

THE SECRETS OF STONEHENGE



▲ The oldest stones at Stonehenge were placed more than 4,500 years ago. Today, mystery still surrounds this ancient monument.

- 1 All over the globe are historical mysteries left to us by the ancient world—lost civilizations, abandoned cities, and puzzling monuments. One unexplained mystery that has both **inspired** and mystified modern man for centuries is Stonehenge. Though it is one of the best-known artifacts in the world, we have no **definitive** idea of why it was built and what it was actually used for. Today, however, two new investigations may offer some answers.

A PLACE OF THE DEAD?

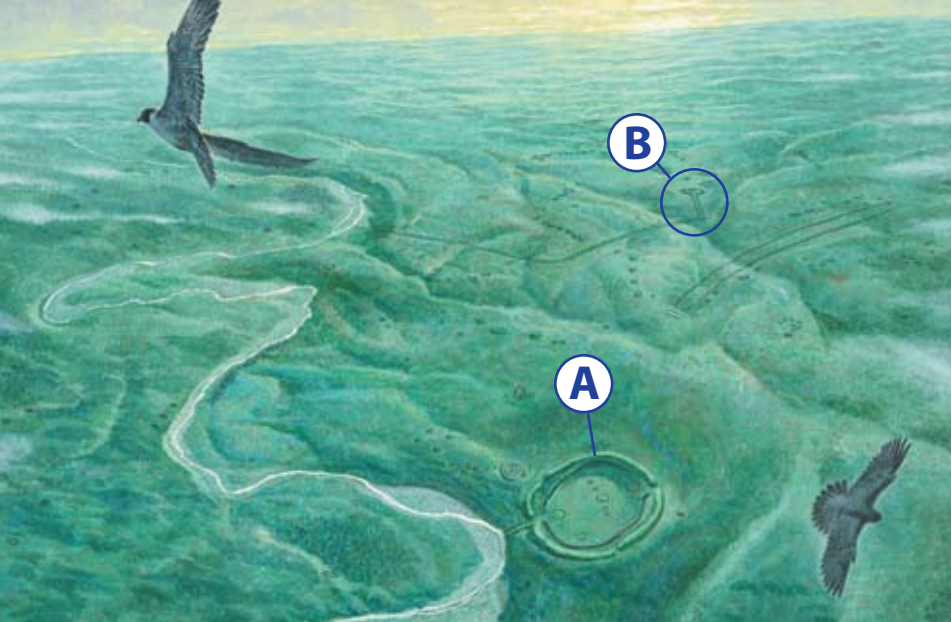
- 10 The first theory begins with findings being unearthed not at Stonehenge, but at a location nearby. Archeologist Mike Parker Pearson and his colleagues¹ have been studying an area about three kilometers (two miles) northeast of Stonehenge. Here stands Durrington Walls—a structure similar to Stonehenge but about 20 times larger. In and around Durrington Walls were three circular structures made of wood. Evidence suggests that these wooden circles were holy places or perhaps the residences of important officials who cared for Durrington. Outside Durrington Walls, Parker Pearson and his colleagues have also recently discovered a village of up to 300 houses which date back more than 4,500 years.

- 25 What do the findings at Durrington Walls have to do with Stonehenge? Parker Pearson believes there is a connection between the two places, and he **cites** his recent studies of the Malagasy culture in Madagascar to help explain his theory. In Malagasy culture, stone is

- 30 a symbol of hardened bones and death. Wood, in contrast, is associated with life.

Using this model, Parker Pearson sees associations between the wooden structures of Durrington and the hard monument of Stonehenge. Durrington, in this new theory, is the **domain** of the living, while Stonehenge is a place of the dead.

- Parker Pearson goes on to explain that the houses near Durrington Walls were probably occupied at certain times of the year when people gathered for the summer and winter solstices (the longest and shortest days of the year) to celebrate certain religious ceremonies. And in fact, large amounts of pottery² and animal bones have been found near Durrington, suggesting that this site was used as a place for eating and drinking. In contrast, very little pottery has been found at Stonehenge. In addition, almost no human remains³ have been found at Durrington, but a number of **graves** have been uncovered at Stonehenge.



◀ Some archeologists believe that Durrington Walls (A) and Stonehenge (B) were linked.

possible that the **motive** for moving these stones the great distance to the Salisbury Plain was to create a center for health and healing.

How exactly the stones were transported—without the use of wheels—remains a mystery. Perhaps they were pulled by teams of men and animals or moved on

giant rollers of wood. However it was done, transporting such enormous stones was a remarkable achievement for the time.

Stonehenge was one of the last great monuments built in ancient England. It was abandoned about 3,500 years ago, and because its creators wrote no texts to explain it, they have left us forever with one of history's great puzzles to solve.

¹ Your **colleagues** are the people you work with.

² **Pottery** is pots, dishes, and other objects made from clay.

³ **Remains** are all or part of a dead body.

▼ Evidence suggests that Durrington Walls—which had perhaps 300 houses—was a place for the living, whereas Stonehenge was a place for the dead.



Paths from Stonehenge and Durrington Walls to the nearby River Avon also suggest that the two sites were linked. At certain times of the year, most of the dead would have been carried down the road from Durrington and put in the river. Later, remains of the society's rulers would have been brought down the river, carried up the long **avenue**, and **deposited** at Stonehenge.

A PLACE FOR HEALTH AND HEALING?

In Wales, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) east of Stonehenge, archeologists have another theory about why the monument was built and what it was used for. In this region of Wales are the Preseli Mountains. Archeologists have **traced** the origin of Stonehenge's oldest stones (often referred to as “bluestones” because of their appearance when wet) to this site.

One question that has puzzled archeologists for years is why did ancient Britons **transport** these huge stones—which weighed up to 3,600 kilos (four tons)—and use them to build Stonehenge? Some archeologists believe that early people saw the Preseli hills, with their giant blue stones, as a holy place. There is also a local belief, which is still common today, that the waters coming from the Preseli Mountains can cure illness. It is