

(Friday, June 14, 1968)

EAN —
FYI for your trip —
Tom —

(by the E.R.P. staff)

Summer Comes to Stonehenge

The summer solstice, Friday June 21, should draw the year's largest crowd of tourists to Stonehenge, the mysterious stone-slab monument in southwest England. The attraction is a Druid ceremony, enacted each June, celebrating the arrival of the Northern Hemisphere's longest day of the year. The ritual is anachronistic: Stonehenge was erected between 1800 and 1400 B.C., while the Druids did not arrive in England until around 250 B.C.

Stonehenge is enclosed within a circular ditch 300 feet in diameter, with a bank on the inner side, and is approached from the northeast by a broad roadway called the Avenue. Within the circular trench the stone slabs are arranged in four series. The two outermost series are circular, the third is horseshoe-shaped, and the innermost (few traces of which remain) is ovoid.

The purpose of Stonehenge has never been established beyond doubt. It has been described as a monument to those slain in battle against Germanic invaders, as the tomb of Boadicea, and as a Druid or Roman temple. At the turn of the present century, Sir J. Norman Lockyer advanced the theory that when Stonehenge was erected the axis through the Altar Stone and Friar's Heel pointed directly to the rising of the sun on midsummer day, as it approximately does now. This theory implied that Stonehenge was designed for sun-worship. Two years ago, Dr. G.S. Hawkins suggested that Stonehenge served as an astronomical observatory.

All of this expert conjecture adds to the mystery and presumably to the allure of Stonehenge. More than 400,000 tourists a year visit it. Only the Tower of London, among Britain's countless monuments, draws more visitors. (R.L.W.)

See Reminder Service of June 16, 1967: "The Vurst Day of Summer."

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~