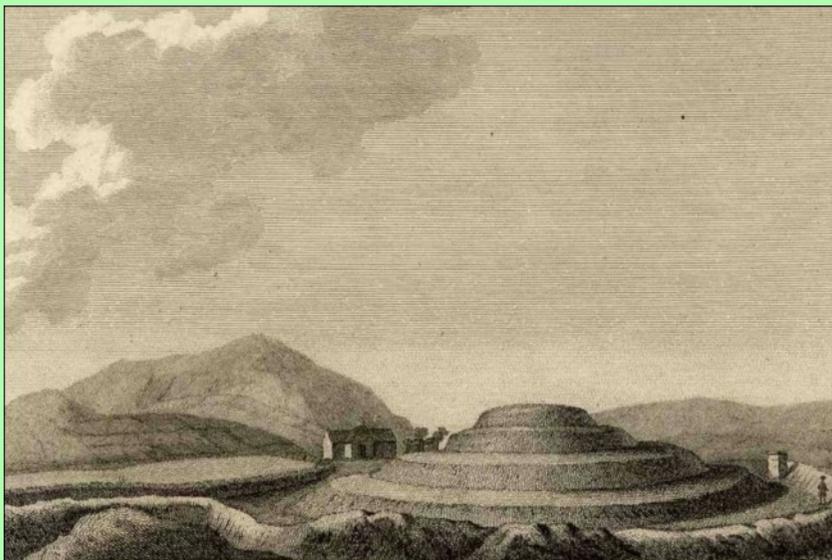


Tynwald Hill Isle Of Man



Wayne Perkins

Tynwald Hill - Isle Of Man

As the New Ley Hunting continues to rediscover leys as spirit paths, a body of evidence begins to grow and solidify as surely as the old theories disintegrate under close scrutiny. To add to the already impressive research collated so far, a shining example can be found at Tynwald Hill on the Isle of Man.



Much has already been written about this focal point of the island as it is the seat of the oldest continuous government, the Manx Parliament. For nearly a millennium, on old Midsummer's Day (5 July) the laws and proclamations of the land have been read from this spot in Manx and English. It has been variously described as the omphalos of

the British isles, a place of pagan celebration and the seat of learning of the Celtic Druidic tradition.

The site itself consists of four-tiered mound which is connected to St John's church by a straight processional way. The mound itself is enigmatic. Legend states that it was artificially created by the Viking Kings who took soil from the four corners of the island to construct each tier. It thus represents a microcosm of the island. There are several references suggesting that the mound is prehistoric, possibly a Bronze Age round barrow, but this has never been proven by excavation.

The present day ceremony at the site sees the top tier occupied by the governor and Lord Bishop (originally the Viking king and his high priest), the second tier has the deemsters and members of the legislative council, the third is occupied by the twenty-four members of the House of Keys and on the fourth vicars and captains of the parishes. Outside are

the freemen and commons. The four land divisions were in turn divided into three making the significant number twelve. Many comparisons to esoteric organisations can be made using this figure.

The area around the monument is of interest as well. The church of St John The Baptist, built in the 19th century, is unspectacular, but it is on the site of a previous chapel, possibly a Keeill (a small, single cell building), which in turn may have been on an even older religious site. The processional way, measuring 112.5m in length, was traditionally swathed in palm leaves as a sign of respect to the Celtic sea-god Mannan-an. The name Tynwald is derived from the Scandinavian 'Tingvollr', meaning 'thing' and 'field' (an assembly held in a field). There is other evidence to suggest that pagan festivals were already being held on the spot before the coming of the Vikings. There are accounts of huge fires lit on Midsummer Eve to bless the crops and cattle. Interestingly, fires lit on St John's Day were said to drive away dragons (the Christian church trying to put a spin on the 'old ways'?). Early photographs of the mound show it surmounted by a maypole.

As you start to look at the area in closer detail you will find other fascinating sites in the vicinity. Nearby is a stone-lined cist, the remains of a Bronze Age round barrow, another further north is called the Giant's Grave. The view to the south-west is dominated by the hill Slieu Whallian where witches were once punished by being rolled down its slopes in spiked barrels. The hill is said to be haunted by the cries of one such unfortunate. Tynwald was also the spot where the fossil remains of a huge Irish Elk (*cervus gigantus*) was found, not seen since the end of the last Ice Age.

This is a site with an incredible amount of history attached to it and one that is visually stunning - but is it a spirit path? It has obviously had a long association with life, death and the celebration thereof. Orientated east-west, it would be possible to watch the sun rise over the church (life?) from the mound, just as the Viking kings once raised their swords in this direction. From the church you would witness the sun set behind the mound (death?) before it repeated itself again the next day (the afterlife? the life cycle?). A spectacular example.

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