

# Stonehenge







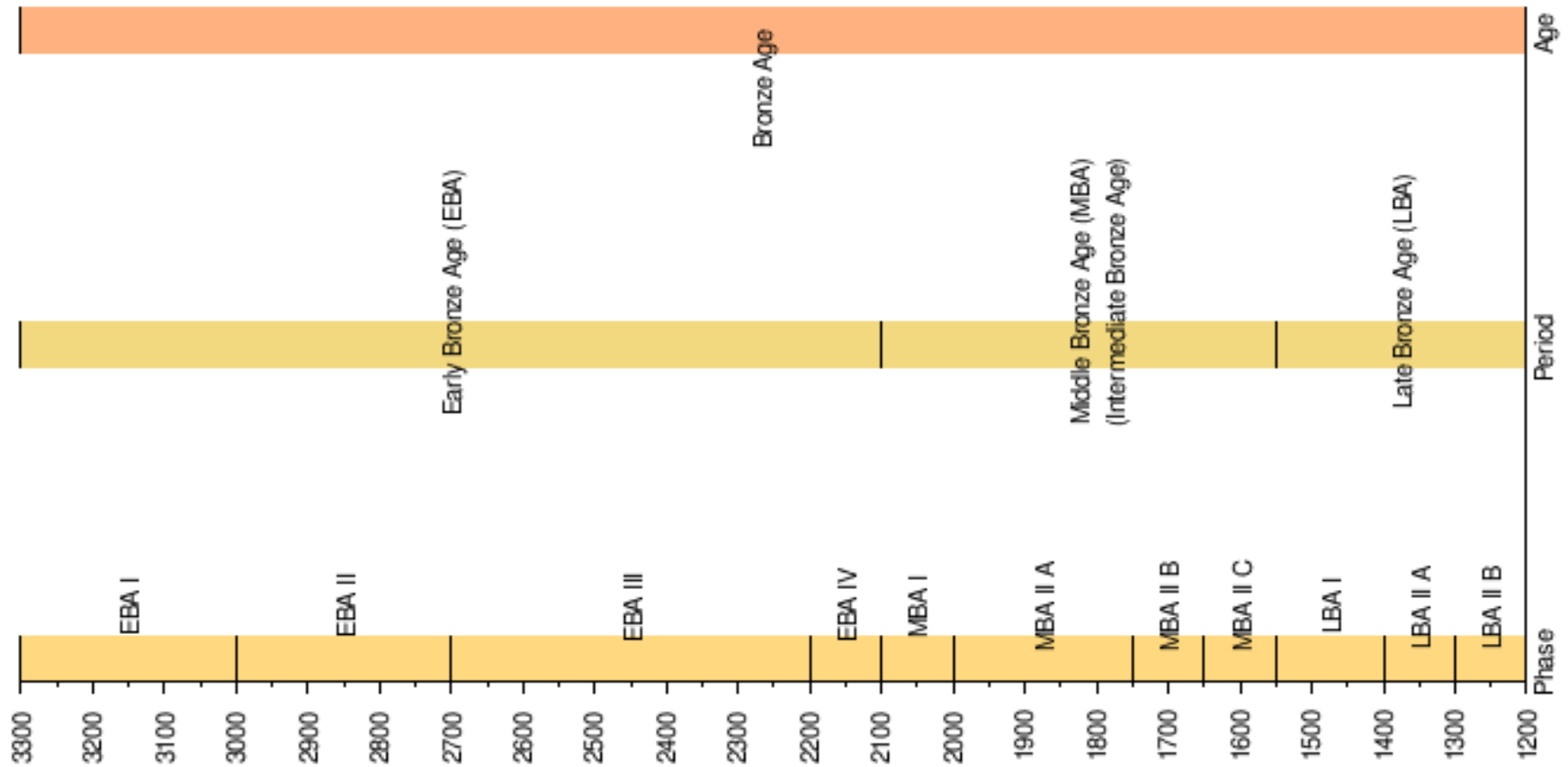
The **Neolithic** Era, or Period, or **New Stone age**, was a period in the development of human technology, beginning about 10,200 BC, according to the ASPRO chronology in some parts of the Middle East, and later in other parts of the world<sup>1</sup> and ending between 4,500 and 2,000 BC.



