

ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN STONEHENGE BLUESTONE SHOCK

'Got those Preseli Blues, everybody's talkin', 'bout those Preseli Blues'

from *Those ol' Preseli Blues*, recorded by Bettws y Smith, and the Bluestones (*Paramount*, 1923)

It appears you can get away with almost anything in contemporary archaeology. One can for once agree with Jacquetta Hawkes who reckoned that *'Every generation gets the Stonehenge it deserves'*. In this generation one may gain permission to dig the hallowed turf of Stonehenge itself provided you have a theory that is zeitgeisty enough to woo the public. But does it hold water?

I am, of course, talkin' 'bout my gg..g.g.eneration of archaeologists, the *Geoffrey Wainwright Experience*, with Geoffrey himself on Mediaphone, accompanied by Tim Darvill on Vibes. Their opening track? *"Cutting the First Sodds for 50 Years at Stonehenge"*

Compared with anything that has gone before in recent Stonehenge history, this 'New Improved' theory of why the bluestones were so important to the builders of Britain's National Temple must appear as pure affrontery to 'the lunatic fringe of dotty archaeology', who have always thought that, free from the dogma that lurks in academic disciplines, they had sole rights to investigate whatever questions they liked on archaeological matters. In an apparent surge of 'if you can't beat them, join them' mainstream archaeology now boldly appears to be straying into traditional loony fringe territory. We must welcome them - they may be healed by the process.

The media love it, of course, fawning all over the two heroes of this piece of Stonehenge 'science'. It is the perfect media story. Stonehenge sells - and is thus like a magnet to the media. Everyone knows about Stonehenge (except they don't really know very much about it at all), it's a World Heritage Site and it attracts nearly a million visitors a year who all come, pay their £5, and then learn very little about it. Despite all this *brouhaha*, the monument retains its title as one of the best solstice detectors in the known world.

The Heal Stones

The theory put forward by these two adventurous archaeologists is that the Preseli Bluestones were a vital part of Stonehenge because they have healing properties, and this made it well worth while to bring at least 80 of them (some weighing in at over 4 tons) from the outcrop in the Preseli Hills of West Wales to Stonehenge - a distance, as the crow flies, of 135 miles.

On the BBC News on 31st March 2008, Geoffrey Wainwright told his viewers that, "following extensive research at the site of the Bluestones" there was "much evidence" for the healing properties of the bluestones, citing "healing springs" throughout the Preseli region. Is this then the breakthrough that the world has been waiting for, the reason why the Bluestones were so vital to the builders of Stonehenge? Since this mainstream event I have been phoned, emailed and harangued by friends and media alike concerning my opinion on the matter. "Surely", they say, "you must sanction readers/viewers to be highly cautious in accepting this latest example of faulty archaeologic." Not true. I applaud it.

I regret that I have had to tell each and every one of these searchers after truth that our good friends Darvill and Wainwright are, in my incredibly humble opinion, onto the very crux of the whole Stonehenge matter, asking just the right questions, but that they are as yet fumbling with the evidence, the data. And they appear rather vague concerning certain aspects of their research. So, let me pursue their theory to its logical conclusions and we will discover that the loony fringe and the mainstream archaeological view can meet up and even shake hands in this affair. I'll show you healing!

Some facts need first to be provided as anchor points in the landscape any reader will need to walk through in approaching Stonehenge Nirvana. As I have lived in this self-same Preseli region for nigh

quarter of a century, and walked the very same region intensively while studying its prehistoric past, I have never, ever, come across any firm evidence to suggest that the bluestones were revered in recorded history, let alone prehistory, as having healing properties any more than wells throughout the whole of Old Albion were.. There is nothing in the Welsh National Library, no local anecdotes passed down through families, no farmers putting their sheep on fancy diets involving ground up bluestones or spring fed troughs that thenceforth produce golden fleece. And the health statistics of the Preseli region are rather below average compared to other regions of Wales. In terms of life expectancy and proneness to the commonest diseases that see our locals off the planet before their customary three score years and ten, Preseli isn't a noted hot spot. So first one needs to see and study Wainwright's "much evidence" because this author doubts that there is very much. I can not find anything. Call me a cynic by all means, but this is not a good start to the theory.

