

Archeoastronomy Of Lundy Sacred Island Of Annwn?



Archeoastronomy Of Lundy - Sacred Island Of Annwn?



Three miles long and half a mile across, the tiny granite island of Lundy lies 12 miles to the north-west of Hartland Point off the coast of North Devon. Lundy is pounded on her Western side by the Atlantic and faces the busy Bristol Channel on her Eastern board. A haven for Kittiwakes, Gannets, Puffins and seals, Lundy emanates a sense of otherworldliness and peace, remote in her oceanic isolation from civilisation. With just one pub, the Marisco Tavern, the Church of St Helena, a single shop and a scattering of cottages, Lundy has featured rarely in the field of 'Earth Mysteries' and attention to our islands is perhaps overdue.

The only inhabitants are Landmark Trust employees (numbering around 14 people). Whilst working on Lundy this summer I spoke with the National Trust Archaeologist who recommended that I read a series of articles written by R. W. E Farrah, an ex lighthouse keeper on Lundy. Farrah's extensive and methodical fieldwork is contained in two particularly interesting articles published by Lundy Field Society in their annual

newsletters. 'The Megalithic Astronomy of Lundy: Evidence for the Remains of a Solar Calendar', (Lundy Field Society Annual Report 1992: No 42) and the 'Symbolic Alignment of St Helena's Church' (Lundy Field Society Annual Report, 1992, No 43). These articles reveal some of this island's archaeological treasures and continue to be the subject of lively debate within Lundy Field Society, the Parish of North Devon and amongst the islanders themselves.

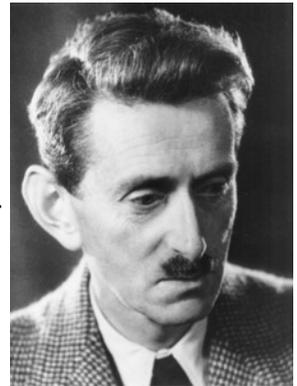


In this article, I hope to summarise the recent fieldwork undertaken by the National Trust Archaeological Survey and Farrah's imaginative conclusions supported with his meticulous field work in which he has been advised by Gerald Hawkins (Mind-steps to the Cosmos) and Professor A Thom

(Megalithic Sites in Britain; (Oxford - 1967).

The article is extracted from research towards a book on Lundy as Annwn, its mythology and sacred sites.

The conclusions drawn from the positioning of these stones are that they constitute a solar calendar on Lundy. Farrah shows 6 to have solar alignments and the remaining 3 similar declinations and may be meridian markers. Stone 9 is a recent find and provides Farrah's 'missing link' to his solar calendar theory. This stone is aligned to the mid-winter sunset. Stones 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8 are recorded by the National Trust Archaeological Survey and 3, 5 and 9 are previously unrecorded.



Alignments of Stones

Farrah's criteria for alignment are: two markers - foresight and backsight for observer. For single marker sites, the alignment is taken from the orientation of the axis of the stone. The axis being the narrower width of the stone rather than the broad face. If no clear axis is found, then alignment is not deduced.

It would be difficult to dispute his findings and further investigations on Lundy could be revealing Islands as Prototypes of Megalithic Mainland Calendars.

Farrah makes the point that a solar calendar, such as his theoretical find on Lundy could possibly have originated on islands and have been carried to the mainland by early sailors.



Robin Heath's recent book *The Key to Stonehenge* (1997) identifies Lundy Island as an important place in relation to Stonehenge which is on the same latitude as Lundy. It is possible that the culture responsible for Lundy's stone calendar took this knowledge to the mainland and was

implemented in the construction of Stonehenge.

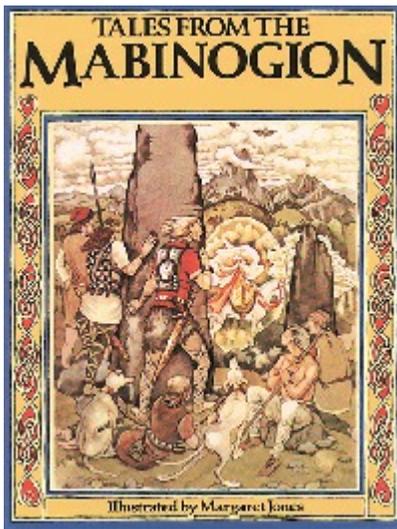
Ian Armit's *Archaeology of the Western Isles*, reviewed in *Northern Earth* (No: 67) also outlines the importance of islands as sacred places with highly developed cultures.

The remarkable monuments found on Lewis, Anglesey, Malta and Easter Island are testaments to the unique lifestyle of islanders. Such locations nurture introspection and the vast horizons instil a familiarity with celes-

tial bodies. The changing courses of the sun and moon on such islands as Lundy, unobscured by topographical features would make placing of menhirs reasonable, the stones perhaps acting as a calendar for crop planting. The books and articles referred to in this article remind readers of the archaeological importance of islands. Being, as they are, on the very edge of the 'civilised' world, islands such as Lundy retain an other-worldliness. Inward looking culturally and spiritually, islanders have left a wealth of ancient monuments which can reveal much about the beliefs of early man.

The assumption that megalithic culture in the form of standing stones and circles originated on islands would, of course, be difficult to prove but is an interesting idea nonetheless.

Islands as 'Otherworld' - Lundy as Annwn



Ian Armit's Archaeology of the Western Isles, Farrah's Astroarcheology of Lundy and Robin Heath's Key to Stonehenge are directing our attention to these island outposts of civilisation. In mythology islands feature as sacred places, or as entrances to the 'otherworld'. Lundy, in particular holds an importance to the Welsh as Annwn, the realm of Gwyn Ap Nudd and the place to which departed souls go. The most popular holder of the title 'Annwn', is of course, Glastonbury Tor. There may however, be a good case for Lundy as Annwn and the island is mentioned in the Welsh Epic The Mab-

inogion.

An interesting story in support of this theory occurred whilst we were working on Lundy last summer. The Church of St Helena on Lundy is also the subject of interesting debate within the pages of the Lundy Field Society journals. The symbolic orientation of St Helena's and the circum-

stances of its construction are the subject of ongoing research by R.W.E Farrah. Farrah's theory is that the Reverend Heaven was in possession of esoteric knowledge which was incorporated into the construction of the church and its orientation. Whilst working on Lundy last summer my partner and I were invited by bell ringers on Lundy to ring the recently restored peal of eight. I was interested to learn that the tenor bell bears the Latin inscription:

"Animus cedentibus dico valente" meaning: "Farewell to the departing souls".



Lundy Church

Lundy then as Annwn, is an interesting proposition and the work being carried out currently by the National Trust Archaeological survey, combined with Farrah's researches and

earth mystery field work will no doubt reveal more of this islands secrets.

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