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**Mission:** Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

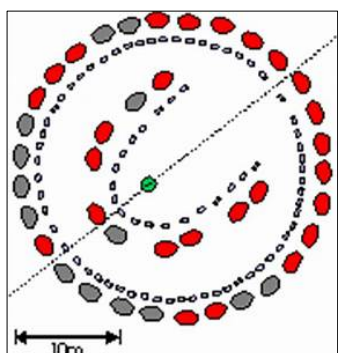
To: Friends and Family everywhere  
From: Cheri and Raven Hill  
Date: December 5, 2020  
Re: Greetings from Raven Hill!

Hello to Everyone!

One thing seems to lead to another at Raven Hill and it happened again this week, as connections between astronomy & Stonehenge surfaced. Patrick Stonehouse, local astronomer and longtime Raven Hill volunteer, shared a photograph he took last month showing faint Saturn on the left and brighter Jupiter on the right and a scary cloud to the far left. Currently, the planet pair are visible low in the southwest after twilight. His photo was published on Space-weather, an online forum for astronomy.

According to the website <https://www.timeanddate.com>, “the year 2020 will end with a special astronomical event: the closest great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 397 years. On the Winter Solstice, December 21<sup>st</sup>, the two planets will almost touch in the sky...Jupiter and Saturn will be separated by a mere 0.1 degrees, and may appear as a single bright “star.” ...It will be the closest great conjunction since July 16, 1623.”

Patrick has been watching these two gas giants drawing closer together in the sky all summer, as Jupiter overtakes Saturn on its faster orbit around the sun.



Layout of Stonehenge: large sarsens & smaller “bluestones”.

Back in 2004, Patrick helped us lay out the “bluestones” of Stonehenge in the Center’s Ancient World exhibit. Our Stonehenge is comparable to the size of the actual monument. The “bluestone” circle and horseshoe are found inside the large trilithons, which would have been located outside our fieldstone circle.