Those Wide and Empty SPACES

Secondly, there are vast numbers of springs throughout the Preseli region, 'tis true, and these are largely due to the fact that it is often raining in Wales and that the geology of the Preselis is complicated and contains many interfaces and fractures ideal for water to seep along to later emerge as springs. But healing springs? There are, in fact, two major sources of stones for Stonehenge, the Bluestones from Wales and the much larger sarsen stones, the 'grey wethers' that were fetched from the Marlborough Downs near Avebury, a location similarly endowed with large quantities of rainfall and also riddled with fissures and faults that produce such wonderful springs as Swallowhead.

An even worse follow on to Wainwright's theory is that he stated on TV that he arrived at his results following "extensive research" in the Preseli region. I walk and survey this area quite often, and have several megalithomaniac buddies who roam throughout this region. I know quite adequately well the farmer who owns the parcel of land upon which the Preseli Bluestone outcrop sits brooding and smouldering and awaiting its Champollion . On more than one occasion, Hwyl has taken me and my theodolite (which in fact is a theodoheavy) up to the site in the bucket of his tractor. Inelegant, I know, and hardly a transport of delight, yet highly effective. I have even taken an entire TV film crew up the steep slopes of Carn Meini in the bucket of this tractor, their 'Chelsea Tractor' proving wholly inadequate for the task. Now this farmer tells me that the two able researchers have, to his ample knowledge, "spent almost no time" at the very spot where all the fuss began, Carn Menyn, the cairn which Petrologist Dr H H Thomas identified in 1923 as being the source of the vast majority of the Stonehenge Bluestones.

So I am confused, and perhaps we need to know just where and when the extensive research was going on in the Preselis, from 2001, because apparently very little was going on at the epicentre of the Bluestone Mystery. The much vaunted SPACES project (*Strumble - Preseli Ancient Communities & Environment Study*), heralded in the current edition of *Heritage in Wales* magazine (CADW, spring 2008) tells its reader very little concerning where and at what level intensity the study was undertaken.

At this point, I want to make it perfectly clear that I have no personal grievances with either Darvill or Wainwright. I'm not at all envious that they have attracted so much publicity for their theory, for history has turned vicious on theories about megaliths that prove increasingly doubtful as time passes. And I'm so very happy that they are focussing on what I understand to be the Big Issue relating to understanding Stonehenge. But my final point in this analysis of the media coverage leads to a massive piece of faulty logic. When Wainwright tells his viewers that the bluestones have healing properties and that's why they were taken to Stonehenge and subsequently why so many people went to Stonehenge - to "get healed", it does rather beg the question as to why all those prehistoric seekers after healing did not instead tramp to West Wales to enjoy a surfeit of bluestone water alongside those near immortal indigenous tribes-people living in perpetual health, rather than lug 80 stupendously heavy stones off to an unbuilt Stonehenge building site.. These

stupendously healthy welshmen and women lived at one of the largest prehistoric settlements on Western Britain, the unfortunately named, 'Glandy Cross Complex' (*see next page*). Perhaps it was a prehistoric precursor of that dreaded *Bluestone Leisure Complex*, currently under construction nearby and massively contentious in Pembrokeshire cultural circles.

The reader may be perplexed how, after this exposure of the argument so far, I retain genuine approval for what is actually driving this research. So let me explain where this is all leading, beginning with for three important factoids:

(a) That the Bluestones were the first stones to be fetched to the present Stonehenge site has been known about since 1955.

This fact was established via conventional archaeological methodology by the last of the great Old School archaeologists, Professor Richard Atkinson (Cardiff) in his 1955 book *Stonehenge*, which remains seminal work on the archaeology of the site. Bluestone chippings from the polishing and shaping of these stones upon their arrival were found beneath the silt of forty centuries in the ditch and Aubrey holes. Simply, they fell in first. Carbon dating subsequently affirmed Atkinson's premise, but pushed his dates way back from his 50s vision following the recalibration of carbon dating to account for its earlier errors.