# **NEOLITHIC (5500-2000 B.C.):**

- **The Neolithic was the period of domestication of plants and animals. There is a current debate between those who believe that the introduction of farming and a sedentary lifestyle was brought about by resident peoples adopting new practices, and those who hold the opinion that it was effected by continental invaders bringing their culture with them and, to some degree, replacing the indigenous populations.**

The **Bronze Age** is a period characterized by the use of copper and its alloy bronze and proto-writing, and other features of urban civilization.



# BRONZE AGE:

- This period can be sub-divided into an earlier phase (2300 to 1200 BC) and a later one (1200 – 700 BC). Early Bronze Age Britons buried their dead beneath earth mounds known as barrows, often with a beaker alongside the body. Later in the period, cremation was adopted as a burial practice with cemeteries of urns containing cremated individuals appearing in the archaeological record, with deposition of metal objects such as daggers.

**Stonehenge itself seems to have been constructed in three phases:**

**I        c. 3,100-3,000**

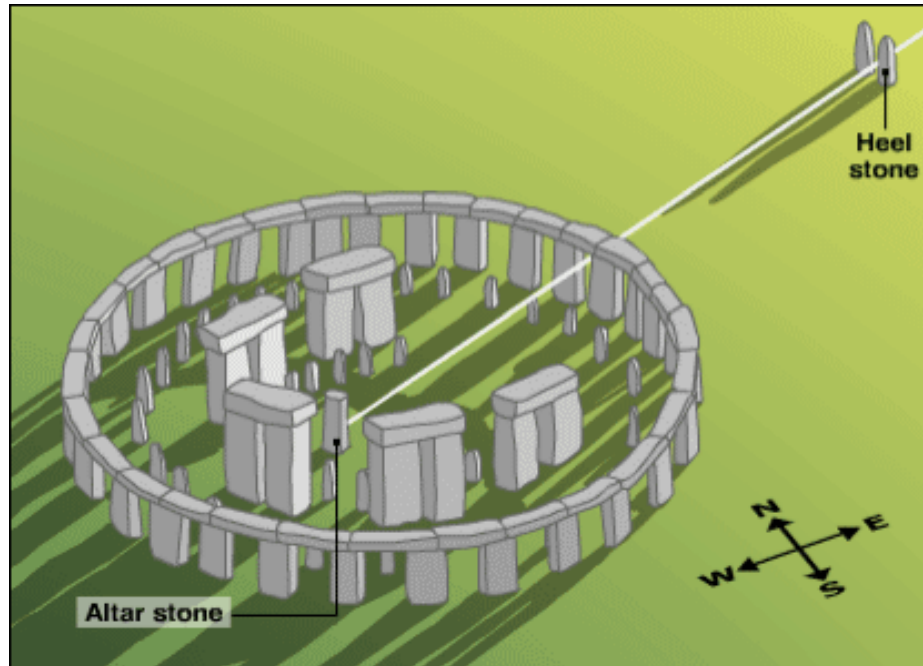
**II        c. 3000-2550**

**III       c. 2550-1600**

- **First Phase:**
- **The native Neolithic people of England began construction of Stonehenge I by digging a circular ditch using deer antlers as picks. The circle is 320 feet in diameter, and the ditch itself was 20 feet wide and 7 feet deep.**
- **abandoned.**
- **Next, they used the land and rocks taken from the ditch to build a high bank circle just inside the outer circle. Inside the bank circle, they dug 56 shallow holes known as the Aubrey (named after their discoverer, 17th century scholar John Aubrey) with the Slaughter Stone.**
- **Finally, two parallel stones were erected at the entrance to the circle, one of which still survives. Also surviving are two Station Stones, positioned across from each other on opposite sides of the circle, which may also have been erected during this time. Stonehenge I seems to have been used for about 500 years and then abandoned.**







