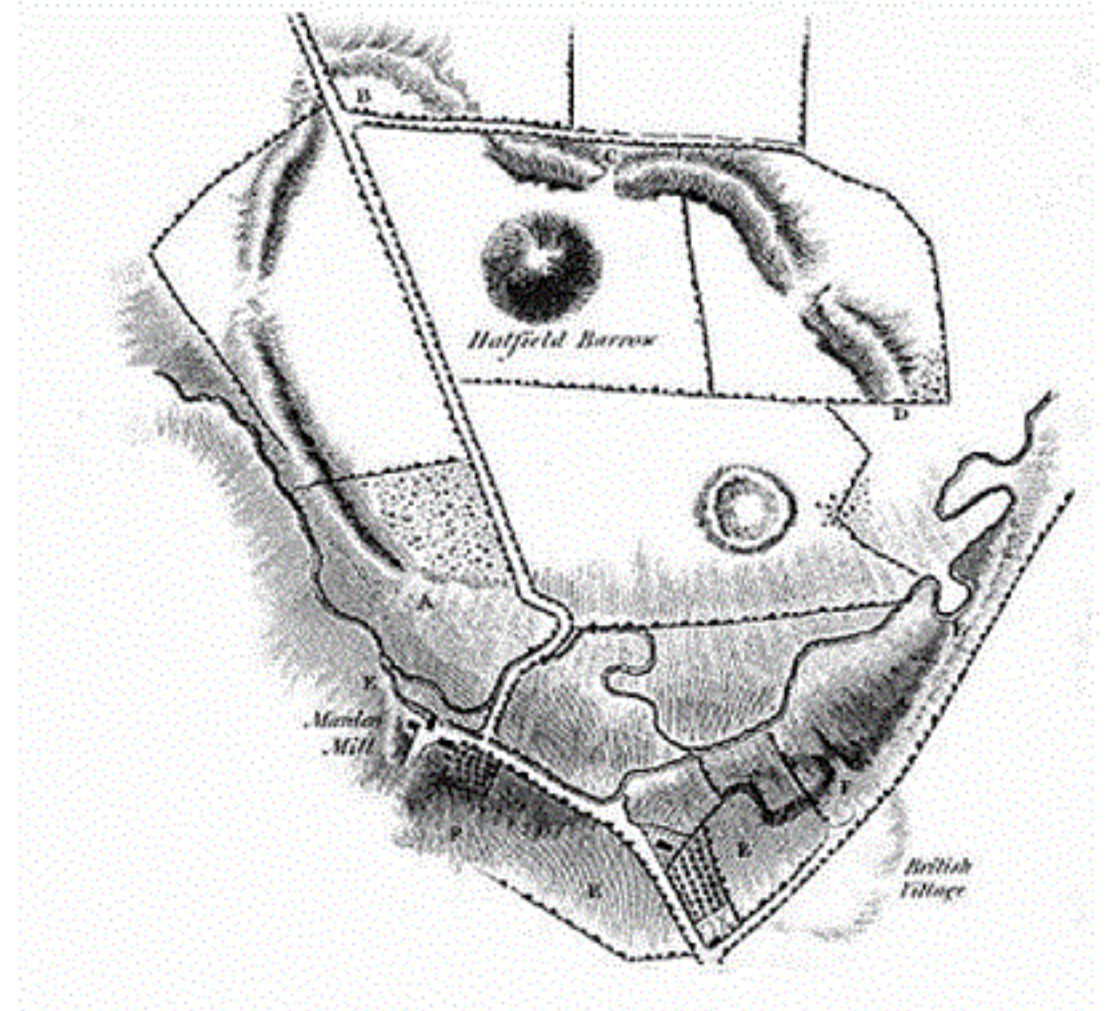




Marden henge



From Sir Richard Colt Hoare's *Ancient Wiltshire* (1812)

Marden henge is one of Britain's most important prehistoric monuments. Henge monuments, which feature a ring bank and ditch, are enigmatic features of late Neolithic Britain (around 2800 - 2000 BC) used for significant ceremonial or ritual activity.

The sheer size of Marden Henge – around 10 times larger than Stonehenge – is astounding. It covers an area of 15.7 hectares, making it the largest Neolithic henge in Britain. It is roughly oval in shape, and is enclosed by a typical bank and internal ditch arrangement constructed on the east, north and north-west sides and by the River Avon to the south and west. It encompasses an area of 14 hectares (35 acres), and is under the care of English Heritage. Antiquarian accounts of the site describe a huge mound within the enclosure called Hatfield Barrow, which collapsed after excavation by William Cunnington in the early 19th century. Today, Marden Henge has been damaged by ploughing, and no longer has any standing stones.

A notable feature within the monument is an inner henge, where small-scale excavations in 2010 identified the remains of what has been described as the best preserved Neolithic building in England. This highlighted the potential for significant finds on the site: bone needles, flint flakes and decorated 'Grooved Ware' pottery were found close by, together with the remains of a large feast and two delicately crafted flint arrowheads. The finds are at Wiltshire Museum in Devizes, where there is also a small display. The site was included in a three-year investigation of the Pewsey Vale begun in 2015 by the Department of Archaeology at the University of Reading, which also included the nearby Cat's Brain long barrow.

The area was designated as a scheduled monument in 1953. Around 1 kilometre to the south, archaeologists have detected a smaller site known as Wilsford Henge.