(b) The location of the Bluestone site has been known to high accuracy since 1923.

Dr H H Thomas's 1923 research showed that all of the Bluestones at Stonehenge came from a very small area within the Preseli Hills near Mynachlog Ddu (*Black Monastery*). Originally, there were an estimated 81 or 81 stones brought to Stonehenge from Preseli. Most of the stones came from the outcrop now called Carn Menyn, but some were identified as coming from Carn Beca, and Carn Alw, both less than two miles away.

(c) Within two miles the Stonehenge Bluestone outcrop may be found the remains of one of the largest prehistoric settlements in Western Britain, the Glandy Cross Complex.

Stone circles, cemeteries, burial chambers, complex villages all point to this area holding prime social importance contemporary with the early building stages of Stonehenge. Archaeologist Dr 'Paddy' Figgis's book, *Prehistoric Preseli* is warmly recommended in making clear the immense importance of this region of the Preselis.

Asking the Right Questions

Having established these things, it is now left for me to show just how important is Wainwright's and Darvill's research, in particular to readers like myself, who are fascinated by prehistoric research but do not enjoy the advantages conferred by an archaeological background. The normal name for such people, happily and freely given by archaeologists themselves, is 'the loony fringe'. Right now, this 'loony fringe' urgently needs more archaeological evidence to complete the mysterious and complex jigsaw of Why Stonehenge? - what caused prehistoric chieftains in Wessex to undertake the concept, building, organising and funding of Stonehenge.

Working with media people for the past 15 years on matters *megalithique*, I am impressed by their sharp vision as to which are the vital questions that need answering concerning Stonehenge. These are, as was once directly put to me over lunch by leading documentary maker Richard Sattin,

1. Why was Stonehenge built?
2. Why is Stonehenge built where it is?
3. Why were the Bluestones so important in its construction?

Although I argued that to answer question one you needed to have first answered two and three, this succinct list is essentially correct and states precisely what we, the great public, are dying to find out about Stonehenge.

Now, Wainwright and Darvill are currently making much noise about having answered question three. It's good that there is finally a theory emerging from archaeology at all, where before there was none. Hats off, gentlemen! But I will later show that question three may readily be connected to the other two questions in the list above. What is included within the present data would benefit from an injection of some highly objective evidence - for surely no-one can argue concerning the location of either site? It is a given, a fixed point of reference. The latitude and longitude of the Preseli Bluestone region and of Stonehenge can be determined with an £80 GPS device or an OS map in minutes, by anyone.

Let me attempt to take the reader through the route that can provide a link between their theory of 'healing stones' and an enlarged model of the two sites that answers the remaining two questions concerning Stonehenge.

Heel Stone and Heal Stones



I'll begin with Healing. Many people will tell you that the root of this word stems from Whole or wholing, and there is not a person amongst the health profession that would not confirm that health is about being in balance, whether that balance is the body's acid / alkali balance, or its potassium / sodium balance. In those superstitious middle ages and before, the 'balance of humours' formed a major plank in medicine, as did the the concept of the Sacred Marriage or *Heiros Gamos* within alchemy. A look at any alchemic text of the 15th to the 18th century and one will reveal a consistent collection of curious engravings accompanying the text where Kings and Queens, men and women are symmetrically arranged, and sometimes merged hermaphroditically as 'The Work' progresses and the alchemist finds a perfect balance between his (or her) inner male and female qualities. In the powerful illustration (left) the male and female forces are shown united as King and Queen, standing astride dragons and serpents, flanked by 'trees' of 13 suns and 13 moons and crown with a final rayed sun(?). A common factor of many of these engravings is that they contain graphics of the Sun and Moon as the archetypal Male and Female 'gods'.

