**The secrets of Stonehenge**

***(history and mysteries of the most famous of cromlechs)***

Throughout the extraordinary and complex history of humanity, there are **mysteries** of all types that are still unsolved today, capable of continuously stimulating the imagination and the most disparate stories: **Stonehenge** is certainly one of these. The complex of megalithic stones today has not yet provided enough **information** to be able to shed light on its **purpose** and its true uses.

An aura of mystery still surrounds this place located in **Wiltshire, England**, 13 km from **Salisbury**: who built it? What does it symbolize?

***The history of Stonehenge***

To begin, it is appropriate to give the correct definition of **Stonehenge**: a cromlech, a Breton term that can be translated as a **circle of stones**, which indicates structures composed of large stones, called menhirs, arranged **in a circle** and generally joined with the **trilithic system**.

There are several examples of these prehistoric elements in the world - they are also present in **Sicily**, **Val D'Aosta** and **Piedmont**. **Stonehenge** is the most famous. The historical reconstruction has arrived at a reliable estimate regarding the origin of the complex: the cromlech was erected **between 5000 and 4600 years ago**, approximately around **3100 BC** and it is assumed that its construction involved 80 generations and a total of 1600 years. What we see today is a set of **93 stones** arranged in two ideal circles: the **internal** one composed of six large blocks surmounted by three architraves, while the **external** one is composed of seventeen monoliths. It is thought that the cromlech originally consisted of **more than 160 stones.**

***Who built Stonehenge?***

One of the great mysteries of this structural complex is linked to its origins: **who built** the Stonehenge site? The **Druids**, the **Romans**, the **Saxons** or the **first local agricultural communities**? There are still no particular certainties, except that the first two theories were denied following the dating of the complex: the Celts spread **after 300 BC** and the Romans arrived on the British Isles only **in 55 BC**. Some studies have also highlighted the presence of the **village of Durrington Walls** a few km from the cromlech, perhaps used by the builders and their tribes as a support for living.

***Stonehenge: the meaning***

The main **mystery about Stonehenge** is however linked to its **meaning**: what was it built for? What was its use? Even in this case, several hypotheses have been formulated, often conflicting with each other. Among the first and most famous theories about **Stonehenge** are those of **John Aubrey** and **Isaac Newton**, who attributed to the cromlech respectively the function of an **astronomical calendar** by the Celtic Druids and the **evocation of the solar system** taking inspiration from the Temple of Jerusalem. Historical dating, as mentioned above, has then excluded both of these theories due to chronological incompatibility.

Even the version that wants **Stonehenge** to be assimilated to a **temple** as we understand it today is not very sustainable, in fact the structure does not present specific references relating to entrances that recall some type of building dedicated to meditation.

Other theories instead see the stones as having the primordial purpose of **indicating some of the brightest stars** in reference to dated cults, but the very broad temporal placement makes it difficult to identify the stars to which reference would have been made.

A generally accredited interpretation wants the cromlech to be somehow linked to **prehistoric rituals** related to the movement of the **sun**.

***The Solstice at Stonehenge***

The relationship between the **sun** and **Stonehenge** is as well-known as it is strong. Between June 21 and 24, the light of the sun at dawn and at its zenith intersects perfectly with the innermost part of the complex. This phenomenon, which attracts **crowds of visitors** and enthusiasts of natural cults every year, is the main element that links the cromlech to the sun, giving rise to the **magical** or **celebratory functions** of the place.

However, it has been noted that the earth's axis today is **slightly shifted** compared to the one present at the time of the construction of the monoliths. Even this theory, therefore, does not seem to be the definitive one to solve the mystery of **Stonehenge**.

***Curiosities and legends about Stonehenge***

**The charm of Stonehenge** has given rise to various **myths** since ancient times and – in a more modern key – to **stories** and **science fiction films** oriented towards its mysteries. Two in particular are the most famous legends that concern **Stonehenge**. The first connects it to the famous figure of **King Arthur** and in particular to his uncle Aurelius Ambrosius, who in **450 BC** decided to erect a monument in the area to commemorate his men who fell during the battle between the Celts and Saxons. **Merlin** is involved, who with his magic transports the famous stones from Ireland to the English site.

The second concerns the specific **Heel Stone**, a boulder placed a little distance from the central complex and which indicates the north-east: according to legend, the stones were originally in the hands of an Irish lady who was tricked by the devil, who took possession of them and transferred them to the current location. Boasting of the gesture he had just made, he was caught out by a passing **friar** who, attracting the devil's wrath, was hit by a stone thrown by the same friar that hit him on the **heel** and stuck in the ground. It is precisely to this popular story that the name of **Heel Stone** is due.