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April



Welcome to Spring

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Articles



In 1708 a correspondent wrote in to the British *Apollo* magazine to ask, “Whence proceeds the custom of making April Fools?” The question is one that many people are still asking today.

The puzzle that April Fool’s Day presents to cultural historians is that it was only during the eighteenth century that detailed references to it (and curiosity about it) began to appear. But at that time, the custom was already well established throughout northern Europe and was regarded as being of great antiquity. How had the tradition been adopted by so many different European cultures without provoking more comments in the written record?

References to April Fool’s Day can be found as early as the 1500s. However, these early references were infrequent and tended to be vague and ambiguous. Shakespeare, writing in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, made no mention of April Fool’s Day, despite being, as Charles Dickens Jr. put it, a writer who “delights in fools in general.”

Many theories have been put forward about how the tradition began. Unfortunately, none of them are very compelling. So the origin of the “custom of making April Fools” remains as much a mystery to us as it was back in 1708.

STONEHENGE

"From Whence Came You?"

STONEHENGE! An ancient structure filled with mystery; the subject of speculation and rumor studied and analyzed by generations of men.

Scientists and producers of fanciful mystique alike have found it a challenge which thwarts the analytical minds and the discerning eyes of man! What is this strange and little known edifice which stands alone and aloof on the Plains of Salisbury?

To quote a statement by Russell A. Herner, author of "Stonehenge: An Ancient Masonic Temple." :I contend that this majestic structure is, in fact, an Ancient Masonic Temple. This structure, or Temple as I will call it, has survived the lapse of time, the ruthless hands of ignorance, and the devastations of war for many centuries."

The author does not equivocate; he does not apologize; he does, however, theorize very convincingly. Let's look at this phenomenon on the open plains of Southwest England. Salisbury Plain is in Wiltshire, England, about seven miles from the town of Salisbury. On the flat plain surrounding Stonehenge, one can see large burial mounds similar to those found in the United States (Moundsville, West Virginia, for example).

Unanswered questions come flooding into one's mind as the mystery of Stonehenge is viewed as it spreads over the plain. How was it built? - What genius supplied the scientific knowledge which made it possible? - When was it built - and by whom? Questions unanswered now, and possibly for all time.

This was no small undertaking which our ancient craftsman took upon themselves. IT WAS MONUMENTAL!! Imagine what they faced!

No high-tech equipment which today's builders use so routinely!

No colleges teaching today's technology and sciences!

Quarries for the special stones located from 20 to 240 miles away!

No beasts of burden - only man's backs and strong limbs.

A river between the quarries and the building site!

A project of a magnitude exceeding the Sears Tower in Chicago or the Bay Bridge in California. For building such modern projects involved many tasks which individually were not difficult. - Building Stonehenge involved many tasks which individually seemed insurmountable! To the average mind today it was the impossible dream! But there it stands for all to see: the improbable, impossible, inconceivable project. Completed by a culture which we consider to be uneducated and without artistic temperament.

At a point directly Northeast of the center of the Altar Stone, there is a break in the circular embankments for an avenue, nearly 40 feet wide which leads to the only element of Stonehenge which is outside this circle. The "Heelstone" is a massive stone 20 feet high with 4 feet buried in the plain. It is planted at an incline of 27 degrees toward the center of the structure. It is estimated to weigh over 35 tons and is 256 feet from the center of the Altar Stone. Just within the embankments is a stone 3 feet thick, 7 feet wide, and nearly 22 feet long. This is thought to be the spot where animals were slaughtered as offerings to Deity.

More is involved in the construction of Stonehenge than meets the casual view. It is located and constructed by an exact scientific formula from which can be derived much scientific data and many astrological readings. Just inside the Aubrey Holes there are four Station Stones forming a rectangle 108 feet 8 inches wide and 262 feet 3 inches long with its long dimension perpendicular to the Northeast axis. At this latitude of 51 degrees 17 minutes North Latitude, lines drawn through these four stones plot the rising and setting positions of the sun and moon at midsummer and midwinter. If Stonehenge were moved as little as 30 miles, this rectangle would have to be laid out as a parallelogram without right angled corners.

At the summer solstice (about June 21) the sun rises directly over the tip of the Heelstone; its rays passing through the Sarsen Arch and striking the center of the Altar Stone. (That one archway is 6 inches wider than all the rest.) With this in mind, picture, if you will, this scene which may - or may not - be purely imaginative. It is night. The darkness is broken only by a candle or two - or perhaps by the dim light of a setting moon. A group of men, marching in double file, enter the Sarsen Circle. They are dressed in ancient costumes of leather and rough, homespun cloth. They carry implements of the builders trades.