Now although the archaeology profession has been reticent to embrace the link between megalithic monuments and intense prehistoric study of the motions of the sun and moon, it nevertheless exists and it will reveal itself to anyone who has the required background and experience to investigate these sites unshackled to the orthodoxy and protectionism that abounds in this particular area of archaeology in the UK. The kindest thing one can say concerning this matter is that archaeologists backed a couple of wrong horses in the late 60s, then backed another in the 80s. Stuck in their archaeoastronomical cul de sac, they cannot see that they must retire the horses, clean out the stables, turn around, walk out and try a different route.

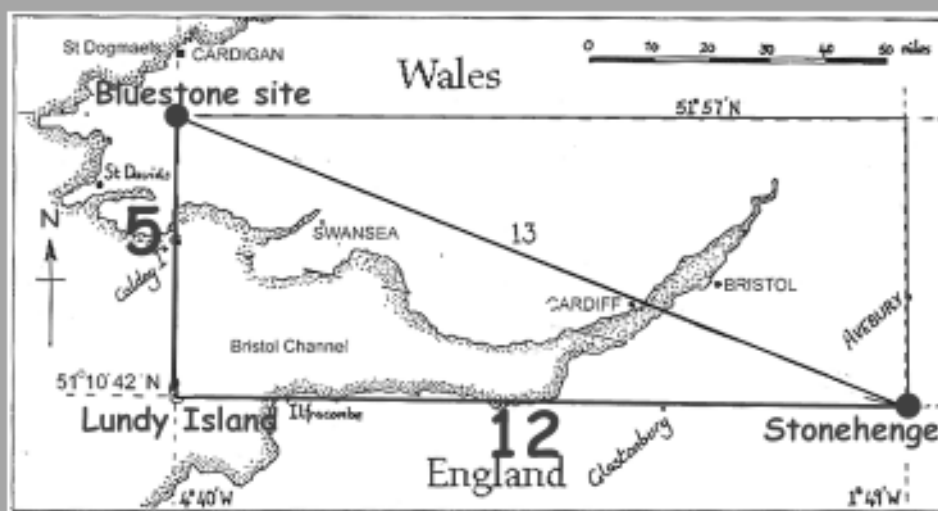
Unfettered by preconceived ideas, several stunningly qualified people have meantime shown the rest of us how Stonehenge responds with precision to the motions of both the Sun and the Moon. In many books nearly all written within those astonishing 60s, by Alexander Thom, Professor Sir Fred Hoyle, Gerald Hawkins, Cecil Newham and latterly by this writer, to *integrate* these motions.

