



**At first glance Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire, UK, is nothing but an ordinary looking English city. It has**

**schools and roads and roundabouts and shopping centres, but it also has an unexpected magic. It was designed in the second half of the 20th century, by a group of architects. It has up to 40 per cent green space, 200 pieces of public art and 22 million trees and shrubs. Its sewage pipes are rumoured to have been installed across a ley line (supernatural**

**invisible highways that criss-cross the globe and link all mystical places), and it is a temple to the Sun.**

*What do you mean 'ley lines'? Ed*

**Never mind that, let's talk about the Sun thing!**

*Oh, sorry... What do you mean 'it's a temple to the Sun'?*

When the brand new city of Milton Keynes was founded in 1967, urban planners intended to build it on a nice neat grid, along north-south and east-west axes. But when lead architect **Derek Walker** looked at the plans, he

had a bright idea. Derek noticed that, by shifting it just a few degrees, **the entire city could be aligned with the sunrise of the summer solstice.** The city itself would become an enormous Sun temple!

After checking the angles with the **Greenwich Observatory** (see our London issue pages 10-11), Derek and his co-workers stood in a field, waiting for the solstice Sun to show up, so they could make sure their calculations were just right. Lo and behold, they were! Derek convinced the engineers to shift the main road, Midsummer Boulevard, so that the Sun would rise and shine down it.

On the summer solstice, the Sun's rays bounced off the railway station windows at the other end.

### PYRAMID PILGRIMS

Pyramids are believed to symbolise the shape of the Sun's rays in solid form. One example of a pyramid-shaped Sun temple is **The Pyramid of Khafre** at Giza in Egypt. It was built around 2570 BCE behind the **Great Sphinx**. At the spring equinox the Sun rises over the sphinx's right shoulder, illuminating both the sphinx and the pyramid and merging their shadows to symbolise union.

In 2012, in parkland at the eastern end of Midsummer Boulevard, a six-metre sculpture known as **Light Pyramid** was designed and built by sculptor **Liliane Lijn**. Every year pilgrims come to behold the crimson Sun rising over the elegant monument – a Sun temple inside a Sun temple!

Winter visitors to Milton Keynes don't miss out either. The city has a beautiful winter solstice tree circle. Built of tall and well-cared-for conifers, it has an opening that allows the winter Sun to flood the area with light at sunset on the shortest day.

Modern temples like those at Milton Keynes show us that humans still have an important relationship with the Sun, just like our ancestors did. Next time you see a Sun temple, look for lots of symbolic circles and triangles.

**Maybe you could even make your very own?**

**We want to see your Sun temple designs. Please send your photos to the usual address on the readers' page of the AQUILA website and we'll share as many as we can.**



**Did you enjoy reading about marvellous Milton Keynes? Then let's check out some more Sun-celebrating structures:**

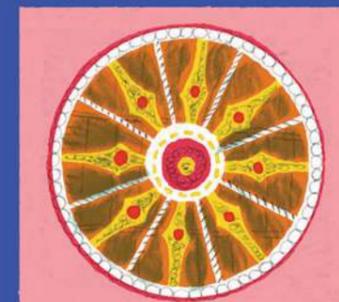
Light Pyramid isn't England's only Sun temple – not by a long chalk. The most famous, **Stonehenge**, is located on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire. On the summer solstice, the Sun rises behind the **Heel Stone** in the northeast part of the horizon. Its first rays shine into the heart of the stone circle. Hundreds turn up every year just to see it.



At **Machu Picchu** in Peru, at midday on the autumn equinox, sunbeams hit the giant **Intihuatana Stone** and cast no shadows. *Intihuatana* means 'the place where the Sun gets tied'.



In India, the **Konark Sun Temple** contains a stone-carved, wheel-shaped sundial. It was created in the 13th century and has a sculpture of the Hindu Sun god Surya towering over it. You can use this sundial to tell the time to within 1 minute.



**Newgrange** in Ireland is a 5,200-year-old Neolithic temple. Its rocks were carved and designed by people with a great understanding of maths and astronomy. During the winter solstice, the rising Sun shines all the way along the passage, bathing a chamber with light. This was originally timed to happen exactly as the winter Sun rose on the shortest day.



**Jantar Mantar**, in Jaipur, India, is one of the world's largest sundials. It's 22.6 m tall and it was built sometime around 1724, by Maharaja Jai Singh II. It tells the time accurately to within two seconds!

