another 3m below ground (a fact discovered during works to stabilise the then leaning stone), it weighs about 100 tons and was – amazingly – one of the first to be put in place. The 2 stones are a good example of the male/female principle applied in several places in Avebury: a pillar-shaped 'male' stone paired with a diamond-shaped 'female' stone. Of the circle of 27 stones that surrounded The Cove, only 4 are still visible. Have a look at the nearby barn, partly built from broken sarsen stones. Leave this quartile through a wooden gate nearby to cross **Swindon Road** and on the other side *turn right* along a paved path parallel to the road. In 80m walk through a wooden gate and *turn left* to follow the curving line of standing stones in the north westerly quartile.

The first one, almost reaching out over the road, is the '**Swindon**' or '**Diamond Stone**', one half of what was the '**Northern Gateway**' (the missing straighter 'male' stone was destroyed in the 18th century). It is also one of the few stones to have remained standing for 4500 years; a lot of the others have only been re-erected in the last centuries. Smaller concrete pillars denote proven but missing earlier standing stones. Leave this quartile through a wooden gate in 180m and *turn right* down a few steps and continue along a gravel path at a bend. In 25m you reach an open area by the NT-run **Avebury Museum** in a double-ended threshing barn from 1695 and its **Circles Restaurant**. Continue past the dovecote (built between 1533-69) to **Avebury Manor & Garden** 120m away and *turn left* to enter the churchyard of **St. James', Avebury** through a metal kissing gate.

In 40m – at the church entrance – **you have a choice:**

For the extension loop via Windmill Hill (either now or at the end of the Avebury part of your walk, when you know whether you have enough time and energy left for it, as it adds 5.3 km) *veer right* along a tarmac path (215°) towards a metal gate 30m away at the corner of a thatched wall, and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Extension Loop via Windmill Hill**.

For the Main Walk you continue in the same direction towards the lychgate 60m away.

***)** Go through the lychgate to *turn left* along a lane. In 90m – just before reaching the **Avebury Community Shop** and the **Henge Shop** – *turn right* through a wooden gate into the south westerly quartile of standing stones. The first megalith is the '**Blacksmith's Stone**', so dubbed as it had been taken to the forge for breaking up, a task only half-achieved, but you can still spot where it has been cemented back together in the 1930s before returning it to this spot. The sixth megalith 150m along is the '**Barber's Stone**', so dubbed for crushing a barber-surgeon during the efforts to topple and bury it underground. That practice was subsequently discontinued. Notice a **hollow in the earth bank** on your right near the road; this is damage done by 19th century road builders. They used the soil to fill in the ditch to let the road run across it. *Turn left* through a wooden gate to cross the road and go through another wooden gate into the south easterly quartile of standing stones. For lunch, you *turn left* and in 100m reach **The Red Lion** by a **bus stop for services to Swindon**.

From the pub retrace your steps across the **A4361** through a wooden gate to follow the stone circle. This consists of 5 stones and 4 concrete pillars. Although incomplete, it allows you to imagine the rest of the circle of 29 stones. At its centre is a large fluted marker stone (similar to a trig point) that shows where the mighty '**Obelisk**' once stood, believed to having towered over the smaller stones by more than 2m. The two very large megaliths in the right-hand corner are the '**Southern Gateway**', the right-hand stone having been dubbed the '**Devil's Chair**', as one can indeed sit on a seat-like ledge on the back side of the megalith. Follow a gravel path up the earth bank to appreciate the view from the top across the southerly quartiles and – on the outside of the bank and ditch, on your right as you turn around – the beginnings of the remains of the ceremonial **West Kennett Avenue** of standing stones.

Descend from the bank **in the direction of the West Kennett Avenue** towards a wooden gate in the fence corner 40m away and cross a tarmac lane to walk through another wooden gate on the other side into the fenced grassy area of the Avenue. Walk along a clear path curving left and then following the Avenue (again: smaller concrete pillars denote proven but missing earlier standing stones). The first pair of standing stones in 250m is another example of the male/female principle mentioned earlier.

Here, with more standing stones visible ahead, you have a choice:

For an Extension Loop via Silbury Hill, West Kennett Long Barrow and The Sanctuary, continue in the same direction and pick up the text below under **Extension Loop via Silbury Hill, West Kennett Long Barrow and The Sanctuary**.

For the Main Walk, return back to the earth bank in the southerly quartile and *turn right* along it, in an easterly direction. From this elevated position, you can best appreciate the various stone circles inside this quartile. Descend to a wooden gate leading onto a tarmac lane and *turn right* along it, away from Avebury, retracing your route back onto the Ridgeway. In 2.2 km at the signposted Ridgeway/Wessex Ridgeway crossing, you continue in the same direction through a metal gate.

