

Building Stonehenge

This extract is from a book about British history. Located in Wiltshire in the south of England, Stonehenge is one of the best-known prehistoric monuments in the world. It is an impressive structure and a popular tourist attraction, but how and why it was built remains a mystery...

The early Britons were so good at building structures from stone that some are still standing today. No one really knows what these strange structures were used for, but many archaeologists believe they were made to celebrate the changing seasons or to worship the sun.

- 5 Stonehenge is a prehistoric structure, found in Wiltshire, that is made up of a ring of vertical slabs of stone. Here is a brief history of the three main phases of its construction.

Stonehenge I

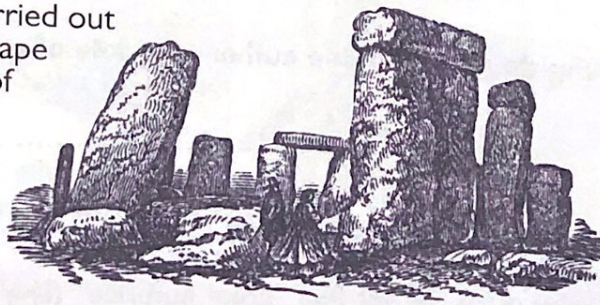
- 10 By around 3100 BC, people using deer antlers to break the earth dug a ditch about 2 metres deep and roughly 6 metres wide, forming a circle 98 metres across. Two tall stones marked the entrance on the northeast side of the circle. A wooden henge (which means a circular area) may also have been built at this time.

Stonehenge II

- 15 A bigger and better henge was built around 2300 BC. About 80 stones, each weighing up to four tonnes, were placed upright in the centre of the site, forming another two circles. The stones were brought about 380 kilometres from a quarry in Wales — but no one really knows how. Many of the stones were carefully angled to line up with the position of the sun at different times of the year.

Stonehenge III

- 20 Around 2000 BC, more work was carried out and a new circle, with a horseshoe-shape of large stones, was created. A ring of 30 upright stones, weighing up to 50 tonnes each and standing up to 9 metres tall, were added, and these were connected by a ring of stones that were laid on top.



An extract from *Off With Their Heads! All the Cool Bits in British History* by Martin Oliver.