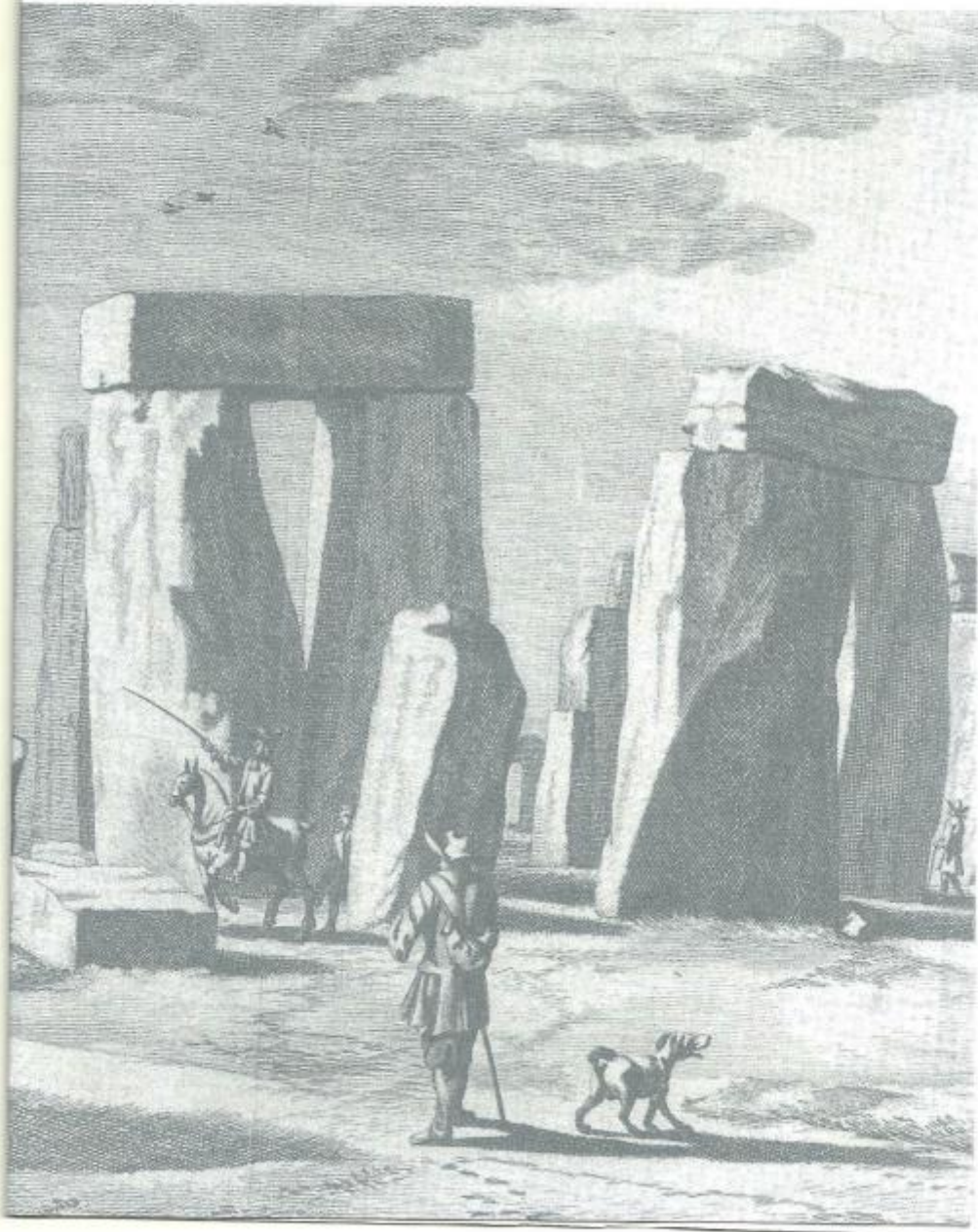


# Drawing Stonehenge



## Introduction

Stonehenge is one of the world's greatest and most enigmatic monuments. People have been visiting it for thousands of years, and today it attracts some 800,000 visitors every year. The prehistoric sites of the Stonehenge region have enthralled artists, writers, antiquarians and archaeologists for centuries. Recently, archaeological excavations have taken place on an unprecedented scale around Stonehenge, discovering surprising new facts about its landscape. Several English universities, including the University of Manchester, have been digging in the Stonehenge Avenue, Stonehenge Cursus, Woodhenge and Durrington Walls henge. The chance to excavate around Stonehenge is a rare privilege and the archaeological team extended this experience to include six artists who were invited to document the dig and explore the practice of archaeology.

