

# Sun Worshippers

People in the past were fascinated by the sun, just as we are today. But some of the beliefs people in the past had about the sun were very different to our ideas today.

In ancient times, people realised how necessary the sun was. Farmers especially depended on the sun for their crops to grow. Many ancient peoples believed the sun was so important that it was a god. They worshipped the sun.

## The People of the Late Neolithic Age

During the late Neolithic Age, about 5000 years ago, people living in Britain and Europe built circles of stone. These may have been places of sun worship. Some were big; some were small. One of the biggest, and probably the world's most famous, is Stonehenge.

If you stand in the middle of Stonehenge at sunrise on the longest day of the year, called the "summer **solstice**", the sun's light will hit a special stone outside the circle. The shadow that forms will fall onto a flat stone in the centre of the circle. Because of this some people think Stonehenge was an ancient **observatory**.



Stonehenge is on Salisbury Plain in England.

But other people say the flat stone was an altar. They think Stonehenge was a place where people worshipped the sun.

It is not certain why Stonehenge was built, but it is a special place. At dawn on summer solstice day, which in the northern hemisphere is either 21 or 22 June, you will find thousands of people waiting for the sun to light up the circle.



Stonehenge today is a popular tourist destination.



During Neolithic times, people from miles around may have gathered at Stonehenge to perform religious ceremonies.