****)** Follow a grass path gently uphill across **Overton Down**. There are some sarsens scattered here too, especially in the half-distance on the right. In 450m at the brow of the rise, you pass a bridleway marker post close to a fence corner on the right. In 30m go through a set of wooden gates to the right of metal field gates either side of a gallop, and continue gently downhill along a car wide gravel track. Ahead to the left is **Delling Copse**, seen earlier before lunch from the other side, while walking through a large sarsen-filled field. Down on the right below you look down into a long curving dry valley filled with the largest collection in Britain of **Sarsen Stones (or Grey Wethers)**, about 25,000 of them: the **Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve**. In 80m you pass a corner of the fenced copse and in 180m, at the bottom of the drop – where the gravel track with the Wessex Ridgeway curves to the left, you continue in the same direction with an unmarked public bridleway along a clear grass path gently uphill.

[The tempting and very scenic right turn following the bottom of the valley through the sarsens is not a right-of-way.]

In 450m in the top-left corner of the fenced area, with **Wroughton Copse** just ahead, *turn hard right* along the fence with a public bridleway, ignoring a metal gate out of the fenced area. According to the OS map, you are now in **Access Land**, although a second fence showing on the map to your right is clearly not there (anymore). In 140m you *veer left* downhill with the fence, but first have to curve to the right around a couple of trees blocking the way. In 230m go through a metal gate in a fence line and follow a fence on your right. In 120m at the bottom of the drop, you *bear left* along a faint grass path to the right of a lone hawthorn tree. In 40m you pass a stile about 30m away to the right in a fence line, SWC 255 Pewsey Circular via Avebury rises out of the valley in that direction. Follow the clear track just to the right of the majority of sarsens for 750m where you *fork right* towards a lonely hawthorn tree 60m away near the fenced boundary on the right, and in another 25m join a public footpath along the boundary.

In 300m at the fence corner on the right, ignore a right turn towards a metal gate (SWC 255 comes down that way) and continue in the same direction along **Clatford Bottom**. In 350m walk through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate into a fenced grassy area (this area can be overgrown). In 150m go through a fence gap (a missing gate) on the right into a grassy area (permissive access) and *turn left* to the obvious target, 120m away: **The Devil's Den**, three large sarsen stones remaining of a Long Barrow, one resting on the other two in a door-shape. *Bear left* from the Devil's Den towards a wooden field gate in the near corner of the field and go through it [if the gate is locked, *turn left* through a wooden gate 25m back and right on the other side of it, then go through a gate 25m away]. *Turn right* along a car wide farm track, in 250m pass a large brick barn, as the track continues between rows of trees, and in 650m go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate and in 20m cross the **A4** to continue along the tarmac drive of the **Clatford Hall Estate**, an unmarked bridleway.

In 40m you cross the **River Kennet** on a road bridge and in 130m *turn left* with the now gravel then grass track, by the entrance gate to Clatford Hall. In 80m you pass a car wide gate on the right and in 110m go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate. In 50m *turn left* at a signposted three-way bridleway junction. In 120m continue in the same direction along **Lockeridge Lane** joining from the right and in 80m continue in the same direction at a crossroads along **Manton Road**. In 750m you enter Manton village and in 70m pass a **bus stop for services to Marlborough**. In 350m pass another bus stop on the right and in 40m on your left pass **The Oddfellows**, an early tea stop (open all day every day). You *turn left* with the road and in 40m *turn right* along **Preshute Lane**, by the Old Post Office on the right (signed 'Preshute Church'). [The WHT has joined from down the road.] In 300m you pass the entrance to **Manton Grange Stables** on your right and in 330m you have the red brick (rear of) **Preshute House** on your left.

In 70m you have a choice:

For a slightly quieter route, also passing the **Marlborough White Horse** (at a distance), ignore a left turn towards Preshute Church and *veer right* to pass to the left of a metal car barrier, and walk along a gravel track into the grounds of **Marlborough College**. *Veer left* to continue to the left of some fenced in tennis courts along a public bridleway, ignoring a right turning footpath. In 300m ignore a left turning private track through some metal gates and across the **River Kennet** towards the college buildings and in 30m you get good views of the **Preshute Hill Figure** (a.k.a. Marlborough White Horse, dating from 1804) on the right on **Granham Hill**. In 250m ignore a metal kissing gate in the fence on the right and in 120m another one (the **Wansdyke Path** joins through it down the slope). In 25m walk past a wooden field gate and continue along Granham Close. In 140m *turn left* at a T-junction with the **A345** (Pewsey Road) and cross the river on a road bridge in 20m. Cross over to the other side where the pavement discontinues and in 160m *turn right* with the pavement where the road meets the **A4** (High Street). Continue three paras below ("The bus stop for services...").

