

Samuel Rowe (1793 – 1853)

Dartmoor



Samuel Rowe (1793-1853), a topographer (map-maker), was initially apprenticed to a bookseller at Kingsbridge. He later started a business at Plymouth and in 1812 entered Jesus College, Cambridge. He graduated in 1822 with an M.A., and in 1833 took Holy Orders. He was in 1886 vicar of Crediton. His chief work, the celebrated *Perambulation of Dartmoor*, dedicated to Albert Prince of Wales, appeared in 1848.

This was a period when it was fashionable to interpret the standing stone antiquities of Dartmoor as Druid monuments. In this work,

Rowe gives a thorough account of the various ideas put forward on the possible Druidical significance of the Drewsteignton cromlech by earlier writers such as Borlase, Chapple, and Polwhele, among others [Rowe, p39-43]. Rowe accepted that its primary function was of a sepulchral nature, but was open to the possibility of it being a Druid altar where sacrificial offerings were made.

By the end of the 19th century, mainstream thinking had turned against the Druidical view, and Samuel's nephew J. Brooking Rowe inserted this disclaimer in the preface to his expanded edition of the *Perambulations* published in 1896:

I have made many alterations and some additions, but, although entirely disagreeing with them, I did not feel at liberty to eliminate altogether the Druidical theories of the author with which the first edition of the book was saturated.

