

# :: STONEHENGE... :: Peaceful start to summer solstice... ::

## THE GREAT AND ANCIENT STONE CIRCLE OF STONEHENGE

The great and ancient stone circle of Stonehenge is one of the wonders of the world. There has always been intense debate over quite what purpose Stonehenge served. Certainly, it was the focal point in a landscape filled with prehistoric ceremonial structures, now a World Heritage Site. Stonehenge is surely Britain's greatest national icon, symbolizing mystery, power and endurance. Its original purpose is unclear to us, but some have speculated that it was a temple made for the worship of ancient earth deities.

It has been called an astronomical observatory for marking significant events on the prehistoric calendar. Others claim that it was a sacred site for the burial of high-ranking citizens from the societies of long ago. While we can't say with any degree of certainty what it was for, we can say that it wasn't constructed for any casual purpose. Only something very important to the ancients would have been worth the effort and investment that it took to construct Stonehenge.

There are probably hundreds of myths and legends about Stonehenge. Various people have attributed the building of this great megalith to the Danes, Romans, Saxons, Greeks, Atlanteans, Egyptians,



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Phoenicians Celts, King Aurelius Ambrosius, Merlin, and even Aliens. One of the most popular beliefs was that Stonehenge was built by the Druids. These high priests of the Celts, constructed it for sacrificial ceremonies.

Jaime García Hernández ESO 4

### Peaceful start to summer solstice 21 June 2006, 08:22 GMT 09:22 UK

Celebrations to mark the summer solstice at Stonehenge in Wiltshire have passed off peacefully. Police estimate around 17.000 people watched the sun rise at 0458 BST on Wednesday despite cloudy conditions. English Heritage allows the public access to the 5.000-year-old stone circle for the annual event.

Drum-beating and chanting turned to cheering as the sun broke through the clouds shortly after 0500 BST.

Heavy overnight rain ensured numbers stayed well below the 20,000 expected to attend the annual revelry at the ancient stone circle on Salisbury Plain.

### 'Spectacularly unspectacular'

Although the rain had stopped by dawn this year's sunrise was cloudy, unlike the strikingly clear spectacle witnessed last year.

One reveller said: "Today's sunrise was spectacularly unspectacular." Every year people flock to the 5,000-year-old site for an all-night party culminating in sunrise on the longest day of the year.

Daniel Boulet

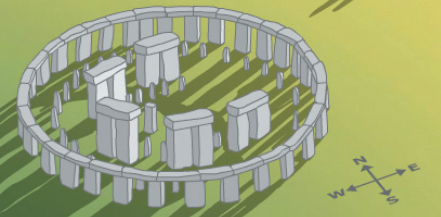
#### SUMMER SOLSTICE AT STONEHENGE

The remains of the megalithic henge of local sarsen and Welsh blue stones lie on a sacred site dating back 5,000 years.



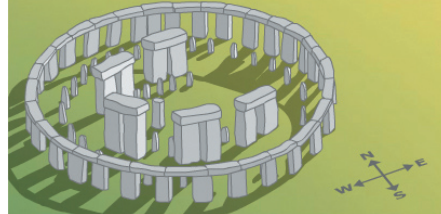
#### SUMMER SOLSTICE AT STONEHENGE

Sunrise on 21st June - the summer solstice - offers some clues to Stonehenge's possible links to seasonal celebrations.



#### SUMMER SOLSTICE AT STONEHENGE

Between 2600BC and 1600BC it is thought to have stood with an outer circle surrounding an inner horseshoe of giant trilithons.



#### SUMMER SOLSTICE AT STONEHENGE

At dawn, the central Altar stone aligns with the Heel stone and the rising sun to the northeast.

