

奥 秘 之 旅

The Mystery of Stone Circles



石圈之谜

Paul Mason (英) 著



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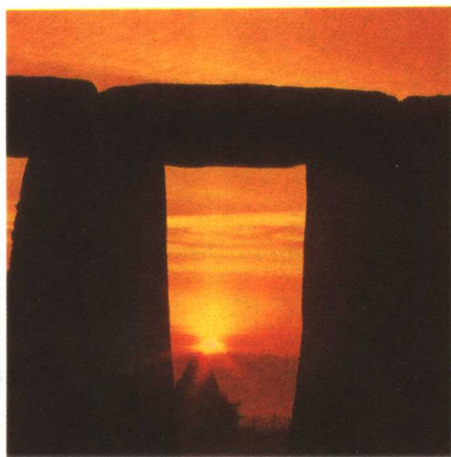
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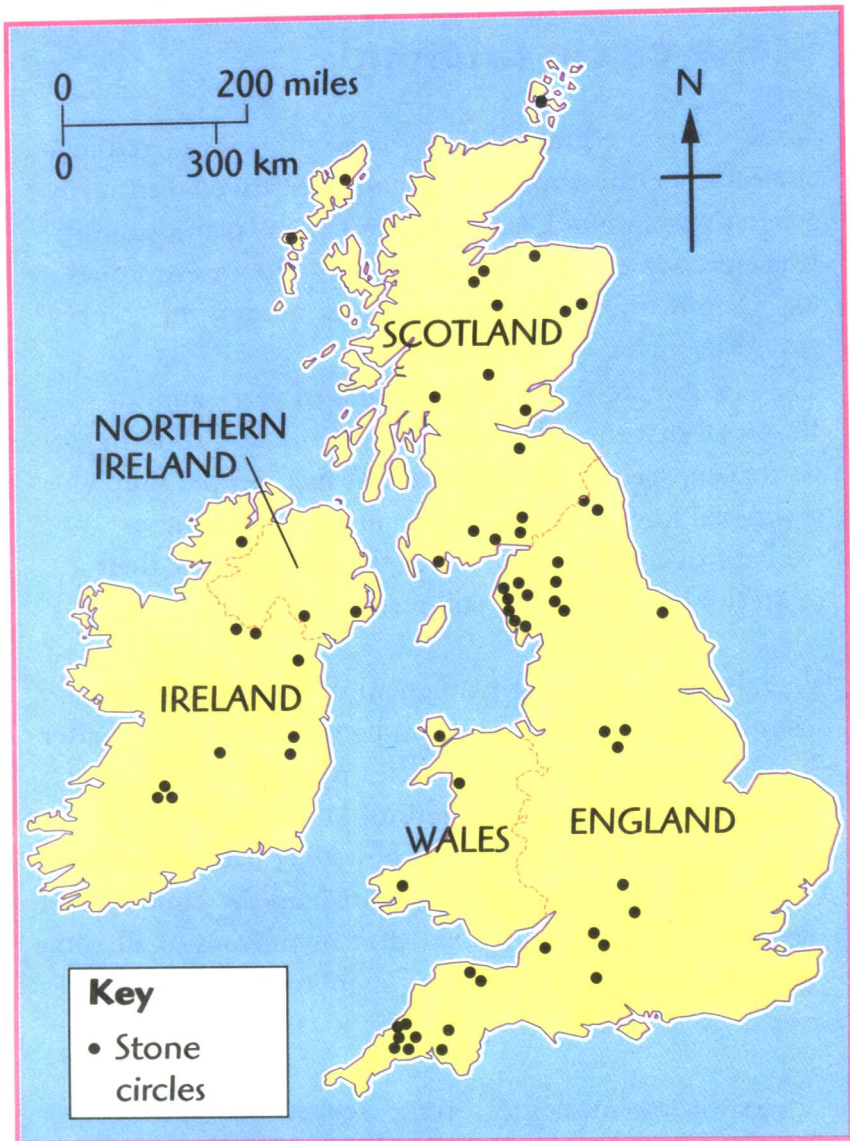
*I*t's a mysterious world

这是个神秘的世界

For tens of thousands of years humans have found their surroundings¹ strange and mysterious. Why does the sun sometimes disappear² from the sky, blanked³ out by the moon? What causes the nights to get longer and the weather to get colder in winter? Why is the sky lit up by strange forked lightning⁴ during terrible storms? Science has now found the answers to these questions.

