

# Neopaganism - out of step with archaeology

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## Stonehenge in England



Stonehenge in England

Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument located in England, about 13 km north of Salisbury. One of the most famous sites in the world, Stonehenge is composed of a circular setting of large standing stones set within earthworks. It is at the centre of the most dense complex of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in England, including several hundred burial mounds.

Archaeologists believe the iconic stone monument was constructed anywhere from 3000 BC to 2000 BC. The surrounding circular earth bank and ditch, which constitute the earliest phase of the monument, have been dated to about 3100 BC.

Archaeological evidence indicates that Stonehenge could possibly have served as a burial ground from its earliest beginnings. The dating of cremated remains found on the site indicate that deposits contain human bone material from as early as 3000 BC, when the initial ditch and bank were first dug. Such deposits continued at Stonehenge for at least another 500 years.

## Stonehenge – with a Swiss link

A wealthy archer found near Stonehenge came from the Alps region, most probably from the area of modern day Switzerland. From the sheer volume and value of the finds in his grave he was nicknamed the King of Stonehenge.

Archaeologists think he might have played an important part in the construction of the site.

The Swiss would not have had any problems communicating with the Britons as they all spoke a form of Celtic at that time. There was a lot of international trade, and cultural links with the continent were strong during the period that Stonehenge was built.

*from swissinfo*

## Stonehenge Aotearoa



Equinox Sunset at Stonehenge Aotearoa

For millennia people have gazed in awe at Stonehenge and other great stone circles, often totally unaware of how these structures were used. Now a full-scale working adaptation of Stonehenge has been built right here in New Zealand, allowing all New Zealanders to experience the wonders of stone circles for themselves. Situated in the Wairarapa countryside, a short distance from Wellington, Stonehenge Aotearoa is a window into the past where the visitor can rediscover the knowledge of their ancestors. It incorporates ancient Egyptian, Babylonian and Indus Valley astronomy, Polynesian navigation, and Celtic and Maori starlore.

Built on the same scale as Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain in England, Stonehenge Aotearoa is not a replica. It is a complete and working structure designed and built for its precise location, so that we can explore the mysteries of our past and learn how early cultures, including New Zealand Maori, used the Sun, Moon and stars for life and survival.

## Neopaganism – out of step with archaeology

Throughout the twentieth century, Stonehenge began to be revived as a place of religious significance, this time by adherents of Neopagan and New Age beliefs, particularly the Neo-druids- at a time when theories about Druids had been rejected by archaeologists.

The first such Neo-druidic group to make use of the megalithic monument was the Ancient Order of Druids, who performed a mass initiation ceremony there in August 1905, in which they admitted 259 new members into their organisation.

*from swissinfo*