Stonehenge: Magnificent, Magical And Mysterious

By: Karen Dabrowska

Stonehenge is probably the most visited historical site in Britain. But a quiet stroll among the ancient stones (with an audio guide in ten languages that provides a comprehensive overview of the site) is a deeply personal and unforgetable experience.



sure why they were brought

The giant stones, magnificent, there: It may have been an magical and mysterious have observatory or it may have been been on Salisbury Plain for over used for sacred rituals linked to 4000 years but no one is quite the sun, successful crops or even the dead.



it also remains unanswered. The monument's construction has been attributed to many and enduring attribution has stone structures. been to the Druids This made around three centuries priesthood around the time of their first

Just like the question of why it conquest (55 BC). By this time, was built, the question who built though, the stones had been standing for 2,000 years, and were, perhaps, already in a ruined condition. Besides, the ancient peoples throughout the Druids worshipped in forest years, but the most captivating temples and had no need for

erroneous connection was first The best guess seems to be that the Stonehenge site was begun ago by the antiquary, John by the people of the late Aubrey, Julius Caesar and other Neolithic period (around 3000) Roman writers told of a Celtic BC) and carried forward by who flourished people from a new economy which was arising at this time.

These "new" people, called Beaker Folk because of their use of pottery drinking vessels, began to use metal implements and to live in a more communal fashion than their ancestors. Some think that they may have been immigrants from the continent, but that contention is not supported by archaeological evidence. It is likely that they were indigenous people doing the same old things in new ways.

Stonehenge has changed ownership several times since King Henry VIII acquired Amesbury Abbey and its surrounding lands. In 1540 Henry gave the estate to the Earl of Hertford. It subsequently passed to Lord Carleton and then the Marquis of Queensbury. The Antrobus family of Cheshire bought the estate in 1824.

During World War I an aerodrome had been built on the downs just to the west of the circle and, in the dry valley at Stonehenge Bottom, a main road junction had been built,

along with several cottages and a cafe. The Antrobus family sold the site after their last heir was killed serving in France during the First World War. The auction by Knight Frank & Rutley estate agents in Salisbury was held on September 1915 included "Lot 15. Stonehenge with about 30 acres, 2 rods, 37 perches of adjoining downland." Cecil Chubb bought the site for £6,600 and gave it to the nation three years later. Although it has been speculated that purchased it at the suggestion of or even as a present for — his wife, he, in fact, bought it on a



whim as he believed a local man should be the new owner.

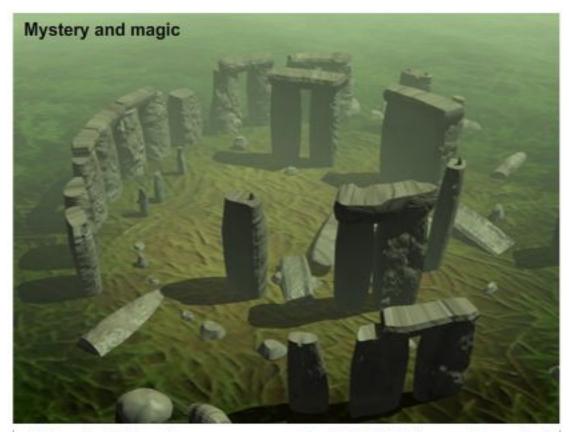
appeal was launched to save the Aubrey holes, all probably Stonehenge the from encroachment of the modern buildings that had begun to appear around it. In 1928 the land around the monument was the purchased with donations, and given to the stage of Stonehenge started National Trust in order to preserve it. The buildings were bluestones from the Preseli removed (although the roads mountains, in south-west Wales were not), and the land returned to agriculture. More recently the land has been part of a grassland reversion scheme. returning the surrounding fields to the headwaters on Milford to native chalk grassland.

In 2002 a public poll voted Stonehenge as one of the Seven Wonders of Britain, alongside Big Ben, the Eden Project. Hadrian's Wall, the London Eye. Windsor Castle, and York Minster

The stonehenge that we see Avon to west Amesbury. today is the final stage that was

completed about 3500 years ago. The first Stonehenge was a large earthwork or In the late 1920s a nation-wide comprising a ditch, bank, and built around 3100 BC. Shortly after this stage Stonehenge was abandoned, left untouched for over 1000 years.

> appeal The second and most dramatic around 2150 BC Some 82 were transported to the site. It is thought these stones, some weighing 4 tonnes each were dragged on rollers and sledges Haven and then loaded onto rafts. They were carried by water along the south coast of Wales and up the rivers Avon and Frome, before being dragged overland again to Warminster in Wiltshire. The final stage of the journey was mainly by water, down the river Wylye to Salisbury, then the Salisbury



This astonishing journey covers about 2000 BC, saw the arrival nearly 240 miles. Once at the of the Sarsen stones, which period the original entrance of the nearer part of the Avenue was and built. aligned with the midsummer sunrise.) The third stage of Stonehenge.

site, these stones were set up in were almost certainly brought the centre to form an incomplete from the Marlborough Downs double circle. (During the same near Avebury, in north Wiltshire, about 25 miles north circular earthwork was Stonehenge. The largest of the widened and a pair of Heel Sarsen stones transported to Stones were erected. Also the Stonehenge weigh 50 tonnes transportation by water would have been impossible, the stones could only have been moved using sledges and ropes.

Modern calculations show that it would have taken 500 men using leather ropes to pull one stone, with an extra 100 men needed to lay the huge rollers in front of the sledge.

The final stage took place soon after 1500 BC when the bluestones were rearranged in the horseshoe and circle that we see today. The original number of stones in the bluestone circle was probably around 60, these have long since been removed or broken up. Some remain only as stumps below ground level.

Stonehenge is easily accessible by public transport. Just take the train to Salisbury. The Stonehenge tour bus is waiting just outside the station to take visitors to the site.