was discovered only in 1998 at Holme-Next-to-the-Sea in Norfolk, Maeshowe, on the Orkney Islands north of Scotland. Seahenge has been dated to between April and June 2050BC. These structures were built to receive a shaft of sunlight into their central chambers at dawn on winter solstice.

The meridian line in churches

Medieval Catholic churches were also built as solar observatories. The clergy needed astronomy to predict the date of Easter, and built observatories into cathedrals and churches throughout Europe. Typically, a small hole in the roof admitted a beam of sunlight, which would trace a path along the floor. The path, called the meridian line, was often marked by inlays and zodiacal motifs. The position at noon throughout the year, including the extremes of the solstices, was always carefully marked.

The introduction of Christmas

In the year 274AD, solstice fell on 25th December. Roman Emperor Aurelian proclaimed the date as "Natalis Solis Invicti," the festival of the birth of the invincible sun. In 320 AD, Pope Julius I specified the 25th of December as the official date of the birth of Jesus Christ. In 325AD, Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman emperor, finally changed the ancient solstice celebrations into Christmas, announcing that it would be an immovable feast, officially celebrated as the birth of Christ. Even so, Christmas did not become widely popular until the 19th Century.

St. Lucia

According to legend, Saint Lucia was a martyr in the persecutions of Diocletian at Catania in Sicily in 304AD. Prior to the calendar reform – from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1582 – Saint Lucia's feast day fell on the shortest day of the year, the winter solstice. In some countries, St. Lucia's Day is still celebrated with the