**Stonehenge**

**Stonehenge:**

Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument in Wiltshire, England.  Archaeologists believe it was constructed from 3000 BC to 2000 BC.

**Why it was built?**

It is believed that ancient astronomers may have used Stonehenge as a kind of solar calendar to track the movement of the sun and moon and mark the changing seasons. But now hundreds of human bones found at the site, dating across 1,000 years and showing signs of cremation before burial.

**History of Stonehenge:**

Three phases.

* Stonehenge 1 2950-2900 BC
* Stonehenge II. 2900-2400 BC
* Stonehenge III. 2550-1600 BC(5 sub phases)

**Stonehenge 1:**

According to archaeologists, it was a circular 'henge' or oval-shaped flat area enclosed by a boundary earthwork.

**Stonehenge 2:**

Some kind of wooden structures have been built within the enclosure, and Stonehenge functioned as a cremation cemetery. Outside the entrance of stonehenge another feature, known as the Avenue, was added to the Stonehenge landscape. The Avenue (probably a ceremonial pathway) consists of a parallel pair of ditches and banks.

**Stonehenge 3:**

Its construction began around 2,550 BC, it involved the changing of the simple earth and wooden henge into a unique stone monument.

**Stonehenge 3 i:**

In the first stage, two concentric circles, of 80 ‘bluestone’ pillars were created at the center of the monument, with a main entrance to the North East. These bluestones, weighing about 4 tons each, originate in the Preseli Hills, and were transported to the site. Apart from the bluestones, a long greenish sandstone slab, known as the Altar Stone, was brought to Stonehenge.

**Stonehenge 3 ii:**

Thirty of these huge sarsens, weighing around 25 tons, were fixed in a circle. On top of these were placed smaller sarsen supports spanning the tops and held in place. Within this sarsen circle a horse-shoe shaped setting of 15 more sarsens, making five trilithons (two large stones set upright to support a third on their top) was erected.

**Stonehenge 3 iii:**

Between 2280 and 1900 BC, the blue stones were re-erected and arranged, finally forming an inner circle and horseshoe between the sarsen circle and the trilithons, mirroring the two arrangements of sarsen stones. This arrangement is the monument that we see today.

**Stonehenge 3 iv:**

Between 2030 and 1520 BC a double ring of pits, known as the Y and Z holes, were dug outside the outermost sarsen circle, possibly to take another setting of stones. They eventually silt up naturally. The Y and Z holes almost seem to mark the end of the construction very little changes were done after this phase.

**Stonehenge 3 v:**

Soon afterwards, the north eastern section of the Phase 3 IV bluestone circle was removed, creating a horseshoe-shaped setting (the Bluestone Horseshoe) which mirrored the shape of the central sarsen Trilithons.

**Reasons for the existence of Stonehenge:**

* **A place for burial**
* **A place for healing**
* **A soundscape**

**Significance of Stonehenge:**

* Stonehenge was one of the very first sites in the UK to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
* Stonehenge is the most architecturally sophisticated and only surviving stone circle in the world.
* The earliest stage of the monument is one of the largest cremations cemeteries known in Neolithic Britain.
* The stones were brought from very long distances – the bluestones from the Preseli Hills, over 150 miles away, and the sarsens probably from the Marlborough Downs, 19 miles to the north.
* The stones were dressed using sophisticated techniques[]](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/history/significance/#go to footnote 3) and erected using precisely interlocking joints, unseen at any other prehistoric monument.