

My name is Dr Máire West. I hold degrees from the National University, Ireland and have held lecturing posts in Irish and German universities. Latterly, I have held a senior managerial position in the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance, the largest Awarding Body in the UK.

I have lived for over 26 years in Redesdale and during this time I have served as Chair of the Rochester and Byrness Parish Council. I have also been secretary of The Bellingham Heritage Centre, the Parochial Church Council for Rochester with Byrness and The Redesdale Society. For the past three years, I have been on the Board of the Revitalising Redesdale Partnership Project.

I listened to today's Appeal meeting (9 March) with Dr Ian Roberts and feel I cannot let certain statements Mr Hitchens made when cross-examined this afternoon pass without comment.

When referring to Image 16, Mr Hitchens mentioned the many tri-radial cairns on the Ray Estate that are found throughout Redesdale – I have no knowledge of these and wonder if he can have been mistaken about the location? He then went on to say that these were, and I quote: “constructed in the Bronze Age as astronomical markers of solstices.”

As a Board member of Revitalising Redesdale I have been involved in several historical and archaeological projects, including one which maps areas of archaeological interest on the Redesdale landscape, called The Redesdale LiDAR Landscapes Project. Just in case I had missed the many Redesdale tri-radial cairns mentioned by Mr Hitchens, I thought it best to check with Dr Paul Frodsham, the archaeologist who has been working with Redesdale members on the LiDAR project. (Dr Frodsham's area of expertise is the Bronze Age and Neolithic. He has also worked as the National Park archaeologist and thus knows Upper Northumberland very well.)

I confirm that Dr Frodsham's opinion echoes those of the other local archaeologists Dr Roberts consulted prior to writing his statement for the Appeal. No tri-radial cairns have been spotted thus far in the LiDAR mapping of Redesdale. In actual fact, the existence of such tri-radial cairns is a matter of archaeological controversy. The name 'tri-radial' has only recently been coined to describe a few three-sided cairns which are quite rare occurrences in the landscape. Their chronology and function is very unclear. Some archaeologists have suggested that they were used as “post-medieval sheep shelters”, because the stones may just have been taken from elsewhere to be used as sheep stells, although this is by no means certain, (see Frodsham, *In the Valley of the Sacred Mountain*, Northern Heritage 2006, p. 93).

To come to Mr Hitchen's second point, Dr Frodsham thinks that any mention of these cairns being used by Bronze Age peoples as "astronomical markers of solstices" is pure fantasy. There isn't a shred of evidence for such claims. Again, this concurs with the opinions voiced by other archaeologists. In short, there is no factual or historical foundation in Mr Hitchen's statements about tri-radial cairns and their supposed usage in Redesdale – they are without credibility.