Other puzzles⁵ come from the past. One of the greatest mysteries surrounds the ancient stone circles that are scattered⁶ around France, England, Scotland and Ireland. There have been many theories⁷ about these circles, when they were built and what they were used for. But it was only after the Second World War that scientists began to study the stone circles in earnest⁸, trying to discover the answers to some of these questions. But have they succeeded?

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|-------------|--------|
| 1. surrounding | <i>n.</i> | [~s]环境 | 5. puzzle | <i>n.</i> | 令人费解的事 |
| 2. disappear | <i>v.</i> | 消失 | 6. scattered | <i>adj.</i> | 散布的 |
| 3. blank | <i>v.</i> | 使模糊不清 | 7. theory | <i>n.</i> | 看法; 推测 |
| 4. forked lightning | | 之字形闪电 | 8. in earnest | | 认真地 |



The stone circles of the British Isles¹

1. British Isles 不列颠群岛

Stone circle briefing¹

Some circles are simple—a few large stones arranged in a circle. Others are complicated² and must have taken many generations³ to build. A few circles feature⁴ giant stones. Ancient people had only simple tools. How were stones weighing many tonnes⁵ lifted without modern machinery?

The circles have stood for thousands of years, and for almost all that time they have been a mystery to both visitors and people living nearby. At first, people simply wondered how they had been built, and why. But as we have discovered more about the stone circles, their mysteries have deepened still further.

The circles seem to use mathematical techniques that scientists believed had not been discovered until long after the circles were built. Some circles were built from giant stones that came from hundreds of kilometres away—no one could work out how they had been moved. Circles hundreds of kilometres apart used the same unit of measurement⁶ in their layout⁷. Most mysterious of all, some of these ancient sites seemed to align⁸ with one another over huge distances.

With so many puzzles to solve⁹, scientists had a real challenge¹⁰ on their hands!

The secret language of the stones

cairn¹¹ a mound¹² of stones used as a marker of some kind.
Cairns are often conical¹³ in shape.

