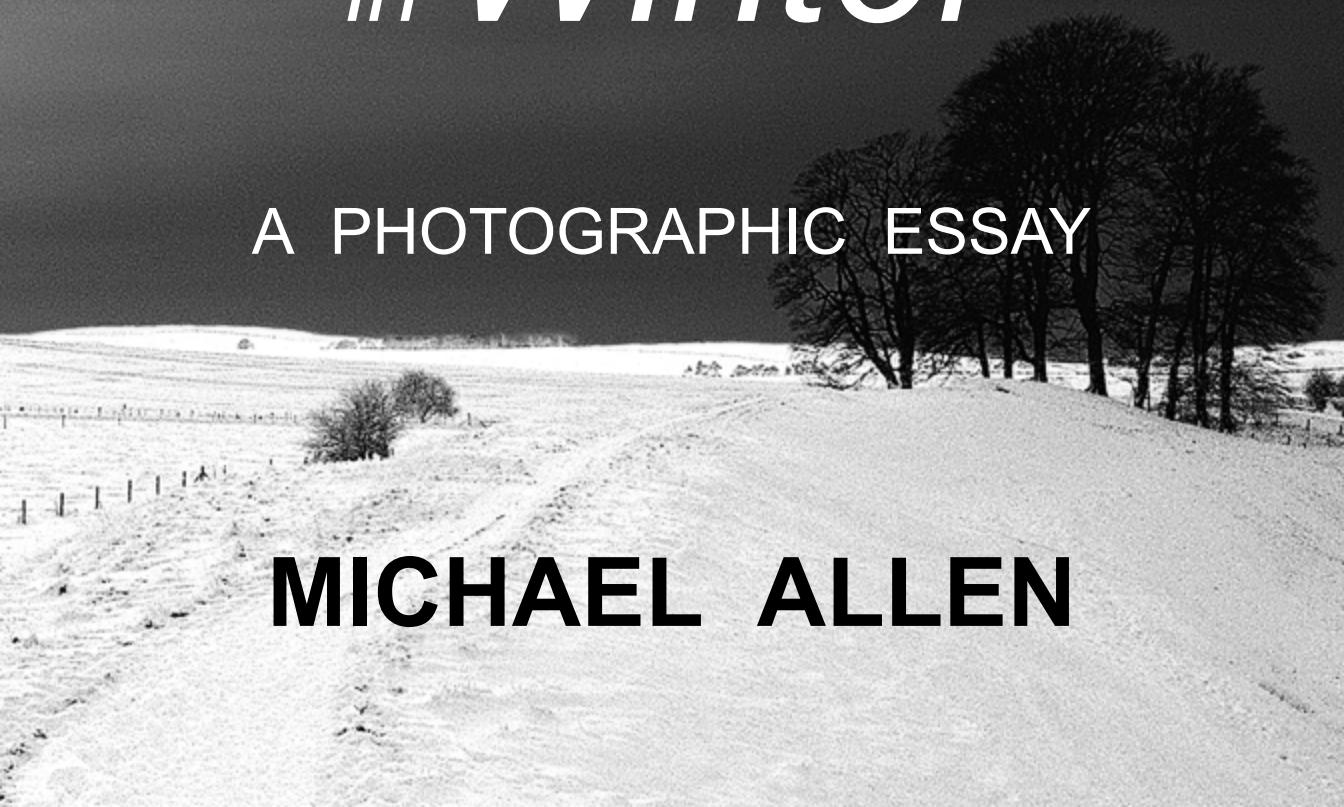


AVEBURY

in Winter

A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

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HOW TO VIEW THIS BOOK

This ebook is available only in PDF format. So, if you are reading these words on screen, you must be using a version of the Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you are not already familiar with the Reader, please consult the Help file to find out how to navigate around this document.

