
Subject: Stonehenge: Cultural Background
Posted by [jmm](#) on Thu, 30 May 2013 04:05:12 GMT
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Note: The following article is not intended to present any new concepts concerning Stonehenge, but only to give the reader a better backround concerning the people who built it.

Among the pantheon of gods worshipped by the ancient Celts, one of the most important was the sun god, named "Bel". Half of the year in the Celtic calendar was named "Beltaine" in honor of Bel. The ancient symbol of Bel can still be seen in many places in the modern world, on churches, buildings, tombstones. Bel's symbol was what we call today the Celtic cross (a cross surrounded by a circle), although it was Bel's sign for probably a thousand years or more before the time of Christ and before its adoption as a symbol of Christ by the Church. So we can say that the movements of the sun were watched with great interest by the ancient Celts.

Another fact which is of interest about these people is that although they had writing, a script called Ogham, they did not trust many things to the written word because they were wary that anyone who was not accepted by them could acquire their knowledge. And so they committed most of their knowledge to memorization. They used rhyme and rhythm as a sort of Cyclical Redundancy Check on the content of their memorization. Their scholars had to study their various fields for many years to acquire a title which would be the equivalent of "doctor" today. Indeed they may have been the first to set up a system of colleges or universities. Later, after Christianity arrived, Irish monks founded the universities of Iona in Scotland and Oxford in England.

One modern survivor of this system of memorization is the seanachai (shan-a-kee) or storyteller. These storytellers had to memorize hundreds of historical and traditional tales which were retold at various prescribed times of the year. At the end of each telling the seanachai would swear an oath that he had not added or altered any part of the story. The ancient Celts were also known to have a great facility with foreign languages and with oratory.

Another point that many people are not aware of is the fact that Stonehenge is not an isolated phenomenon. There are many other similar sites in the British Isles (Scotland, Ireland and Wales) and on the continent of Europe which reveal a continuity of development which eventually led to

Stonehenge. Another associated phenomenon is the system of old Celtic pathways running in precise straight lines over much of Britain and other sites on the continent of Europe. These pathways are called ley lines and are periodically punctuated by standing stones. In addition these ley lines also have astronomical alignments. One very good book on this subject is John Michell's "Secrets of the Stones".

In his book Mitchell mentions "...statements by Caesar and other old historians about the great traditions of astronomy and philosophy held by the Druids and taught in their famous schools...". Furthermore, he says:

"Both leys and ancient astronomers had been dismissed by archaeologists as being against the 'historical evidence'. Now both had been vindicated by the astronomers' discovery that the significant sun and moon alignments at Stonehenge pointed to a succession of other ancient sites over distances of many miles and with stretches of ancient track in between. Stonehenge was no longer an isolated monument but the centre of a vast system of astronomically placed stations extending far across the Wessex landscape, almost as the Rev. E. Duke saw it a century earlier, a 'giant orrery' spread out over Salisbury Plain.

Nor is it the only such system. Its outlying stations must have served as mark points for other astronomical centres, and thus the entirety of Neolithic 'ritual' sites in northern Europe may be seen as the relic of an ancient scientific enterprise, conducted over many centuries and presumably directed by a central college of astronomer-priests whose authority was everywhere accepted. Archaeologists for some unapparent reason had been struggling hard to break the popular association of megalithic monuments with Druidism, when suddenly science restored the Druids to their old temple, Stonehenge, wiser and more venerable than before."

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bonnie!jmm

Subject: Re: Stonehenge: Cultural Background
Posted by [lmc](#) on Thu, 30 May 2013 04:05:14 GMT
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It is my understanding that the earliest dated work on Stonehenge I is dated from ~2775 BC by "megalithic peoples" living at that time across all of western Europe. The work through its various stages lasted about 1200 years, bringing the latest date for construction at Stonehenge to ~1575 BC. Megalithic building seems to have ended across all of Europe at about that time. A shift in culture occurred, bringing in the cultures known as the Beaker People, the Battle Ax and Corded Ware people (it is unknown whether these were invaders, or just culture changes). One fairly certain invasion of the Urnfield Culture did occur between 1200BC and 700BC.

At about 800BC the Pre-Celtic culture arrived in waves from central Europe. To quote one author, "The Celts were not a people to band together in peace and indulge in the slow work of erecting megaliths; their efforts at construction were limited to hill-forts to protect themselves from one another."

Hawkins in "Stonehenge Decoded" is adamant; the Celts did not build Stonehenge. To them, it was probably at least as mysterious as it is to ourselves.

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