

# Dragon

10



Newsletter of the DRAGON Society for people interested in the life  
and times of ARTHUR and the cultures of 'DARK AGE' Britain.

Welcome to Dragon 10, at last!

Suffice to say I enjoyed my break in Japan - well, it wasn't all that much of a break because I did some English teaching there.

On my return I found my family in the process of moving house. So it was some weeks before I was settled in. But here we are back in the swing of things again.

My first announcement must be the 'moot' - having heard nothing from Robert Taylor (it was hoped that this year's moot would be in Northampton) and having heard from Kate Pollard, secretary of the Pendragon Society, the moot will be in Winchester. Dragon members are invited to join in with Pendragon members on the 8th and 9th of September 1984. Members will gather at the Abbey Bar around 11.00 followed by a look around Winchester taking in the cathedral, where the famed 'Round Table' is kept, an exhibition of Arthurian legend and so on culminating in a Wine and Cheese party on Saturday evening.

Please contact me immediately for further information, stating whether you will want somewhere to stay and if you will be attending the Wine and Cheese party. Winchester, I believe, is quite easy to get to from London. So please try and make it if you can.

John Matthew, a Dragon member and author of two books on Arthurian legends, will be holding a seminar at Knighton, Powys in Mid Wales. The one day course, on the 9th September 1984, is on the theme of the Holy Grail, with stories, lectures, meditations and discussions. Information can be obtained from myself or Mrs Jean Thomas, Box Office, the Post Office, Bleddfa, Knighton, Powys.

That's the announcements done, so please read on and I hope you enjoy this issue.

Finally, please note the new address:

9 Earls Lea, Flint, Clwyd, CH6 5BT, North Wales.

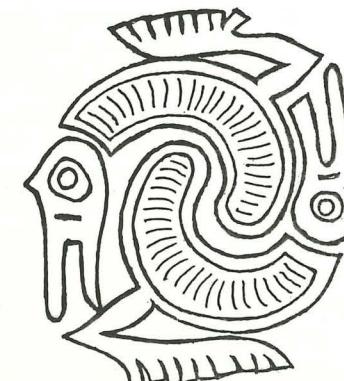
# Anglo-Saxon heathendom

by STEVE POLLINGTON

The Germanic tribes who overran the erstwhile Roman province of Britannia were not the godless savages they have been thought, though they were not "proto-Christians" some authorities have supposed them to be. These various peoples worshipped a variety of gods, goddesses and other entities which might be termed "spirits". The gods and goddesses do not fall neatly together into a pantheon such as those of Rome or Greece, but seem to have "overlapped" considerably. Some of the evidence for their worship comes direct from Anglo-Saxon sources and from archaeology, but much more can be assumed when the native material is compared with Scandanavian sources. The latter sources are usually more complete in the account they present, for the Scandanavians were only later converted to Christianity, and they worshipped gods and goddesses (Aesir and Asynjur) which were essentially local variants of deities worshipped by all the Germanic peoples.

The principal gods seem to have been TIW, WODEN, THUNOR, SAXNOT and FREYA; the principal goddess was FRIGE.

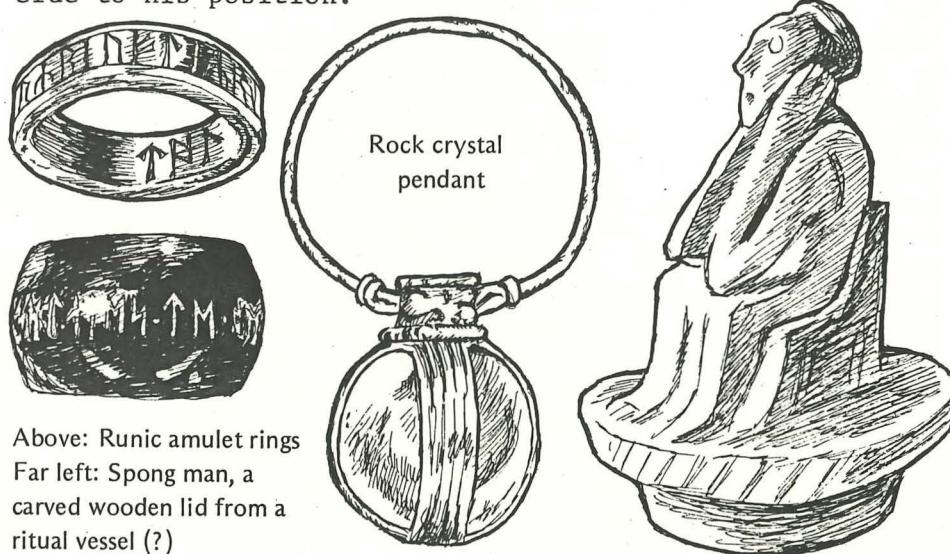
TIW had been the ancient Germanic sky-god, the wise sovereign and bringer of benefits to mankind. It is believed that the Sutton Hoo purse-lid shows Tiw grasping or binding the wolf; in the more famous Icelandic tale the Norse TYR (=Tiw) binds the great wolf Fenrir and loses his right hand in so doing. In later times he faded into a god of battle.



