dismisses as “a chimera, a grotesque statistical misconception”, and he buttresses his opinion with some quite persuasive examples. He quotes the late 'Peter' Newham as saying that the three large post holes discovered in the Stonehenge car park “can be regarded as the most positive ‘astronomical’ discovery yet made at Stonehenge”, and then goes on to demolish this with the heretofore unpublished carbon–14 dates for the postholes of 6140 bc and 7180 bc, long before the earth ring or monument was begun.

Burl denies the claims only of high-precision astronomy; instead, he advocates a rich astronomical symbolism in the rituals, in many cases with the Moon as a special luminary for the dead. Here is clearly an essay that must be considered seriously before coming to any conclusion about the role of science and society in megalithic times.

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Journalist Michael Balfour has provided a goldmine of information about Stonehenge, its history, and its environs from Avebury to Old Sarum. We learn of the controversy that ensued when a traditional path cutting across the circle was rerouted; how the Prescelly Mountains source of the bluestones was announced to the world in April, 1923; how William Stukeley named the “trilithons” in 1740. Here is undoubtedly the most complete collection of Stonehenge in art, including Constable, Turner, and Blake. Numerous illustrations document the slow erosion and more recent reconstruction of the monument. Although the book is lavishly illustrated, many key pictures are small, and most are muddy in the printing; nevertheless, a few remain genuinely evocative, such as the old photographic panorama in plate 71.

At the outset Balfour refers to Stonehenge as “a calculator or computer, for that is probably what it became”, yet only about fifteen pages are devoted to ‘astro-archeology’ and the megalithic yard goes by in a single line. While this book is an excellent reference work on many aspects of Stonehenge, the blurred account of the archaeoastronomy is not its forte.

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