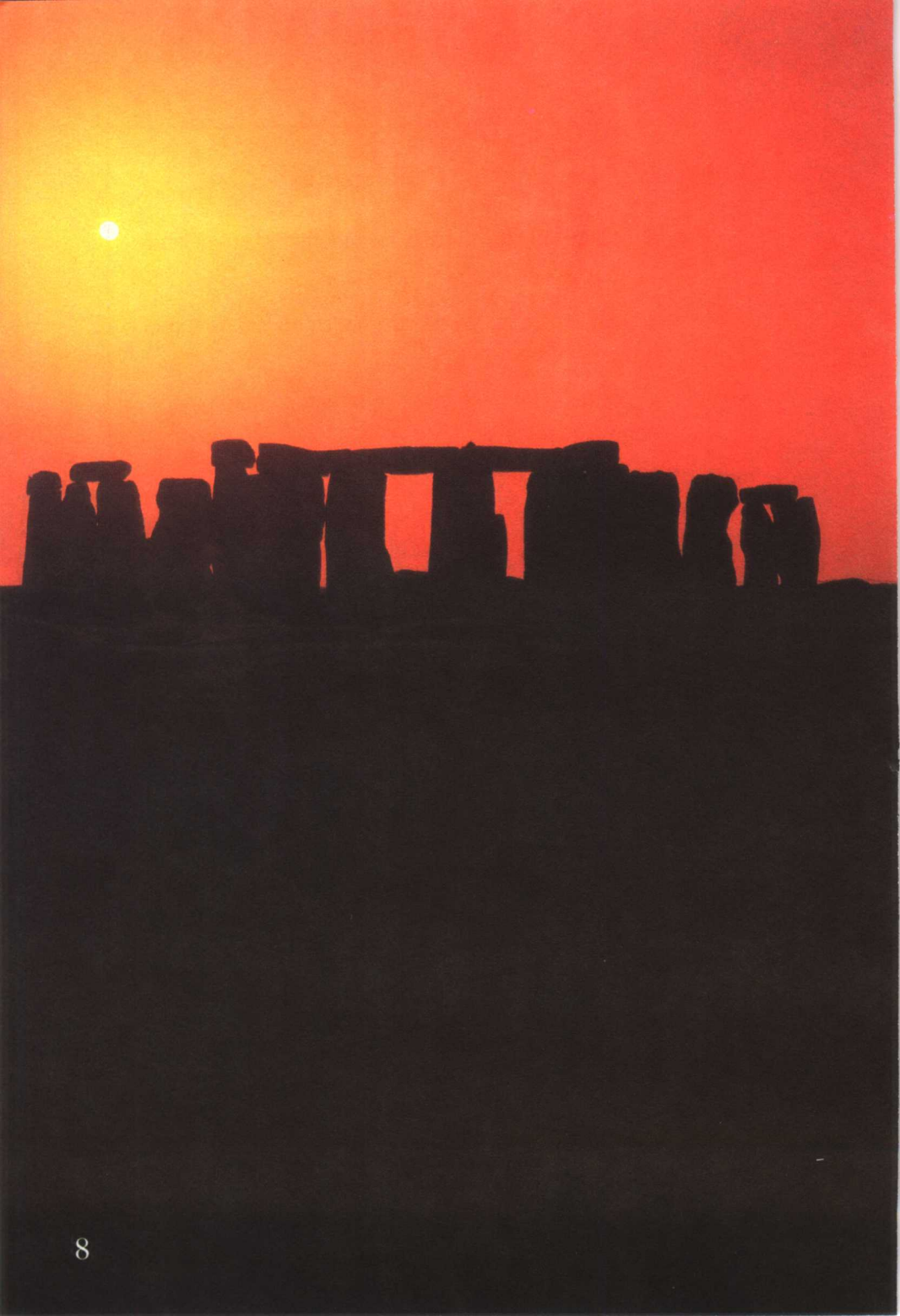
dolmen¹⁴ an ancient tomb with a large, flat stone laid on top of upright ones.

henge¹⁵ a circular earth bank, often found around the outer edge of a stone circle.

menhir¹⁶ a single standing stone.

1. briefing	<i>n.</i>	情况的简要介绍
2. complicated	<i>adj.</i>	复杂的
3. generation	<i>n.</i>	代; 一代
4. feature	<i>v.</i>	以……为特色
5. tonne	<i>n.</i>	公吨
6. measurement	<i>n.</i>	量度
7. layout	<i>n.</i>	安排; 布局
8. align	<i>v.</i>	成一直线
9. solve	<i>v.</i>	解释

10. challenge	<i>n.</i>	挑战
11. cairn	<i>n.</i>	锥形石堆
12. mound	<i>n.</i>	(一)堆
13. conical	<i>adj.</i>	圆锥形的
14. dolmen	<i>n.</i>	石板墓
15. henge	<i>n.</i>	圆形石(或木)结构
16. menhir	<i>n.</i>	(史前的)竖石 纪念物



