

## BOOK REVIEWS

Richard Bradley et al, *The Moon and the Bonfire: An Investigation of Three Stone Circles in North-east Scotland*, Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2005; ePDF, ISBN: 0 903903 33 4; xx, 124pp.

Bradley commences this short book with the question of the relationship between Clava Cairns on the inner Moray Firth and the recumbent stone circles of Aberdeenshire, noting that Aubrey Burl originally thought the recumbent circles derived from Clava Cairns, and later decided they preceded that monument. Bradley's study is plentifully illustrated with photographs, maps, and archaeological drawings, and the monuments he focuses on are fascinating. Bradley selected "the Deeside stone circle at Tomnaverie ... as the main focus for this research" (p. 6) Like the other two circles – Cothiemuir Wood on Donside and Aikey Brae in Buchan – the Tomnaverie monument had been significantly damaged. Chapter 1, "The Origins and Objectives of the Project," by Bradley lays out his desire to establish the extent of the damage and establish the chronology of the monuments.

Chapter 2, "Excavations at Tomnaverie," is by Bradley and Tim Phillips (with contributions from ten colleagues). The site was damaged by a quarry that operated from approximately 1890-1920. Archaeological studies of the circle were done in 1905, 1931, and 1980: "[a]t first it seemed as if the monument had three components: an outer platform, a recumbent stone circle and a well-preserved ring cairn" (p. 13). The circle was sited within the kerb and the rubble bank, and the investigative process involved the return of fallen stones to upright positions, and a critical assessment of the solar and lunar alignments of the stone circle. Next is Chapter 3, "Excavations at Cothiemuir Wood and Aikey Brae," is by Bradley, Sharon Arrowsmith, Chris Ball and Tim Phillips. This study opens with Aubrey Burl's contention that recumbent stone circles originated in Donside. It is concluded that: "The stone circle was a later development than the ring cairn, but, as at Tomnaverie, these two structures exhibit an essential continuity. The monoliths at Cothiemuir Wood were organized according to the same colour scheme as the existing kerb. Similarly, the outer ramp which helped to hold that kerb in place was built on a more considerable scale on the south-west side of the cairn" (p. 77).

Chapter 4, "The Results of Fieldwalking at Tarland and Castle Forbes," is concerned with the concentrations of artefacts that are to be found in the vicinity of the monuments under consideration. The purpose of the survey was to identify similarities between Tomnaverie and Cothiemuir Wood. Chapter 5, "The Implications of the Project," opens with Bradley's question: "The results of this fieldwork suggested that the monuments in different parts of north-east Scotland may have more in common than many writers had suggested, but are these findings consistent with our knowledge of other sites?" (p. 100). He considers the siting of recumbent stone circles and their orientation, and relates their construction to the wood/ stone = living/ dead typology of Mike Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina's analysis of Stonehenge, Woodhenge, and Durrington Walls. This book is of value in understanding the prehistoric monuments known as

recumbent stone circles in Scotland. It is clearly written, excellently researched and presented, and represents a great advance in knowledge of these mysterious and ancient sites. It is highly recommended.

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