

FAMILY ACTIVITIES AT THE ROLLRIGHT STONES

The Stones are very well suited to family visits, and while not all our more formal educational activities are not available to all, some can be tried and there are also other things families can do together. What follows are just a few examples – and please remember that some things like climbing on the Stones, flying drones and lighting fires are NOT allowed!

Counting the stones and measuring the Kings Men stone circle:

Counting the stones sounds simple, but it is not – even for adults! The challenge is that if you count the Stones three times and get the same number each go (without having merely remembered the last count!) you can have any wish you like!

But there is no specific number and even if you achieve this, do parents and children get the same number? Whose counts

differ most? Why is it difficult? What does it show - whether parents and children can count, or which stones ‘count’?



Triprouk2011

The diameter of the great ring of sarsens at Stonehenge is 33m: about 43 normal walking paces for a man, 49 for a woman and 60 for an eight-year-old. Do you think the Kings Men is larger, smaller or about the same? Why do the two monuments seem so different?

Work out for yourself how the monuments might have been built and used

In the Neolithic Age before the age of metal and wheels, what equipment was used to move and erect the Stones? What were tools and ropes made of? How could they be used to get the Stones into position? How many people for how long would it have taken to build each monument?

What was the Stone Circle for? It is generally thought to have been for gathering people together, but for what purposes?

How many people could you fit inside the King’s Men stone circle? What buildings and monuments do we have today that serve a similar role?



Shipston on Stour Primary School

Sing a song

No-one is allowed to move the Stones but as you walk to and from the Whispering Knights you could try singing our stone moving chant, which is downloadable from the 'Resources' section of our Learning page of our website (see 'Visit' tab). And if you come on a family open day, there may be an opportunity try out prehistoric methods to move small stones that come from a nearby quarry.

Listen to the Rollright legend and re-enact it :

Download our re-telling of the Rollright legend from the 'Resources' section of our Learning page of our website (see 'Visit' tab) and listen to it as you walk round the Stones. Or go one better: using the words of the legend of the Rollright monuments being turned to stone below, you can re-enact the legend for yourselves (but please don't stay petrified for ever!)



Hattie Kimberley

A King with ambitions to conquer all of England had got as far as the Rollright Stones when up popped a witch. She challenged the King with these words -

*“Seven long strides shalt thou take And if Long Compton thou canst see,
King of England thou shalt be.”*

Off went the King, shouting -

“Stick, stock, stone As King of England I shall be known.”

On his seventh stride the ground rose up before him in a long mound hiding the view. The witch laughed and declared -

*“As Long Compton thou canst **not** see, King of England thou shalt **not** be.
Rise up stick and stand still stone For King of England thou shalt be none;
Thou and thy men hoar stones shall be, And I myself an eldern tree.”*

Drawing and painting:

The stones present the most fantastical shapes and textures, covered with colourful lichens, and they are set in a landscape with fine views over the countryside. Bring paper, pencils, crayons or watercolours for all the family to have a go at capturing the unique character of the Stones and their surroundings.



Eden McDonald

Wildlife watch:

Please leave all wildflowers for everyone to enjoy, but how many different kinds of trees and wildflowers or birds and insects can you spot? How many different plants can you find actually growing ON the Stones? If you are not familiar with their names why not bring an identification book or key to help. If you spot anything unusual, please let us know via the contacts page.



Robin Smitten

Ashes are the commonest trees, growing in amongst larches planted in the last century. Can you spot scots pine, silver birch, field maple and elm? Large birds to look out for include ravens, buzzards, and occasionally red kites, and smaller song birds such as skylarks, yellowhammers and goldfinches, and more commonly, robins, blackbirds and great, blue or long-tailed tits.

In spring look out for lesser celandine, red campion, bluebells, cowslips and dandelions. From early summer look out for swallows and swifts. Enjoy the buttercups, cow parsley, dog rose and wild cherry and elderflowers. Blackcaps and chiffchaffs are also summer visitors. Later in summer and into autumn look for knapweeds, meadow cranesbill and mouse-ear hawkweed; also the berries of hawthorn, blackthorn, rowan and wayfaring tree. In winter look out for wintering birds like redwings, redpoll and siskin, and in the New Year the first signs of life signalled by snowdrops and colts foot.

You can find our current lists of wildflowers and birds in the 'Resources' section of our Learning page of our website (see 'Visit' tab).

Stargazing:

The Rollright Stones are a Dark Skies Discovery Site and the sky, particularly the wonderful starry dark sky on a clear night, is the only aspect that has not changed since prehistoric times. You can visit after dark and enjoy the moon, planets and stars and with a good telescope, distant galaxies. Even with your phone you can get stunning images like this one of the Transit of Venus taken from close to the King Stone by John Vincent in 2011.

Check the Chipping Norton Amateur Astronomy Group for special public stargazing events at the Stones



John Vincent