Stonehenge

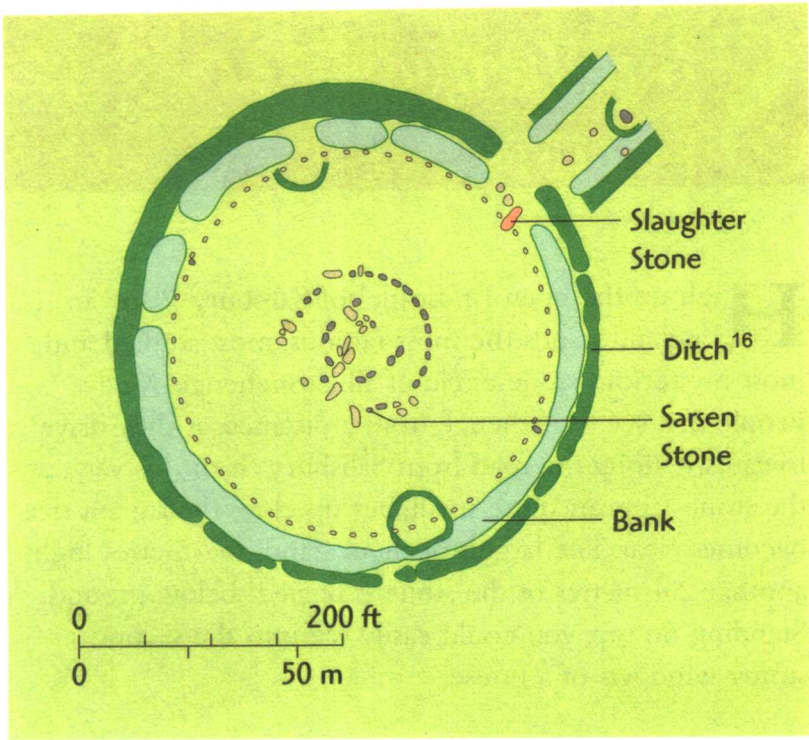
巨石阵

High on the open landscape¹ of Salisbury Plain² in England stands the most famous, most studied and most mysterious stone circle of all: Stonehenge. Many people first see Stonehenge from a distance, as they drive towards it along the road from Salisbury. Seen this way, the stones appear³ quite small, but up close their giant size becomes clear. The largest of them stands 6.7 metres high, another 2.4 metres of the stone is buried⁴ below ground. Standing on top, you could easily see into the second storey windows of a house.

The Avenue⁵

The way into Stonehenge is along a pathway⁶ known as the Avenue, which leads between two banks. At the entrance⁷ to the circle is a large, red-stained⁸ stone, lying on its side. People once thought that this red colour was

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|----------------|-------------|-------|
| 1. landscape | <i>n.</i> | 地貌 | 5. avenue | <i>n.</i> | 通道 |
| 2. Salisbury Plain | | 索尔兹伯里平原 | 6. pathway | <i>n.</i> | 路; 径 |
| 3. appear | <i>v.</i> | 看来好像 | 7. entrance | <i>n.</i> | 入口 |
| 4. bury | <i>v.</i> | 埋 | 8. red-stained | <i>adj.</i> | 涂成红色的 |



The layout of Stonehenge seen from above.

a result of the stone being used for human sacrifices¹, and it is still called the slaughter stone². In fact, scientists have now worked out that the red colour comes from rainwater reacting³ with the iron in the stone over thousands of years.

Stonehenge consists⁴ of several circles, each inside another. At the outside edge of the site are the Aubrey Holes⁵ (named after John Aubrey⁶, the man who discovered them in the 1600s). The washed, burnt bones of human beings

were found in the bottom of some of these 56 holes.

The sarsen stones⁷

The most dramatic⁸ part of Stonehenge is the central circle of giant sarsen stones. Some have now fallen or have been pulled over, but originally they were arranged as a giant circle of upright⁹ stones, crowned¹⁰ with another set of huge sarsens—called lintel stones¹¹—on top. Each group of three stones arranged in this way is called a trilithon¹². Some of the trilithons are still standing. It is hard to imagine how they could possibly have been erected¹³ without the help of some sort of crane¹⁴. You can read how scientists worked out the answer to this riddle¹⁵ on page 39.

1. sacrifice	<i>n.</i>	献祭	9. upright	<i>adj.</i>	竖直的
2. slaughter stone		屠宰石	10. crown	<i>v.</i>	占据……的顶端
3. react	<i>v.</i>	反应	11. lintel stone		过梁石
4. consist	<i>v.</i>	组成	12. trilithon	<i>n.</i>	巨石牌坊
5. Aubrey Holes		奥布里孔	13. erect	<i>v.</i>	竖立
6. John Aubrey		约翰·奥布里(英国 文物收藏研究家)	14. crane	<i>n.</i>	起重机
7. sarsen stone		砂岩漂砾石	15. riddle	<i>n.</i>	谜
8. dramatic	<i>adj.</i>	给人深刻印象的	16. ditch	<i>n.</i>	水道



Part of the circle at Stonehenge. For centuries people were puzzled by how these giant, ancient stones had been moved into position.