## Stonehenge and its Archaeology

The people who built Stonehenge lived in times very different to our own. Biologically, these people were fully modern humans – just like you and me. But they lived without writing, in a period before written history, called prehistory. There are no documents to tell us what these people thought or felt; our only evidence for their lifestyles comes from archaeological investigation. The bank and ditch of Stonehenge was built around 5,000 years ago (c3000 BC). Current archaeological work has found that burnt human remains were buried at the site when the bank and ditch were first built. At least 250 cremations have been found at Stonehenge, making the site the biggest cemetery known from this period in Britain. The most recent cremation dates to around 4,500 years ago. Around the same time that this person was cremated a circle of giant stones was erected in the centre of the henge.

Excavations currently taking place at Stonehenge have revealed how the site worked as part of a much larger complex. There are at least three important henges in the Stonehenge landscape – Stonehenge itself, Durrington Walls henge and Woodhenge. Stonehenge and Durrington Walls are both linked by prehistoric routeways leading to the River Avon. Archaeologists currently working at Durrington Walls now think that the two henges may have been used as one related monument. Excavations at Durrington Walls astonished archaeologists when the traces of a large Neolithic village of around 300 houses were found. This village is the largest known anywhere in North-West Europe for its time. The contrast between Durrington Walls henge, with its evidence of settlement, and Stonehenge with its buried cremations, has led archaeologists to suggest that Stonehenge was once a 'domain of the dead', while Durrington Walls henge was a place for the living. Stonehenge's avenue, is aligned on the midsummer solstice sunrise, while the Durrington avenue lines up with midsummer solstice sunset. Similarly, a timber circle inside Durrington Walls was aligned with the midwinter solstice sunrise, while Stonehenge's massive stones frame the midwinter solstice sunset.

In between Durrington Walls henge and Stonehenge lies Woodhenge. As the name suggests Woodhenge once contained huge wooden posts, set in concentric rings in the centre of the henge. As part of the recent excavation campaign archaeologists have re-excavated it and have discovered the layout of a stone setting, now removed, which replaced the original posts after they decayed. The Woodhenge digs show that Stonehenge represents only part of a landscape of ceremonial monuments, most of which have since disappeared.

One of the earliest, and most mysterious, constructions in the Stonehenge landscape is the Stonehenge Cursus, a massive

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(3km long and 100m wide) rectangular enclosure that lies just to the north of Stonehenge. Current excavations have proved that this site is around 500 years older than Stonehenge. The Cursus remains a puzzling monument in many ways. However, new work has shown that around the time that Stonehenge and Durrington Walls were in use the cursus ditches were dug into again, perhaps to redefine the cursus as a boundary separating the two henges.

Today, Stonehenge still stirs admiration and awe. Although the site is older than the Druids by nearly two millennia, it has been associated with Druidical ceremonies for several centuries. Each solstice thousands of people gather here to celebrate.

## Stonehenge and its Art

Many famous artists from Turner and Constable to Henry Moore have drawn Stonehenge. Works shown here include a print after Turner, works by eighteenth and nineteenth century draughtsmen, and a modern wood engraving by Gertrude Hermes. This exhibition reveals the continuing power of Stonehenge to fascinate and inspire. Historical drawings of Stonehenge date back to 1340, but the very earliest drawings from this landscape are Neolithic and recent excavations have found several fragments of prehistoric drawings inscribed on chalk plaques. These early descriptions of Stonehenge through drawing have their modern counterpart in the drawing practice of archaeologists and artists. At the site today archaeologists make technical drawings to help work out how different layers of material relate to different periods of time. On the Stonehenge digs the artists investigated how drawing is linked

to the modern compulsion to unearth and reconstruct. Both artists and archaeologists use drawing to capture, suspend and collect moments of time, but their techniques and purposes are very different. During the project, practices of both groups were brought together compared and reworked. The resulting artworks uncover overlooked aspects of time, place and story, producing alternative visions of archaeology and creating strange new monuments from the collision between past and future. Extending the boundaries of drawing practice, this exhibition traces our changing curiosity about ancient places.

