

New dig suggests Stonehenge was built to align with summer and winter solstice

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Stonehenge. Image: Wikipedia.

(Phys.org) —New excavations conducted by English Heritage appear to confirm a theory that suggests that Stonehenge was built where it was because of natural land formations. Researchers for the team report that new excavations near the huge stones have revealed that natural ridges beneath parts of the embankment that leads to Stonehenge, known as the Avenue, point to the summer solstice in one direction and the winter solstice in the other. This suggests, the team reports that Stonehenge was built where it was because it aligned with important solar events.

The new dig came about as the road that crosses the Avenue has been closed, allowing for excavations beneath where it ran. The A344 road was built right over the top of a portion of the Avenue near the circular

mound that surrounds Stonehenge. That part of the Avenue was destroyed as a result, but the researchers wondered if there might be anything beneath the road that might offer clues as to why the Avenue and Stonehenge were built where they were. Closing the road, permanently, allowed the researchers to remove its surface to examine what lie underneath. There they discovered fissures that had developed naturally due to ice-age melt causing ridges to form. Those ridges, as it turned out, just happened to point to the [summer solstice](#) in one direction and the [winter solstice](#) in the other. Upon closer examination, it was discovered that the Avenue lay along the same lines as the ridges, suggesting that the people that built the Avenue and Stonehenge chose the site because of its unique [geography](#).

Though this new evidence strongly supports the idea that Stonehenge was built where it was because of its association with the solstices, it still doesn't explain why the people that built it did so, or why they went to such great lengths. Researchers with English Heritage suggest that this new information suggests that the monument wasn't built as a means of worshiping the sun, but more as a testament to how special the location was to the people that lived in the area at the time.

As an addendum to the study, the researchers also report that they've identified three holes that appear likely to have been the resting spot of other stones, suggesting that the monument was once fully round. The holes had not been seen before because they'd been covered in green grass. Recently, problems with watering led to some of the grass dying, most noticeably over the holes, allowing for their discovery.

Removing A344 is part of a renovation project that aims to allow visitors to see the monument in a more natural state. Eventually grass will be planted over the parts that were once covered by the road and a visitor center will be erected at a distance to far to be seen by tourists.

More information: via [The Guardian](#)

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