- **Second Phase: Timber Structures (c. 3000-2550 BCE / c. 2900-2400 BC)**
- In this phase, a semicircle of granite stones known as bluestones (from their original coloring) was assembled within the original bank and ditch circles. Several aspects of this phase are intriguing.
- 1) The bluestones come from the Preseli Mountains in South Wales, nearly 250 miles away. There were about 80 of them, weighing up to 4 tons each. How they were transported is not known, although scholars don't regard the feat as impossible and various theories have been presented.
- It is intriguing to wonder, however, what makes the Stonehenge site so special that so much effort would be expended to drag the giant stones 250 miles instead of constructing the monument near the quarry.
- 2) The entranceway to the semicircle of bluestones is aligned with the midsummer sunrise. The alignment was continued by the clearing of a new approach to the site, "The Avenue," which has ditches and banks on either side like the original outer circle.
- Two Heel Stones (so-named from the shape of the one that remains) were placed on the Avenue a short distance from the circle (and, today, very close to Highway A344).

- **Third Phase: (c. 2550-1600 BCE ) Sub-phase One ( Circa 2,550 - 2,600 / : Bluestone Arrive )**
- **Stonehenge III is the stone circle that is still visible today. During this phase the builders constructed a circle of upright sarsen stones, each pair of which was topped with a stone lintel (horizontal capstone). The lintels are curved to create a complete circle on top.**
- **There were originally 30 upright stones; 17 of these still stand. These stones came from the Marlborough Downs, 20 miles to the north, are 7 feet tall and weigh 50 tons each. The outside surfaces of all these stones were pounded smooth with hammers, and dovetail joints fasten the lintels to their uprights.**
- **Within this stone ring was erected a horseshoe formation of the same construction, using 10 upright stones. Eight of the original ten stones remain. The horseshoe shape opens directly towards the Slaughter Stone and down the Avenue, aligned with the summer solstice sunrise.**
- **Some shuffling around of the bluestones and digging of holes (probably in preparation for placing the bluestones, which was not completed) occurred around 1500 BC. The Altar Stone is the biggest of these newly-arranged bluestones that remains.**





# Stonehenge: ideal reconstruction



A photograph of Stonehenge at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with several white contrails from an airplane streaking across it. The Stonehenge monument is silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun.

In the 12th century, Geoffrey of Monmouth included a fanciful story in his work *Historia Regum Britanniae* that attributed the monument construction to Merlin



- **STONEHENGE IS ONE OF ENGLAND'S GREATEST ICONS. ITS ORIGINAL INTENT IS STILL SOMEWHAT UNCLEAR, BUT SOME HAVE SPECULATED THAT IT WAS A TEMPLE MADE FOR THE WORSHIP OF ANCIENT EARTH DEITIES. IT HAS ALSO BEEN CALLED AN ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY TO CELEBRATE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS ON THE ANCIENT PREHISTORIC CALENDAR. OTHERS CLAIM THAT IS WAS A SACRED SITE CREATED BY MERLIN AND KING ARTHUR FOR THE BURIAL OF HIGH-RANKING CITIZENS FROM SOCIETIES OF LONG AGO.**

# EARLY INTERPRETATIONS

1. THE ARCHITECT JOHN WEBB SUPPORTED THAT STONEHENGE WAS A ROMAN TEMPLE BUILT FOLLOWING THE TUSCAN ORDER
2. JOHN AUBREY DECLARED STONEHENGE THE WORK OF DRUIDS.
3. WOOD INTERPRETED THE MONUMENT AS A PLACE OF PAGAN RITUALS.
4. GERALD HAWKINS NOTED 165 KEY SITES THAT HE STATED CORRELATED VERY STRONGLY WITH THE RISING AND SETTING POINTS OF THE SUN AND THE MOON.
5. SOME LEGENDS HELD THAT MERLIN HAD A GIANT BUILD THE STRUCTURE FOR HIM OR THAT HE HAD MAGICALLY TRANSPORTED IT FROM IRELAND, WHILE OTHERS HELD THE DEVIL RESPONSIBLE.

