

Brian Byng

Prehistoric ritual.

The Dartmoor cists are aligned northwest-southeast and so you can take your pick, I think its directed towards the east, Christian burials, of course, are directed east-west, they're directed towards the east, but in prehistoric times these things are aligned to the southeast and it's directed towards a point on the skyline where the moon will rise on its 18.6 year maximum, that occurs in 2006 and the moon will rise directly in line with the long access of the cist. So why would they bother to do that? Why would they be so interested in the moon at its most southerly rising position? Well here on this site the moon would rise and it would skim the top of King's Tor, that we can see, a very dramatic spectacle and something that would be interesting and maybe they made something rather more of it than we would, but it would still be interesting. And in the stone circle they met, we think, at places like that, at important dates in the year which were signified either by the sun or by the moon and they had some kind of celebration, some kind of communal meeting for the society that lived here, and that's what we do in our churches, we meet in there. There are burials, of course, associated with this, but there are burials associated with churches, and you have to ask the question, is a church where you bury people? Well it is, but it's much much more than that and this, I think, is the same, this is a place where they buried people, but it's much much more than that as well, and I think there's a link between their culture and ours which we've really forgotten.