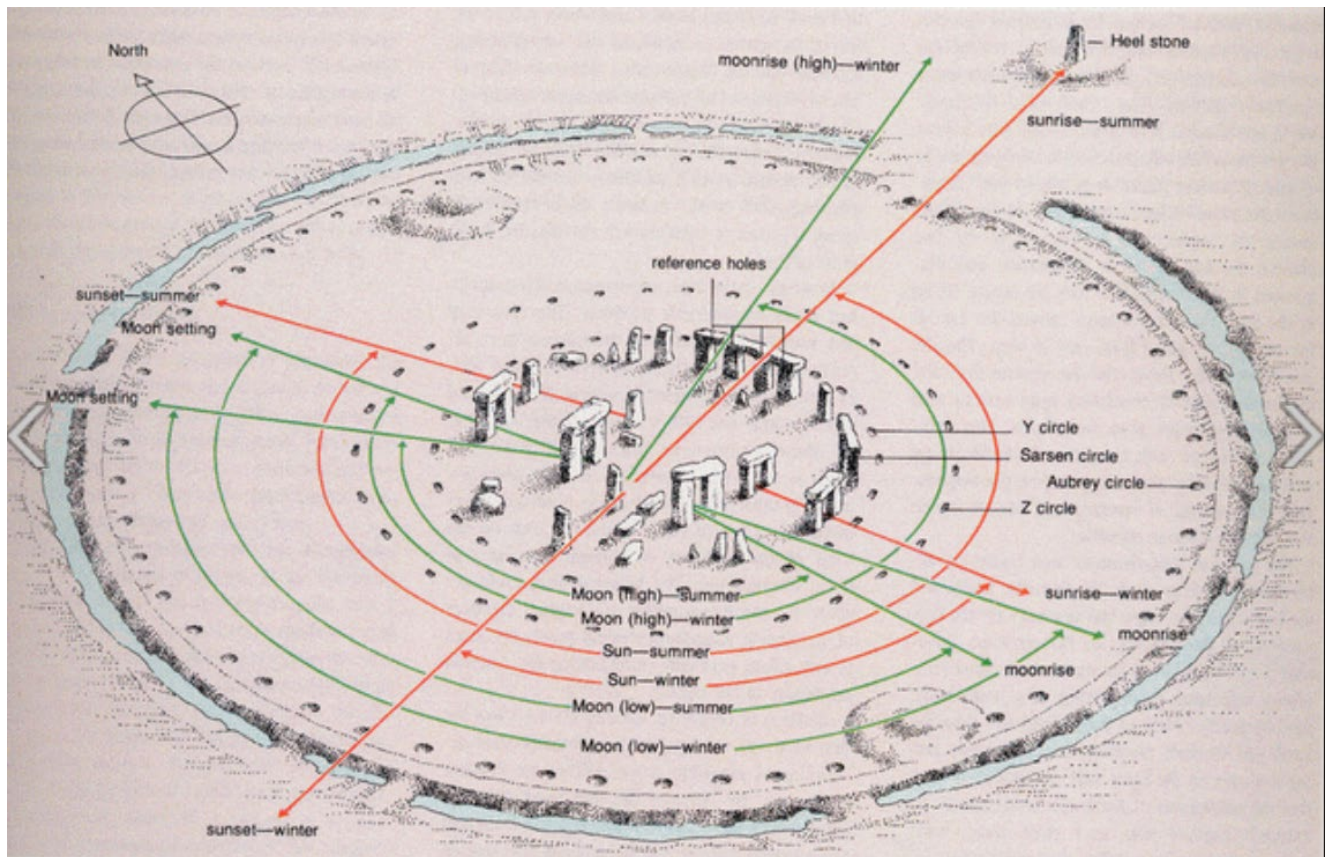
Stonehenge is one of the world’s most famous monuments **and** one of the ‘Seven Wonders’ in Raven Hill’s Ancient World exhibit. “With a history spanning 4,500 years, the actual Stonehenge has many different meanings to people today. It is a wonder of the world, a spiritual place and a source of inspiration. Two types of stone were used at Stonehenge – the larger sarsens (trilithons) and the smaller ‘bluestones’. The sarsens were erected in two concentric arrangements – an inner horseshoe and an outer circle. Stonehenge is a masterpiece of engineering. Building it would have taken a huge effort from hundreds of well-organized people, using simple tools and technologies.” <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk>



As in Patrick’s picture above, the night skies at the Raven Hill’s Schoolhouse are perfect for viewing.



A drone, operated by Charles Dawley, snapped this aerial photo of Raven Hill’s Stonehenge, where the “bluestones” are represented by local fieldstones.



Stonehenge's orientation suggests that ancient astronomers may have used Stonehenge as a kind of solar calendar to track the movement of the sun and moon and mark the changing seasons. <https://www.history.com>

"The prehistoric monument of Stonehenge has long been studied for its possible connections with ancient astronomy. The site is aligned in the direction of the sunrise of the summer solstice and the sunset of the winter solstice." [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



Talk about magical. Jean VanDam took this photo of the girls & the dog at the altar of Stonehenge, as the sun was disappearing behind the tree line.

Raven Hill's Stonehenge is similarly aligned for the Summer and Winter Solstices. From the bonfires of winter to the wonderful sunsets of summer, families have gathered at Raven Hill to celebrate the longest and shortest days of the year. During the 2006 Summer Solstice, several families gathered at Stonehenge in our Ancient World to celebrate and watch the sunset. A magical bonding occurred between three girls and a dog. Everyone was mesmerized by the impromptu dance the girls performed as they slowly moved from the heel stone to the altar.

This December 21<sup>st</sup>, celebrate the Winter Solstice. Venture out, if the night is clear and observe this rare great conjunction of Saturn & Jupiter. Afterwards, delight in the lengthening days and the promise of a new year to come, a 2021 with vaccines in place and eventual control of this crippling pandemic. C.S. Lewis once said, "You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending." Sounds like good COVID-19 advice to me. Stay safe. Wear your mask, watch your distance and wash your hands often. You know that I always enjoy hearing from you, so email [cheri@miravenhill.org](mailto:cheri@miravenhill.org) at any time. You can also text or call my cell—231.675.6025. Take care of yourselves,

Cheri