For the slightly more traffic-noise afflicted route, also passing the **Marlborough Mound**, *turn left* towards **St. George's, Preshute** Church along a tarmac drive and in 50m enter the churchyard through a metal gate. *Fork right* along a tarmac path and in 60m cross the River Kennet on a two-railed concrete bridge. In 50m *fork right* along a tarmac path which in 20m curves to the right and continues parallel to the A4, separated by a hedge. In 80m ignore a set of lights on the left and in 20m *turn left* through a narrow hedge gap by a footpath signpost and continue in the same direction along the road pavement, initially on grass then crossing the main drive into **Marlborough College**. To the side of the main college building, you get glimpses already of the Marlborough Mound. In 140m you have the college's **Porter's Lodge** by another entrance on the right.

For a short but interesting out-and-back to the Marlborough Mound, enter the college grounds (this is private land, but access to the mound is usually permitted, but you may want to check in the reception building). Continue along the drive, to the left of the church, and in 40m, by some large trees on the right, *turn right* down some railed steps and in 50m reach the base of the mound. Radiocarbon dating has found it to date from about 2400 BC, i.e.: being **of similar age to the larger Silbury Hill near Avebury**. About 120m around to the left you find an interesting shell grotto. Return to the road and *turn right* along it. In 110m *turn right* with the road and in 80m *turn left* across it and continue down **High Street**.

The bus stop for services to Bedwyn or Hungerford stations is about 450m along the High Street on the left-hand side, **by the Lloyds Bank**.

These pubs, cafés and restaurants on High Street are **this side of the bus stop**:

- **La Bobina, The Marlborough** (both on the left), **The Food Gallery, The Wellington Arms, Rick Stein** (all on the right), a couple of chain pizzerie, **The Royal Oak** (left), **The Polly Tea Rooms** (right), **The Castle & Ball** (left), **The Green Dragon** (right).

Further along, located in a circle around the imposing **Town Hall**, you find:

- **The Bear Hotel, Il Gusto d'Italia, Raj, Franklyns Bistro, Costa Coffee** and **Coffi Lab**.

Extension Loop via Windmill Hill (add 5.3 km and 52m ascent/descent)

You walk through the redundant metal gate and follow a narrow tarmac path between high brick walls. In 50m continue in the same direction along a tarmac lane at a bend, with **Wessex Ridgeway** and **White Horse Trail** markers a little further along on the right. In 110m cross a ditch on a car wide bridge by a pumping station on your left and in 40m pass a couple of benches on your right (from which you have splendid views of **Silbury Hill** more than a kilometre away). In 20m cross a tarmac bridge over the **River Kennet** and in 10m **[!]** *fork right* with a **National Cycle Network 403** marker on a metal railing along a wide ditch on your left. **[!]** In 35m you *turn right* with the White Horse Trail over a stile by a footpath signpost (Windmill Hill 1 ¼) into the first of several pastures, which you cross generally in the same direction.

In more detail: in 75m *turn right* over a stepped two-railed wooden bridge and *turn left* on the other side to follow a usually clear path through the grass (20°), now with the **Kennet River** on your right. In 180m cross a stile in the boundary tree line, continue in the same direction and in 140m cross a set of stiles in a hedge to continue in the same direction in the next field, close to its right-hand boundary. In 400m – and 20m left of the far-right corner – leave this field over a stile into a narrow, wooded strip (**Sloe Copse** on the OS map) to go over a double stile in 10m and continue in the same direction through the next field, close to its left-hand boundary. In 450m, in the far-left corner of the field, go over a stile to the left of a double metal field gate onto a car wide farm track at a T-junction.

Turn left with a 'Windmill Hill 1 mile' signpost along this bridleway through an often-open metal field gate to continue along a tree-lined right hand field boundary, gently uphill. In 250m leave the field in its top right corner through a rusty metal gate and continue in the same direction along the adjacent narrower field. In 170m the terrain levels out where there is a field boundary on the right-hand side behind the trees. It is worth turning around here for the views of Avebury, Silbury Hill and the surrounding Downs. Ahead, you get first sightings of the remnants of the earth banks, ditches and barrows on **Windmill Hill**, the largest known causewayed enclosure in Britain. In 370m you walk through a wooden gate in the top-right field corner and continue in the same direction over or around the first barrow and in 100m go through the outer ditch past a cluster of more barrows and in another 110m reach the central barrow, surrounded by a smaller ditch. The area is **Access Land**, so explore it as you wish and leave it through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate in the south west corner 300m from the central barrow by a fine info panel (i.e.: *turn left* from the central barrow, 225°).