In the center of the group, walking between the columns and guided by two of the ancients, is a young man - an initiate. They circumambulate the Sarsen Circle, stopping at strategic points while voices from the darkness instruct and admonish the initiate in their midst. As dawn approaches they pass through the open end of the Trilithons, into the Bluestone Horseshoe, and wend their way Southeastward until the initiate and the guides stand behind the Altar Stone, at its center, facing Northeast. The rest of the group file slowly back until they form a double line from the Altar Stone to the Sarsen Arch at the Extreme Northeast limit of the Circle.

All is quiet. The darkness dims. The initiate has time to think on what he has been told and the things he has seen. The circles of stone

about the group shut out nearly all the light as dawn grows near.

Suddenly a glow appears and a guide turns the initiate's head with the command: "Look to the East!" The entire area is encompassed by two earthen embankments separated by a ditch 17 feet wide. The inner embankment rises 7 feet above the plain to reduce the possibility of cowans and eavesdroppers. The outer mound is approximately 400 feet in diameter.

Within this circle, at a diameter of 286 feet, are 56 pits (called "Aubrey Holes") filled with solid chalk. Several of these have been excavated and found to contain human bones, spawning the assumption that they are burial spots for the leaders or officers of those who used the site. Further toward the center, with an inside diameter of 97 feet 4 inches, is the main part of the structure: a circle of 30 stones nearly 4 feet thick, 7 feet wide, and standing 13 feet 6 inches above ground. At a diameter of 77 feet is a circle of Bluestones, 6 feet 7 inches high in the Southwest, tapering to 2 feet 4 inches in the Northeast.

We now approach the "Inner Sanctum" of Stonehenge. A horseshoe formation of 5 huge stone groups called "Trilithons" with the open end to the Northeast. These mammoth units consist of 3 stones each. Two upright members varying in height from 25 feet 6 inches in the center of the closed end of the horseshoe to 20 feet above ground at the open end. The third stone forms a lintel across the top and is 15 feet 5 inches long (the width of two uprights). These stones are about 3 feet thick and 7 feet wide and, at the top, are carved in the form of a mortise and tenon joint to hold the lintel in place.

Within this impressive group is a second horseshoe of round Bluestones 2 feet in diameter varying in height from 9 feet 3 inches at the closed end to 6 feet 6 inches at the end open to the Northeast. These are set at a diameter of 39 feet. Central to all the other parts of the structure is one of the two most important elements. It lies flat on the ground and is a green stone with flecks of mica throughout. It measures nearly 2 feet thick, 3 feet 3 inches wide and 15 feet 9 inches long. This is the "Altar Stone."

Some mention should be made of the two color elements used in Stonehenge's construction: the green Altar and the two Bluestone units. Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry has this statement: "In all the Ancient Mysteries, this idea was carried out with Green symbolizing the birth of the world, of the moral creation or resurrection of the initiate." Thus we have the theory that the initiate took his obligation on the Green Altar Stone at Stonehenge: "the creation or resurrection of a new life." The Bluestones are thought to be indicative of the blue which is indelibly attached to Masonry. From all ages blue has symbolized

truth, sincerity, and fidelity. Further, Masons met in outdoor Lodges under the blue canopy of Heaven - thus, today, we meet in "Blue Lodges."

A sudden shaft of light bursts through the Sarsen Arch as the sun rises directly over the tip of the Heelstone. It crosses the space within the Circle - strikes the Altar Stone - and shines directly on the face of the Initiate!

LIGHT!!!

The Initiate has received the LIGHT. After further instruction he is admitted to the inner circle of these rough men who, somehow, know many things of science and nature.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Imagery??? Perhaps. - Perhaps not! We may never know; but this is an indisputable fact: the construction of Stonehenge, like the Great Pyramid of Giza, was done with knowledge that would be difficult to find, even today. It is done with scientific skill which was thought to be developed many centuries after these men lived and died.

The "How" and "Why" we may never understand, but the facts remain. An Ancient Masonic Lodge??? Who knows? And, one may ask: "Does it really matter?"

For whatever we choose to believe about Stonehenge, it offers material for intriguing hypothesizing and endless interesting conversations.

My Brothers - I give you the Mystery that is Stonehenge!"

