

Kids & Schools Tools

Stonehenge, Amesbury, United Kingdom

Stonehenge is one of the 21 finalist candidates in the campaign to choose the New 7 Wonders of the World. The winners of this unique vote will be announced on July 7, 2007 – 07.07.07 and will become part of history. They will be recognized as monuments that have truly global meaning—they are part of our common cultural heritage. We can all be proud of the 21 finalists, since each of them is a unique monument that belongs to its particular culture and country in a very special way.

Stonehenge is a Neolithic and Bronze Age megalithic monument in southern England made up of shaped soil around a circular setting of huge standing stones. It is not clear who built the monument, nor why. Today, about half of the original monument remains—some of the stones have fallen down, others carried away for building or repairing farm tracks and, over centuries, visitors have chipped souvenirs off, too.

Stonehenge was built in three phases, with the stones being rearranged many times during the last stage. It is estimated that millions of hours of work were needed to build it—around 243 years of work for one person! The first monument, built around 3100 B.C., was a circular bank and ditch enclosure around 110 meters (360 feet) in diameter. The ditch was dug by hand using animal bones as shovels and deer antlers as pick-axes with 56 holes were around the edge of the bank to hold wooden posts. Around 2500 B.C., Stonehenge was rebuilt—this time using bluestones, a kind of sandstone, from the Preseli Mountains in Wales 380 km (245 miles) away. They were probably dragged to the sea, floated on huge rafts to and up the River Avon and dragged to the site. Each stone weighs about five tons.

The final stage began about 2300 B.C. The bluestones were dug up and rearranged, and even bigger sandstones, or sarsen stones, were integrated—hammered to size with balls of stone known as “mauls.” Each pair of stones was heaved upright and linked on the top by a complicated technique using lintels. The images of a dagger and 14 axe-heads are carved on one of the sarsens and other axe-head carvings have been seen on the outer faces of stones, probably dating from the Bronze Age, before 2100 B.C. Monument building at Stonehenge seems to have stopped around 1600 B.C.

There is much mythology surrounding Stonehenge. Since it is aligned north-east/south-west, there is a theory that astronomical rituals involved the solstice and equinox points—for example, on a midsummer's morning, the sun's first rays went directly into the center of the monument between the horseshoe arrangement. Other scholars argue that Stonehenge was the destination of a long, ritualized funerary procession, while old legends said that Merlin the wizard had a giant build Stonehenge for him, or that he had magically transported it from Ireland, while others said the Devil built it.

Stonehenge probably comes from Old English: from “stān” meaning “stone”, and either “hencg” meaning “hinge” or “hanging,” or “hen(c)en” meaning “gallows.”

Stonehenge represents, even today, Intrigue & Endurance!



If you want to find out more about the exciting campaign to name the New 7 Wonders of the World, please go to the New7Wonders website at www.new7wonders.com.

07.07.07

Official Declaration of the New 7 Wonders of the World

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