Turn left along a car wide gravel track, gently downhill back towards **Avebury**. In 1 km, **[!]** just after passing a double metal field gate on your left and **[!]** before crossing **Horslip Bridge** (on the OS map), *turn left* with a bridleway signpost on the left through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate. In 20m you walk through a usually open metal field gate into a narrow field to follow its left-hand boundary, but in about 150m **[!]** you *veer right* towards a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate 80m away. Go through the gate and *turn right* along a grassy path between trees. In 220m this becomes a wider turfed path by a house on the left and in 50m you cross a concreted area just before a tarmac lane by a three-way junction. *Turn left* along the more minor lane (**Bray Street**), signposted 'Avebury', past several large old houses. In 370m continue in the same direction along a narrow tarmac path by the last house on the right and in 100m you pass a stile on the left (the outward route). Retrace your steps to the churchyard and *veer right* through it to the lychgate 50m away.

Pick up the directions in the main text at the asterisk *).

Extension Loop via Silbury Hill, West Kennett Long Barrow and The Sanctuary (add 5.2 km and 75m ascent/descent)

In 550m leave the fenced area in the far-left corner through a wooden gate. By a three-way signpost *turn right* along the fence on your right, gently up **Waden Hill**. In 350m – at the brow of the rise – you get first glimpses of **Silbury Hill**, Europe's largest man-made mound, majestic and mysterious in its beauty, as well as of the **West Kennett Long Barrow**, visible on the ridge of the Down to the left. Continue in the same direction to the bottom of the **Upper Kennet Valley** and in 300m *turn left* at a footpath T-junction, by a wooden gate on the right. In 350m walk through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate onto the **A4** (on the course of a Roman Road), which you cross to then *turn left* along its opposite pavement. In 30m *turn right* through a metal kissing gate along a wide gravel track leading towards.

In 160m cross **The Kennet River** on a bridge and in 40m *turn left* with the path through a kissing gate. In 50m *turn right* up a wide grassy path for an out-and-back to the **West Kennett Long Barrow**. Afterwards continue in the same direction. In 430m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction with a barbed wire fence on the left. In 110m you cross a tarmac lane and continue in the same direction over a stile to the right of a double wooden field gate. Walk along a field boundary and in 350m *turn right* with the fence on the right. In 170m – in the right-hand corner of this field – go over a stile and continue in the same direction along a narrow path. In 120m you *turn left* for 15m along a gravel farm track to where a grassy bridle path turns up right.

Continue in the same direction along the farm track. The track bends to the right and in 170m meets a road at a T-junction. *Turn left* along it and in 40m cross a road bridge over the **Kennet River** to *turn right* on the other side (with a bridleway signpost attached to the bridge railing) through a car wide gap in the road side bank and along a right-hand grassy field boundary. In 400m leave the field in its far corner and *turn up left* along a car wide farm track between trees, ignoring a right turn towards a two-way signpost 30m away. You steadily ascend the byway up **Overton Hill**, in 180m the track levels out, in 20m you get first views of some of the seven barrows on the half right, and in 170m you reach the **A4** at a T-junction. *Turn left* through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate into the fenced site of **The Sanctuary**.

None of whose original rings of wooden or stone posts remain, yet their replacement concrete posts and blocks still create an evocative site. The **West Kennet Avenue** of standing stones used to lead here. After studying the site and its info panels and views, return back through the gate to cross the **A4** and continue along a car wide track past Overton Hill car park. You pass a signpost marking one end of the **Ridgeway National Trail** (the other end at **Ivinghoe Beacon** is 139 km/87 mi away), an info panel in the field on the right about the **Overton Hill Round Barrows**, and another couple of info panels about The Ridgeway (one more general, one referring in more detail to the stretch from here to **Wantage**), to then continue in the same direction through or past a wooden field gate. In 320m pass another barrow in the field on your right behind the fence and in 260m (at the corner of the fence on your left) ignore a left turn at a three-way signpost and follow the Ridgeway for another 2.1 km to the signposted four-way track junction with the Wessex Ridgeway passed on the route to Avebury.

Turn right through a metal gate with the Wessex Ridgeway (a bridleway) and pick up the directions in the main text at the double asterisk **).