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A new henge discovered at Stonehenge

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Geophysics work on site

History is set to be rewritten after an archaeology team led by the University of Birmingham and the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection and Virtual Archaeology in Austria discovered a major ceremonial monument less than one kilometre away from the iconic Stonehenge.

The incredible find has been hailed by Professor Vince Gaffney, from the University's **IBM Visual and Spatial Technology Centre (http://www.vista.bham.ac.uk)** , as one of the most significant yet for those researching the UK's most important prehistoric structure.

The new henge was uncovered this week, just two weeks into a three-year international study that forms part of the multi-million Euro international Stonehenge Hidden Landscapes Project.

The project aims to map 14 square kilometres of the Stonehenge Landscape using the latest geophysical imaging techniques, to recreate visually the iconic prehistoric monument and its surroundings and transform how we understand this unique landscape and its monuments.

> Professor Gaffney "This finding is remarkable. It will completely change the way we think about the landscape around Stonehenge. "People have tended to think that as Stonehenge reached its peak it was the paramount monument, existing in splendid isolation. This discovery is completely new and extremely important in how we understand Stonehenge and its landscape."

The new "henge-like" Late Neolithic monument is believed to be contemporaneous to Stonehenge and appears to be on the same orientation as the World Heritage Site monument. It comprises a segmented ditch with opposed north-east/south-west entrances that are associated with internal pits that are up to one metre in diameter and could have held a free-standing, timber structure.

The project, which is supported by the landowner, the National Trust, and facilitated by English Heritage, has brought together the most sophisticated geophysics team ever to be engaged in a single archaeological project in Britain.

British partners are the University of Birmingham; the Division of Archaeological, Geographical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Bradford; and the Department of Earth Science at the University of St Andrews. European partners include teams from Austria, Germany, Norway and Sweden.

Professor Gaffney, who this week won the Best Archaeological Book prize at the prestigious British Archaeological Awards for Europe's Lost World: The Rediscovery of Doggerland, added: "Stonehenge is one of the most studied monuments on Earth but this demonstrates that there is still much more to be found."

Professor Wolfgang Neubauer, Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, adds: "This is just the beginning. We will now map this monument using an array of technologies that will allow us to view this new discovery, and the landscape around it, in three dimensions. This marks a new departure for archaeologists and how they investigate the past."

Martin Papworth, of the National Trust, said: "The Hidden Landscapes project is providing cutting edge archaeological survey work that will greatly enhance understanding and improve conservation management for the National Trust on its Stonehenge Estate."

Dr Christopher Gaffney, of the University of Bradford, comments: "The strategy that we are implementing within this project has provided a first glimpse of new and important information regarding the hidden past at Stonehenge. We aim to cover large areas around Stonehenge and we expect this to be the first of many significant discoveries."

Dr Amanda Chadburn, Stonehenge archaeologist at English Heritage, said: "This new monument is part of a growing body of evidence which shows how important the summer and winter solstices were to the ancient peoples who built Stonehenge. The discovery is all the more remarkable given how much research there has been in the vicinity of Stonehenge, and emphasises the importance of continuing research within and around the World Heritage Site."

Mr Paul Garwood, prehistorian at the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity at the University of Birmingham, said "This discovery is of great importance for our understanding of the Stonehenge landscape in the 3rd millennium BC. Its location, a short distance from Stonehenge, and the fact that the two monuments were inter-visible, raises exciting new questions about the complex sacred landscape that existed around Stonehenge when the sarsen and bluestone monument was constructed."

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Notes to Editors

1. The IBM Visual and Spatial Technology Centre is a division of the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity at the University of Birmingham. VISTA supports academic research and application development for spatial analysis, visualisation and imaging using state-of-the-art technology in one of the best-equipped archaeological visualisation laboratories in Europe. VISTA is involved in projects across the world and staff use the unparalleled opportunities provided for VISTA for research, postgraduate and professional training in archaeology, the humanities and associated sciences. Its director is Professor Vince Gaffney.

2. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection and Virtual Archaeology was founded in April 2010 and aims to create a pan-European network of archaeological scientists supporting interdisciplinary research programmes for the development of large-scale, non-destructive technologies for the discovery, documentation, visualisation and interpretation of Europe's archaeological heritage. Its director is Professor Wolfgang Neubauer.

3. The Division of Archaeological, Geographical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Bradford uniquely integrates archaeological sciences, geography, environmental sciences, biological anthropology and forensic sciences in a single profoundly multidisciplinary department bridging the sciences and humanities.

4. Europe's Lost World: The Rediscovery of Doggerland by Vince Gaffney, Simon Fitch and David Smith is published by the Council for British Archaeology.

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For more information:

Rachel Burrows – Head of Communications, University of Birmingham

tel: 0121 414 6681 / email: r.burrows@bham.ac.uk / mob: 07789 921165

Stonehenge research story (/research/our/news/items/Stonehenge.aspx)

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