**STONEHENGE** (Sax. *S tanhen gist,* hanging stones), a circular group of huge standing stones (see Stone Monuments), situated on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, England, about 7 m. N. of Salisbury. Until comparatively recent times the surrounding district was in a state of nature with merely a thin coating of turf interspersed with tufts of heath and dwarf thistles, but bare of trees and shrubs and altogether devoid of the works of man, with the exception of a series of prehistoric barrows of the Bronze Age which, singly and in groups, studded the landscape. It is safe to say that no prehistoric monument in Great Britain has given rise to more speculation as to its origin, date and purpose ; and although the few hoary stones still extant are but a small portion of the original structure they are still sufficiently imposing to excite the wonder of the passing traveller, and mysterious enough to puzzle the antiquary.

Stonehenge was first mentioned by Nennius in the 9th century, who asserts that it was erected in commemoration of the 400 nobles who were treacherously slain near the spot by Hengist in 472. A similar account of its origin is given in the triads of the Welsh bards, where its erection is attributed to Aurelius Ambrosius, the successor of Vortigem. This was regarded as a miraculous feat brought about by the incantations of the magician Merlin, who caused a great stone circle in Ireland (said to have been previously carried thither out of Africa by giants) to be trans­ported to Salisbury Plain, where, at Merlin’s “ word of power,” all the stones moved into their proper places. On the other hand, the Welsh bard Aneurin states that Stonehenge existed before the time of Aurelius, whose title of Ambrosius may, as sug­gested by Davies, have been derived from Stonehengé. Geoffrey of Monmouth, in recording the death of Constantine, which took place about the middle of the 6th century *(Historia britonum),* states that he was buried " close by Uther Pendragon, within the structure of stones which was set up with wonderful art not far from Salisbury, and called in the English tongue, Stone­henge.” Inigo Jones, in his work on Stonehenge, published in 1655, endeavours to prove that it was a " Roman temple, inscribed to Coelus, the senior of the heathen gods, and built after the Tuscan order.” This theory was attacked by Dr Charleton (1725), one of the physicians of Charles II., who maintained that it was erected by the Danes, and consequently after the departure of the Romans from Britain. The next controversialist who appeared on the scene was the famous Dr Stukely (1740) who propounded the theory that Stonehenge, the stone circle at Avebury (Abury), &c., were temples for serpent worship, "Dracontia" as he called them, the serpent worship­pers being the Druids. Subsequent writers dropped the ophite portion of this theory, but still continued to regard Stonehenge as a temple or observatory of the Druids. Lord Avebury regards it as a temple of the Bronze Age (1500-1000 b.c.), though appar­ently it was not all erected at one time, the inner circle of small unwrought, blue stones being probably older than the rest *(Prehistoric Times),* On the other hand James Fergusson (1872) contended that it was a sepulchral monument of the Saxon period.

The original number and position of the stones have suffered in the course of time from wind and weather, in days when archaeological interest was not alive to the importance of pre­serving so ancient a monument. That, however, these natural causes of its dilapidation were assisted by the sacrilegious hand of man there is no lack of documentary evidence. Thus Inigo Jones laments the disappearance of stones that were standing when he measured it; and both Stukely and Aubrey deplore the loss of fallen stones that were removed to make bridges, mill-dams and the like. On the evening of the 31st of December 1900, one of the outer trilithons (22 on plan), with its lintel, was blown down in the course of a severe storm, this being the first collapse since the 3rd of January 1797, when one of the fine trilithons (57, 58) of the horseshoe fell. This catastrophe attracted renewed attention to the state of Stonehenge, and much discussion took place as to the taking of precautions against further decay.

The annexed plan, which is that of Professor Flinders Petrie, shows the state of Stonehenge at the moment preceding the fall of the trilithon on the 31st of December 1900. Within a circular earthwork, 300 ft. in diameter and approached from the north-east by a road or avenue which can still be traced by banks of earth, is an outer circle of trilithons (100 ft. in diameter) formed by great monoliths (sarsens), originally thirty in number, with large

lintel stones. About 9 ft. within this circle and concentric with it is another, formed of smaller “ blue stones" originally forty in number, but only a few of which now remain *in situ*; within that was a horseshoe of five huge trilithons formed by ten monoliths with their imposts (all sarsens) ; and within the horse-shoe was an inner horseshoe of “ blue stones/\* originally nine­teen in number. The open part of the horseshoe exactly faces the sunrise at the summer solstice. Beyond the outer circle (not shown on plan) a great monolith—the sun stone, or so-called " Friar’s Heel"—standing on the axis of the horseshoe, marks the point where a spectator, centrally placed within the horseshoe, would see the sun rise on the horizon at the solstice. On the circumference of the earthern circle or surrounding rampart (not shown on plan), which is here intentionally broken, a great recumbent stone—the slaughter stone—lies along the axis: and across the axis, near the central curve of the inner horse­shoe, lies a fine recumbent stone—the altar stone—15 5 ft. long.

Only half the outer circle (sarsens) now remained upright, three on the west, thirteen on the east; and this indicated the effect of the prevalent west wind. The fall of trilithon 22 and its lintel opened a larger path to the wind, and added to the danger of further destruction. Moreover, the narrow passages between the eastern monoliths had become worn by use into hollows which threatened their foundations. The acquisition of Salisbury Plain by the war office for military purposes seemed likely, again, to add to the risk of harm from thoughtless visitors. For all reasons an attempt to preserve Stonehenge was desirable; and the owner, Sir Edmund Antrobus@@1 was willing, on certain conditions, as to limitations of access, to co-operate with the Society of Antiquaries, Wiltshire Archaeological Society and Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments in taking such steps as might be necessary to prevent more stones from falling, and even (if possible) to set up some which had fallen.

@@@1 The ownership of Stonehenge having been questioned, Sir E. Antrobus’s legal title to it was confirmed by a lawsuit in 1905.