

Stonehenge

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Form 10A



- Map of Wiltshire showing the location of Stonehenge

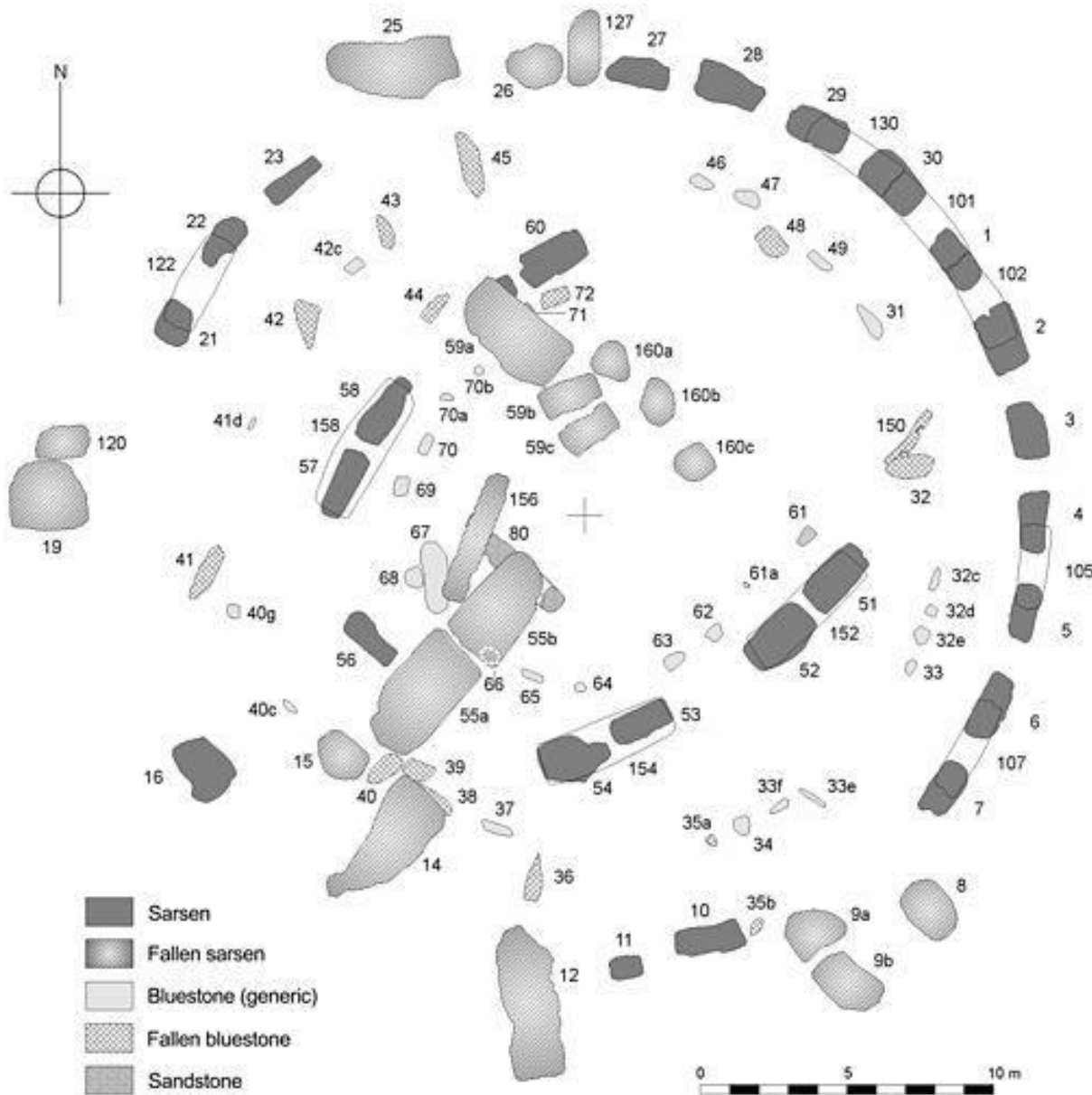
Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument in Wiltshire, England, about 2 miles west of Amesbury and 8 miles north of Salisbury. One of the most famous sites in the world, Stonehenge is the remains of a ring of standing stones set within earthworks. It is in the middle of the most dense complex of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in England, including several hundred burial mounds.



History

- Archaeologists believe it was built anywhere from 3000 BC to 2000 BC. Radiocarbon dating in 2008 suggested that the first stones were raised between 2400 and 2200 BC, whilst another theory suggests that bluestones may have been raised at the site as early as 3000 BC.