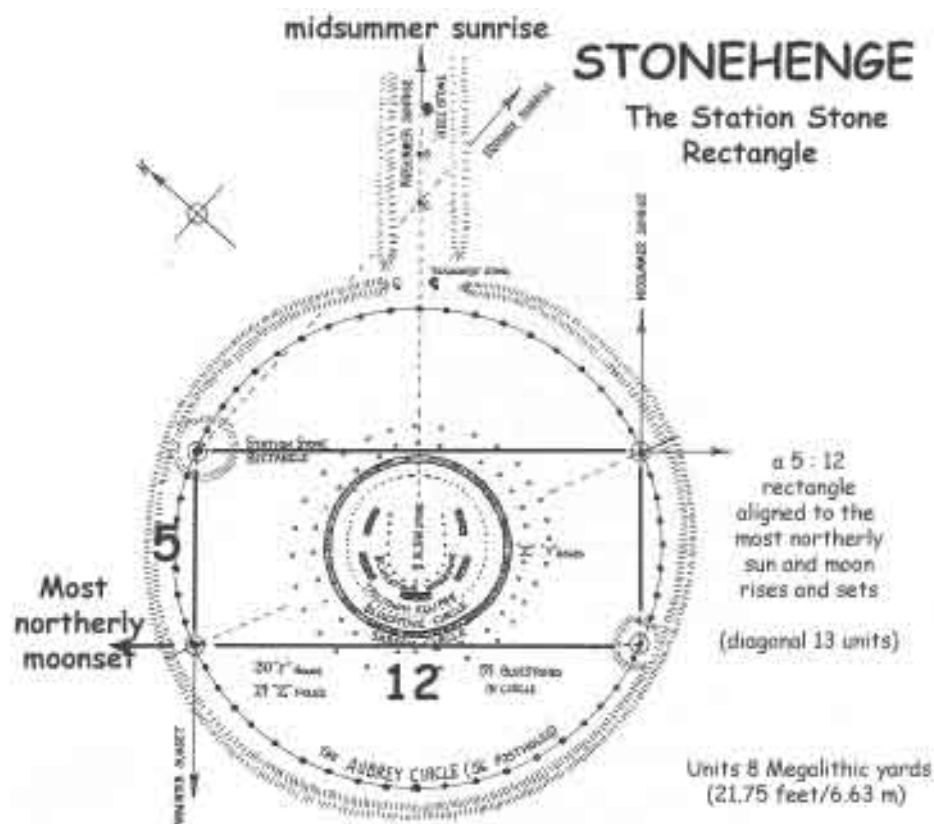
There cannot be many souls who do not know that the midsummer sunrise is marked at Stonehenge by the Avenue and, now off-axis, the Heel stone. Now there's a famous myth about the Heel Stone. A mark on its lower surface resembles a heel mark, and the myth refers to it as having been made by a friar. Thus one name for the stone was 'The Friar Heel'. I found that in Old Welsh, the native language of pre-Anglo-Saxon Britain, *ffriw yr haul* means 'appearance of the sun' and is phonetically 'friar's heel'. This sorts out both the origin of the myth and one ancient purpose of the Stonehenge as a sun calendar, certainly a solstice detector.

To build a monument that identifies and incorporates the motions of the Sun and Moon is taking the two main archetypal gods or goddesses in the sky, and hence within human culture, and attempting to integrate them *on earth*. This quest to be able to arrange the apparently random orbital periods of the sun and moon into alignment or balance was a major endeavour throughout recorded history. This is truly healing or wholing, because the shambles of the calendar has been wrestled with again and again by many great minds. If there is just the faintest of evidence that the megalith builders understood how this trick was done, then healing or not, this should galvanise archaeologists and astronomers into immediate action and could provide a great breakthrough in raising our appreciation of what our forebears were really up to. And that would heal something in us, reared on history lessons where everything done before the Romans came here was to be deemed relatively unimportant. How can one honour the ancestors when one hasn't a clue as to their true capabilities and aspirations?

Discovering the Stonehenge we Deserve

A detective looking through the evidence presented by Wainwright and Darvill would find some issues with their conclusions. If he picked up and studied any of my books or those by the authors previously mentioned, she would be likely as not to want to pursue the magically arranged location of both Stonehenge and the source of the Bluestones. Even without any prior knowledge of surveying or navigation it shouts out from any map (once it has been pointed out!) that these two sites form accurately the corners of a rectangle, perfectly aligned to the north-south and east-west lines of latitude and longitude, and whose side lengths form the ratio 5:12. But Hello!, what do we find within the ditch and bank that defines the Stonehenge site? Why it's a A 5:12 rectangle, described by the greatest living authority on stone circles, Dr Aubrey Burl as, 'near-perfect'. This smaller rectangle, called the Station Stone Rectangle' is illustrated over the page and is 2,500 times smaller than the larger rectangle shown below.





