Durrington

Stonehenge builders' 'bright and airy' homes re-created

More than 20 tonnes of chalk, 5,000 rods of hazel and three tonnes of wheat straw were used

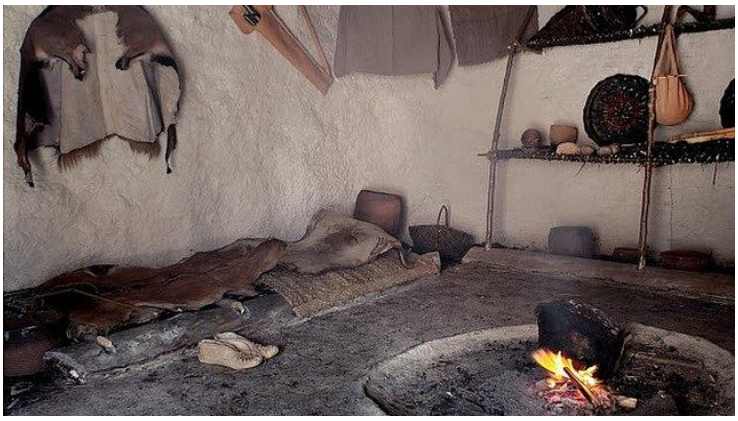
Five Neolithic houses have been recreated at Stonehenge to reveal how the ancient monument's builders would have lived 4,500 years ago.

The single-room, 5m (16ft) wide homes made of chalk and straw daub and wheat-thatching, are based on archaeological remains at nearby Durrington Walls.

Susan Greaney, from English Heritage, said the houses are the result of "archaeological evidence, educated guess work, and lots of physical work." The houses open to the public, later.

The "bright and airy" Neolithic homes are closely based on archaeological remains of houses, discovered just over a mile away from Stonehenge.

Dated to about the same time as the large sarsen stones were being erected, English Heritage said experts believe they may have housed the people involved with constructing the monument.



Sited by the new visitor centre, the houses are furnished with replica Neolithic axes, pottery and other artefacts

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Excavations at Durrington Walls, not only uncovered the floors of houses but stake holes where walls had once stood - providing "valuable evidence" to their size and layout.

"We know for example, that each house contained a hearth and that puddled chalk was used to make the floor," said a spokesman for English Heritage.

"And far from being dark and primitive, the homes were incredibly bright and airy spaces with white chalk walls and floors designed to reflect sunlight and capture the heat from the fire."

'Labour of love'

Using authentic local materials including 20 tonnes of chalk, 5,000 rods of hazel and three tonnes of wheat straw, it has taken a team of 60 volunteers five months to re-create the homes.

Susan Greaney, a historian at English Heritage, said it had been a "labour of love" and an "incredible learning experience" for the volunteers.

"One of the things we're trying to do at Stonehenge is to re-connect the ancient stones with the people that lived and worked in the surrounding landscape," she said.

"Now visitors can step through the door of these houses and get a real sense of what everyday life might have been like when Stonehenge was built."

They are furnished with replica Neolithic axes, pottery and other artefacts.

The houses are the latest phase in a major programme to improve the setting around the monument

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