

STONEHENGE



For centuries, historians have wondered about the many mysteries of Stonehenge. Stonehenge is an ancient monument that took builders an estimated 1,500 years to erect. Located in southern England, it is built from roughly 100 massive upright stones placed in a circular layout.

While many modern historians now agree that Stonehenge was once a burial ground, they have yet to determine what other purposes it served and how a civilization without modern technology—or even the wheel—produced the mighty monument.

Its construction is all the more baffling because, while the sandstone rocks of its outer ring come from close by, scientists have traced the bluestones that make up its inner ring all the way to the Preseli Hills in Wales; some 200 miles from where Stonehenge sits on Salisbury Plain.

Did You Know?

In 1620, George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham, dug a large hole in the ground at the centre of Stonehenge looking for buried treasure.

THE MEGALITHS OF STONEHENGE

Stonehenge's rocks, of which the largest weighs more than 40 tons and rises 24 feet, were likely sourced from places 25 miles north of Salisbury Plain and transported with the help of sledges and ropes; they may even have already been in the immediate vicinity when the monument's builders first arrived there.

The smaller bluestones, on the other hand, have been traced all the way to the Preseli Hills in Wales, some 200 miles away from Stonehenge. How, then, did builders without sophisticated tools or engineering haul these stones -which weigh up to 4 tons- over such a great distance?

WHO BUILT STONEHENGE?

Many historians agree that several groups of people contributed to Stonehenge, each building a different part of its construction. Bones, tools and other artefacts found on the site seem to support this theory.

The first stage was achieved by people who were likely indigenous to the British Isles. Later, it is believed, groups with advanced tools and a more communal way of life left their stamp on the site. Some have suggested that they were immigrants from the European continent, but many scientists think they were native Britons descended from the original builders.

STONEHENGE'S FUNCTION AND SIGNIFICANCE

If the facts surrounding the architects and construction of Stonehenge remain unclear at best, the purpose of the monument is even more of a mystery. While historians agree that it was a place of great importance for over 1,000 years, we may never know what drew early Britons to Salisbury Plain and inspired them to continue developing it.

There is strong evidence that Stonehenge was used as a burial site, at least for part of its long history, but most scholars believe it served other functions as well—either as a religious destination, a final resting place for royalty or a memorial erected to honour and perhaps spiritually connect with distant ancestors.

Where is Stonehenge located?

How long did it take to build Stonehenge?

How big are the largest stones, and how much do they weigh?

How many miles were some of the stones used to build Stonehenge moved?

Why are people confused about how Stonehenge was built?

What do people think Stonehenge might have been created for?