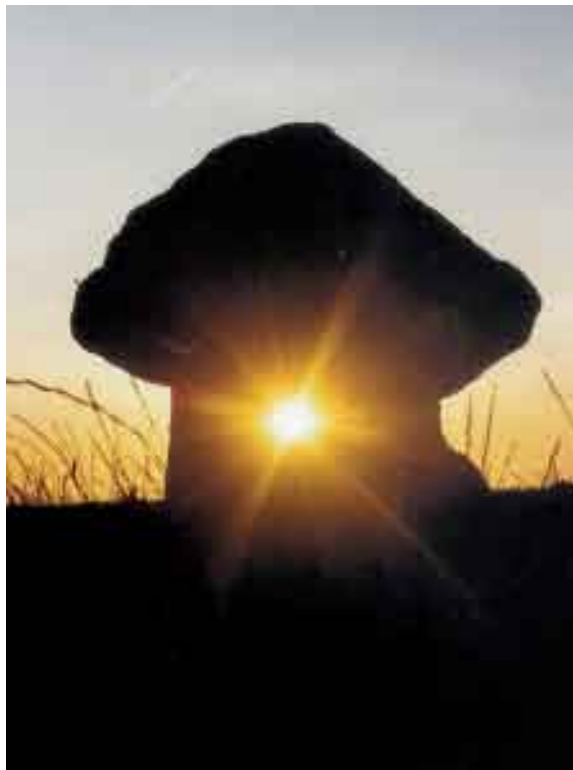
A 5:12 rectangle has a diagonal of thirteen of the same units. At Stonehenge these units are 6.6 metres, although in the ancient units of measure identified by Alexander Thom, this becomes a simpler 8 Megalithic yards (0,829m or 2,72 feet). This makes the diagonal, which also forms the diameter of the Aubrey circle at Stonehenge 104 Megalithic yards (13 x 8 MY), which is what has been measured during surveys.

The fact that the Stonehenge site and the Bluestone site mimic the geometry of what is to be found within the precincts of the monument itself is *evidence* connecting the Bluestone site with Stonehenge geometrically, an alternative way to that proposed by Wainwright and Darvill. The additional fact that the sides of the rectangle at Stonehenge are aligned to the extreme northerly positions of *both* the sun and the moon imbues this geometric discovery with important *astronomical* meanings. A final fact remains, explained in full in my books, that a 5:12:13 triangle is a highly potent tool enabling the solar year to be integrated with the lunar month - the Holy Grail of the calendar designer throughout recorded history. So the Bluestones do, after all, have something to do with healing - in this case our notions of time expressed through the calendar. Finally, for those keen to apply this prehistoric technology, one can also use the triangle to predict eclipses to the day, using just a rope and pegs.

Having once been a research scientist, it was the obvious challenge presented to me upon moving to the Preseli region of Wales in 1984 to research the links between the Bluestone site and Stonehenge. Indeed, from 1990 onwards, it has been my life's work, an astonishing journey that has yielded more information concerning the builders of Stonehenge than anything I had read previously. In my first published book, *A Key to Stonehenge* (Bluestone Press 1993 and 1995), the geometric link between the Bluestone site and Stonehenge was explored, but it took a further ten years to explore the implications of that initial discovery. More complete treatments may be found in *Sun, Moon & Stonehenge* (Bluestone, 1998) and in *The Measure of Albion* (co-written with John Michell, 2004). The diminutive *Stonehenge* (Wooden Books, 2000), distils the main essences of this material and is also freely available at the Stonehenge site shop. The included pictures here should whet the appetite of those people who want some objective data about Stonehenge. Finally, for a complete account of prehistoric astronomy in Britain, try *Alexander Thom: Cracking the Stone Age Code* (Bluestone, 2007).

So, I raise a glass to Wainwright and Darvill for alerting the greater public to the most important remaining questions concerning our national monument. However, seeking for evidence of healing properties in the stones, they should not be too surprised to be led towards a much larger context than their present one. I have written this little article with that in mind, and in the full expectation that the objective and scientifically obtained information I present here will itself become incorporated within their own research material. If their avowed intent is to connect Stonehenge with the source of their Bluestones it surely must be incorporated. And if that is done, I will not have had to have cut a single sod in the process.

Robin Heath, St Dogmaels, April 2008



*Llech y Drybedd dolmen,
Preseli region, Midsummer solstice sunset.*

Further information on books by Robin Heath may be found elsewhere on the website

www.skyandlandscape.com
as can other articles and tour details.