Plan of the central stone structure today. After Johnson 2008

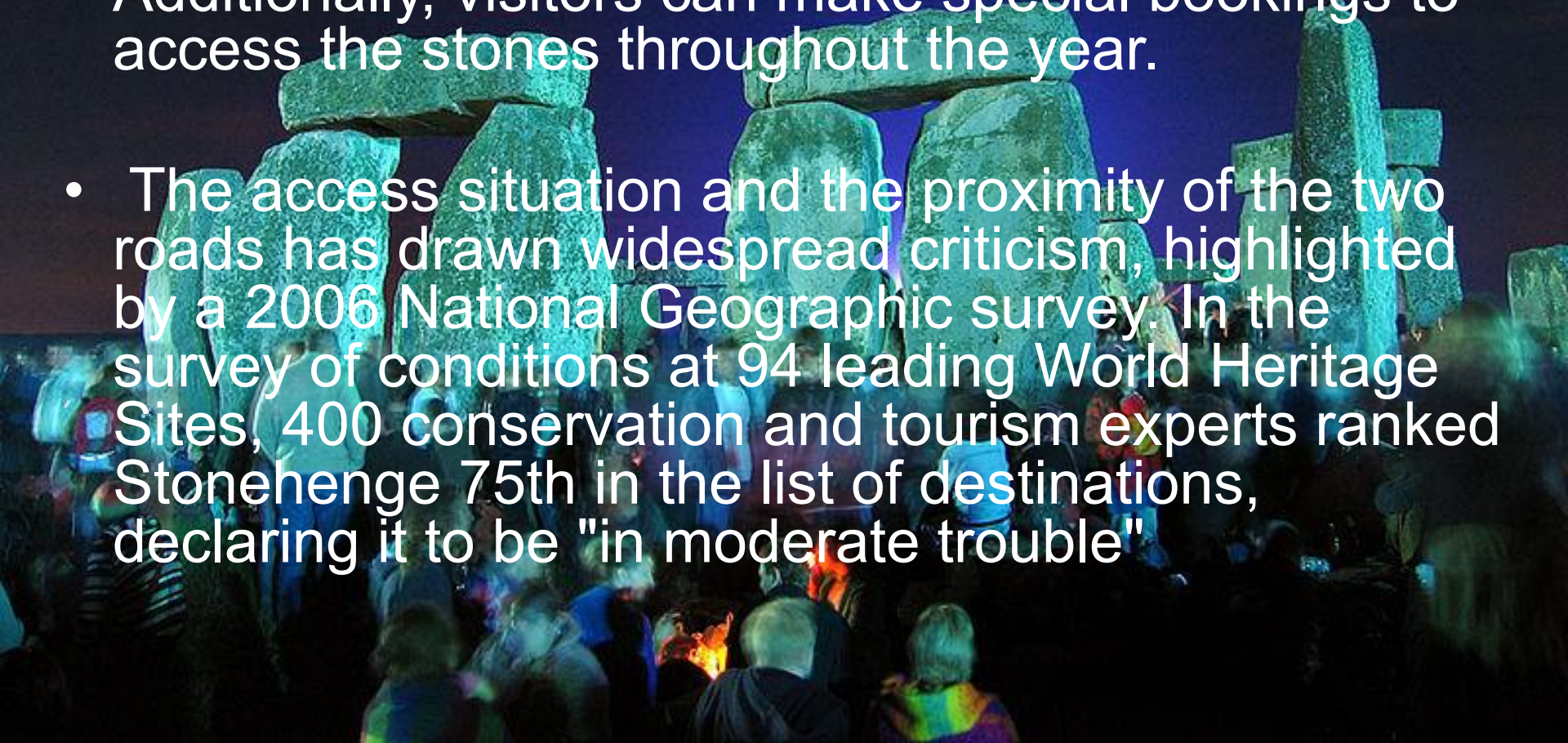


Function and construction

- Stonehenge was produced by a culture that left no written records. Many aspects of Stonehenge remain subject to debate. This multiplicity of theories, some of them very colourful, are often called the "mystery of Stonehenge". A number of myths surround the stones.
- There is little or no direct evidence for the construction techniques used by the Stonehenge builders. Over the years, various authors have suggested that supernatural or anachronistic methods were used, usually asserting that the stones were impossible to move otherwise. However, conventional techniques, using Neolithic technology as basic as shear legs, have been demonstrably effective at moving and placing stones of a similar size. Proposed functions for the site include usage as an astronomical observatory or as a religious site.

- When Stonehenge was first opened to the public it was possible to walk among and even climb on the stones, but the stones were roped off in 1977 as a result of serious erosion. Visitors are no longer permitted to touch the stones, but are able to walk around the monument from a short distance away. Additionally, visitors can make special bookings to access the stones throughout the year.

- The access situation and the proximity of the two roads has drawn widespread criticism, highlighted by a 2006 National Geographic survey. In the survey of conditions at 94 leading World Heritage Sites, 400 conservation and tourism experts ranked Stonehenge 75th in the list of destinations, declaring it to be "in moderate trouble"





- On 13 May 2009, the government gave approval for a £25 million scheme to create a smaller visitors' centre. On 20 January 2010 Wiltshire Council granted planning permission for a centre 1.5 miles to the west and English Heritage confirmed that funds to build it would be available. On 23 June 2013 a road was closed to begin the work of removing the section of road and grassing it over. The centre, designed by Denton Corker Marshall, opened to the public on 18 December 2013.