

AVEBURY CIRCLE, WILTSHIRE, ENGLAND

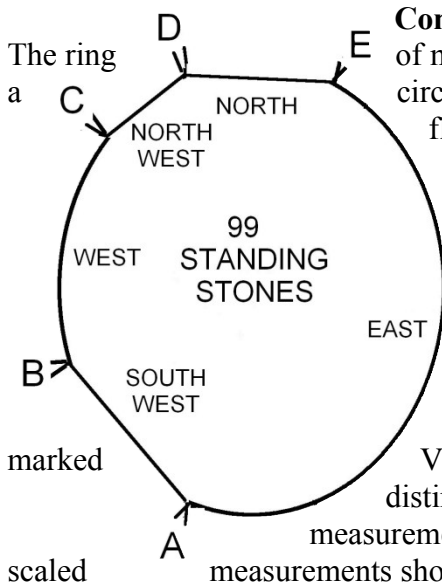
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NUMBER OF SARSEN STANDING STONES CONSTITUTING THE OUTER CIRCLE AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Basis

The Avebury site survey by Professor Alexander Thom, his sons Dr Archibald Thom and Dr A S Thom was made in the summer of 1975. A dyeline copy of the survey drawing scale 1:720 was gifted to me by Dr A S Thom in 1986. A clear transparency copy was made in 1988, the scale adjusted to 1:500.

The fragile dyeline paper eventually disintegrated about 1995 due to chemical processes involved in fixing the blue dye lines on white paper. The 1988 transparency is clear, firm and without blemish at the time this analysis was made of the numbers of sarsen standing stones encircling the site.

A reduced jpeg image of the AO transparency was made in 2007. This served as the basis for the illustration "Design Plan of Avebury" on page 191 of "Stonehenge Sacred Symbolism".



Computations

of more than ninety sarsen columns at Avebury is in the form approximating circle with a diameter of about 350 metres. The enclosed area is essentially flat. Beyond the ring of standing stones, a margin existed then a ditch was excavated by the builders of Avebury, the material thrown further out to form an embankment. The ancient monument is the largest in Britain. The Thom survey clearly shows the ring of sarsens was positioned in five individual sectors. On the east side about half the perimeter is close to an arc of a circle. The north sector is closer to a straight line, the short north-west sector equally so. The western sector is closer to a true arc. The south-west sector is closer to a straight line than an arc. The clear changes of direction at the junctions between sectors are V on the Thom survey drawing, points that have been employed to distinguish one sector from the next in this series of calculations and measurements. Employing a draftsman's wheeled map measure and dividers, the measurements show: -

Sector	Arc length	Spacing	Columns	
Designation	mm	mm	number	
South-west	356	19.7	15 + 2 presumed	= 17
West	330	20.6	10 + 5 presumed	= 15
North-west	127	21.1	6	= 6
North	336	22.5	3 + 13 presumed	= 16
East	1021	22.0	13 + 32 presumed	= <u>45</u>
Perimeter	2170	22.0	Total number	<u>99</u>

Thom recorded standing and prone megaliths on the survey plan, about half the total number of columns originally erected. Positions of missing and presumed columns have been estimated by consideration of each sector length and the measured spacing between columns still standing in each one.

A particular feature of note concerns the number of columns in the north sector. Three columns are shown in existence, the great majority are absent. With the intent of estimating the positions of the sector columns, if one continues an average spacing movement onward from the north-west-sector into the north sector, fifteen column positions are indicated. However, midway between north-west 6 and north supposed column 1, a megalith is in position. Again, between supposed 4 and 5, another megalith is in the midway position. Finally, between supposed 14 and 15, another megalith is in the midway position. For these three megaliths to be out of position when continuing the space sequences from north-west sector into the north sector gave rise to a need to re-examine the sector factors.

The same condition occurs if column counting and space increments are approached from the east sector into the north sector, the three columns occur in the middle of north sector space increments. Only fifteen columns would be positioned in the north sector if the three columns were considered incorrectly placed.

Ignoring the spacing increment approaches inwards from the north-west and east sectors into the north sector, it was considered as a separate entity. Assuming the three columns were correctly placed as part of a sub-total northern sector, by applying the average spacing distance of 225 mm, a re-positioning showed sixteen columns were originally erected in the north sector.

Thus the summation of column numbers in each of the five sectors amounts to a total of ninety-nine sarsen standing stones enclosing the central area at Avebury. Elsewhere in “Stonehenge Sacred Symbolism” I demonstrated the adjectival application of the number thirty-three to define a sacred place, in this case thrice enhanced by ninety-nine megaliths. The symbolism continued from 3500 BC until the present day.

Proof

To show the validity of these calculations and the hypothesis concerning sixteen north sector columns, an archaeological exploratory excavation of all five sectors is required around the entire ring of sarsen standing stones, paying particular attention to the north sector.

It is postulated the archaeological researchers may find two sets of stone holes in the north sector, a set of fifteen at average spacing, then a second set of sixteen at a slightly reduced spacing, probably thirty-one in total. The first and last stone holes in this set should be found unusually close to the last stone holes in the east and north-west sectors.

The Sacred Area

Chapter Fifteen Mount Pleasant and Chapter Eighteen Stanton Drew describe how the inner edge perimeter length of the ditch surrounding the flat area was estimated in multiples of megalithic dods or furlangs. Mount Pleasant ditch edge circumference had an estimated length of two dods, Stanton Drew had an estimated length of five dods or furlangs.

The ring of standing stones at Avebury averages about 350 metres diameter, probably an original perimeter length close to two kilometres. In megalithic terms and the ancient measures, the perimeter would be about sixteen furlangs, megalithic dods. If the original designer sought to enhance the Avebury central area to a further degree, it may be the distance between the ring of standing stones and the edge of the ditch was two megalithic rods, 4.14 metres, then the ditch edge diameter would be about 355 metres, a perimeter length about seventeen furlangs.

The number thirty-three symbolically indicated a sacred place, person or article in ancient times. The number seventeen is a prime indivisible number exactly midway between one and thirty-three, elsewhere shown to infer or indicate a half-way stage or situation.

Avebury was probably regarded as a major pilgrimage destination in Neolithic times. Perhaps as a pilgrim crossed the causeway entrance and the inner edge of the ditch towards the flat central area, the pilgrim would be told he or she was half-way to the sacred site and its three deities of fertility, justice and health, Freyr, Thor and Eyr.

Avebury was one of three instances where the perimeter length of the encircling ditch inner edge endowed the sacred area within.