The book is designed to be viewed at a magnification of 100% or a little more. Theoretically, the book should open automatically at that magnification, but if it has not done so then you should click on the toolbar button which provides an ‘actual size’ view. If you wish, you can try using the ‘fit in window’ button, which may enlarge the picture somewhat. The third option, using the ‘fit width’ button, will normally provide an even bigger magnification, but you may notice a deterioration in the quality of the pictures.

The main purpose of the photographs in this book is to give readers an impression of the grandeur of the Avebury

stone circle. But you won't be seeing the pictures at their best unless your monitor is correctly adjusted.

Take a look at the 21-step wedge below. It runs from pure black on the left to pure white on the right. You should be able to see a small but clear difference between each step on the way. (For the purpose of this exercise, it will help if you increase the magnification of the Adobe Acrobat Reader to 400%.) If you can't distinguish between some of the steps, you should adjust the brightness control on your monitor. If that still doesn't do the trick, some excellent advice on monitor adjustment can be found on the [Northlight Images Gallery](#).

For those who are interested in the technical aspects of photography, information on how the images were prepared for this book can be found on page 33.



INTRODUCTION

Avebury in Winter is primarily a collection of black and white photographs; these can be found from page 13 onwards. In a sense, the photographs tell their own story, but a few facts and figures will nevertheless be useful in setting the scene.

Avebury is a small village in the county of Wiltshire, England, and it is the site of an impressive prehistoric monument – a monument which is sometimes said to be the greatest of its kind in the world.

The principal feature of the Avebury site is a circle of standing stones. These stones were erected some 4,500 years ago; they are less famous than the constructions at Stonehenge, which lie some 17 miles to the south, but they are often considered to be more memorable. From an archaeological point of view, Avebury is important enough to have been declared a World Heritage Site.

The original designers and builders of Avebury created

a massive circular ditch, some 30 feet deep and about 400 yards in diameter. This ditch was dug with nothing more than picks made from red-deer antlers and shovels formed from the shoulder blades of oxen. The earth removed from the ditch was thrown up on the outside of the circle to form a surrounding mound, which again was some 30 feet high. The area enclosed by this ditch and mound is about 28 acres. The sheer size of the Avebury earthwork is perhaps its most striking feature, and there is no one point from which the whole of it may be surveyed.

Immediately inside the ditch, the builders erected a circle of about 100 huge stones, a few yards apart. Some of these sarsens, as they are called, weigh forty tons each; they were transported to the site from the nearby downs, where they lie on the surface. A fair number of these stones still stand where they were originally placed, though many have been lost with time.

Within the main circle there were two smaller circles of stones, each of which had further stones inside them.

These 'smaller' circles, of 25 to 30 stones each, are themselves among the ten largest stone rings in the country.

Entry to the grassy area within the mound and ditch was via four causeways, located roughly at the four main compass points: north, south, east and west. Modern roads, making use of these causeways, now divide the area into four quadrants. (The main features of the Avebury monument are shown in the sketch map on page 12.)

In the prehistoric past, the main stone circle was approached by two avenues, each of them flanked with yet more stones. One avenue, giving access from the south-east, largely remains in position; it contains about 100 sarsens. The avenue from the west has almost disappeared.

What was the site used for?

The short answer is that we do not know, and we can never know, because there are no written records from the time when Avebury was built or used. But there are, of

course, numerous elaborate theories about the great circle's purpose, many of them based on little or no evidence. Some writers have claimed that the site was a Druid temple, which is not the case; the Avebury stones were erected a thousand years before the Druids were first heard of in Britain. Others maintain that the stones were an astronomical device, an amphitheatre, or a burial ground.

All that can be said for certain is that Avebury was built by a community which had sufficient stability and wealth for its leaders to be able to organise manpower on a massive scale. The work of creating the ditch, mound, and stones must have occupied hundreds if not thousands of labourers for a good many years.

Avebury is surrounded by yet more famous archaeological sites, such as West Kennett Long Barrow and Silbury Hill; the latter is the largest man-made neolithic mound in Europe. To the east lies the Ridgeway, an ancient road which is even older than Avebury itself.

It seems that, as the centuries passed, and particularly