### Mark Anstee

The Stonehenge Cursus is massive rectangular enclosure built 500 years before Stonehenge. Its function is unresolved, although some have suggested it formed a ceremonial routeway and/or a reserved area where dead bodies were left to rot. In *Curse of the Cursus* theories based on invented evidence are pieced together by a man possessed. A mythological trail with its own iconography begins in the Stonehenge landscape and expands into a narrative including cheap paperback titles, lectures, photos, artefacts and posters.

*Curse of the Cursus (Poster 1)* 2008;  
graphite and coloured pencil on paper; H76 x W56cm

*Curse of the Cursus (Trough 1)* 2008;  
chalk, charcoal and pigment on concrete; L182.5 x W61 x D51cm

### Rebecca Davies

Rebecca Davies' work explores the tension between materials and ideas, often using substances which are unpredictable or cannot be entirely controlled. At Stonehenge, Davies built up a series of visual diagrams recording the activities of archaeologists at work. She was struck by how interactions with excavated material observed a strict protocol. This protocol nonetheless depended on each archaeologist's instinctive feel for materials and his or her ability to imagine the past.

# Stonehenge

*Time and Space, Frozen* 2008; mixed media on paper within Perspex;  
H35 x W45 x D45cm

*An Exploration of Time and Space, Parts One, Two and Three* 2008;  
etchings; H77 x W57cm

## Leo Duff

Leo Duff's work focuses on senses of place as they emerge from specific processes of construction and deconstruction. On the Stonehenge excavations Duff became interested in the shapes left by tools, both in the ground and on paper. She researched how excavation deconstructed the site through constructing its own sequence of layers. These processes went on to influence the techniques used to make her drawings.

*Cursus Assemblage: Mattock* 2008

*Cursus Assemblage: Trowel* 2008

*Cursus Assemblage: Wheelbarrow* 2008

All mixed media; H56 x W129cm

## Brian Fay

Working like an archaeologist, Brian Fay obsessively records and examines traces left by the passage of time. Fay worked at Woodhenge, a prehistoric timber monument close to Stonehenge. At Woodhenge the locations decayed wooden posts are marked by a series of concrete bollards. These bollards are now themselves disintegrating, adding another layer to the archaeology of the site.

*Woodhenge Plaque c1927* 2007

*Black Centre Pillar-Woodhenge c1927* 2007

*Archaeologist Spade-Cuckoo Stone, Stonehenge* 2007

*Green internal pillar* Woodhenge c1927 no 3 2007

*Green internal ring 1-12* Woodhenge c1927 2007

*Green internal pillar* Woodhenge c1927 2007

All digital hand drawing prints on paper; h29.7 x 21cm

## Janet Hodgson

Janet Hodgson makes installations, sculptures and films that explore narrative, time and history. In recent years her work has increasingly brought together the disciplines of archaeology and film to help us think about how we see time. *Time Nap* makes use of an archaeological technique – the 'refitting' of flint – which allows archaeologists to reconstruct the actions performed by prehistoric people as they manufactured tools by fracturing stone.

*Time Nap* 2008; looped DVD; 10 minutes duration

## Julia Midgley

Julia Midgley works within a documentary genre which originates from an British tradition of sending artists to war zones. Working on paper, she draws her subject matter from live observation in the field. At Stonehenge, Midgley moved between the excavations tracing the changing scene in each trench. The drawings produced compress activities taking place over a day or afternoon into a single frame.

*Cursus GC07 trench 26* 2007; pencil and acrylic; h40 x w57cm

*Trench 22* Woodhenge 2007; pencil and acrylic; h40 x w57cm

*Artist's Viewpoint* 2008; mixed media; 58 x 82cm

The artists return to the dig this summer and their work can be followed at: [www.artistsinarchaeology.org](http://www.artistsinarchaeology.org) and in *Second Life* at: <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Phantasm/123/242/86>





## Special Event

*Curse of the Cursus and other Stories from Stonehenge* – a lecture by Professor Julian Thomas, University of Manchester and Mark Anstee, artist.

Friday 10 October, 6.00pm  
Free, but book on  
0161 275 7450 or  
whitworth@manchester.ac.uk

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## Drawing Stonehenge

26 July–23 December 2008  
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image: detail from *Prospects of Stonehenge from the West and South*, 17th century

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