The illustration on the cover depicts a Dark Age warrior. Who is it? I'll leave that up to the viewer:- Arthur or Ambrosius Aurelian?

WODEN was originally a god of the dead who became especially associated with death in battle. He figures in many Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies and may have been associated with the foundation of dynasties. The Norse Odinn (=Woden) was also associated with violent death, with noble families and with warrior cults such as the BERSERKAR, though nothing so extreme is evident among the Anglo-Saxons.

THUNOR, formerly the weather-god, has little to attest his worship in England except a few place-names containing the name "Thunder", which is derived from his name. As a god of the peasants, the farmers and fishers, it is unlikely that he would be commemorated among the works of art which were commissioned by noblemen; however, there is one important clue to his position.



Above: Runic amulet rings  
Far left: Spong man, a carved wooden lid from a ritual vessel (?)

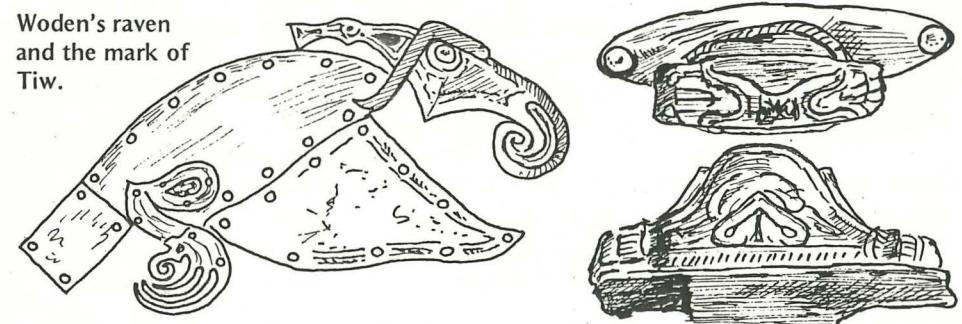
When the Germanic peoples adopted the Roman seven day week, they named the days for their own gods. The sun- and moon- days came first, next the day of Tiw, corresponding to the Roman day of Mars because Tiw was already in decline, becoming a mere war-god. Next came Woden's day, for the day of Mercury, leader of the dead mens' souls and god of many mysteries; fifth was the day of Thunor, equivalent to the day of Jove/Jupiter, foremost of all the gods of the Romans and regarded as a "sky-father", so it would appear that Thunor had adopted his pre-eminent position just as Tiw had lost it. We can hardly believe that the Anglo-Saxons retained the relatively minor god Tiw and ignored the more imposing Thunor.

The sixth day was named for FRIGE, a goddess who with her counter-part FREA form a fertility-pair equivalent to the Norse FREYR and FREYJA. However, the fact that the day of Venus was named for her may suggest that the Anglo-Saxons saw her more as the consort of the principal god and so equivalent to the Norse FRIGA. Frige is the only goddess whom we may safely consider known to the Anglo-Saxons.

The last god mentioned, SAXNOT, appears to be a local variant of Woden. His name means "seax-companion" and simply be a specifically Saxon way of referring to him, the Saxons being the "men of the seax". The various "spirits" were elves, dwarves, goblins and sundry other supernatural beings said to haunt certain places at times. They may have been memories of earlier (Celtic? Pre-Celtic?) deities, living on in a debased form to end their days as pixies and sprites in fairy-tales.

Exactly what forms of worship were practised it is impossible now to tell with any certainty; ritual feasting seems most likely with perhaps the veneration of some rock, grove or barrow deemed sacred to a god, though this may be rather nature-worship pure and simple. At any rate it was

Woden's raven and the mark of Tiw.



probably left pretty much to the individual's own inclinations as to how and how often he worshipped.

Particularly common was the notion of the "divine child" who is accepted as ruler (by virtue of being the son of a god?). Such a concept fits in well with what we know of the lines of kings looking to Woden as ancestor and dynastic founder.

While by no means exhaustive I hope the above will serve as a general guide for those who are interested. For a deeper understanding, and for an insight into the ways in which Germanic heathdom affected English Christianity, see The Lost Gods of England by Brian Branston.

# Cadbury, Camelot & Caer Melyn

by ROBERT TAYLOR

Many people will now be aware of a new theory which identifies Camelot with Caer Melyn, a hill-fort in Glamorgan. In view of this I would like to use this article to take another look at Cadbury and the possibility of it once being used as a base by the Romano-British in the struggle against their enemies. This is not to say that we should ignore Caer Melyn, indeed I should like to investigate it further and fully intend to do so when I can find it! Unfortunately preliminary investigations have drawn a blank but, as I am assured that it does exist, I shall continue. Should I discover anything I shall write to "Dragon" again!

(Ed. For those readers who do not know about this theory it is the idea of Messrs Wilson and Blackett. These two, living in Cardiff, claim that Arthur is Athrwys ap Meurig and that Arthur was King of Glamorgan and Gwent. Caer Melyn, they say, is Camelot - the name meaning "Yellow Fort" which the Norman's corrupted into "Ca-Melot". More on this at the end of Robert's article.)

However, back to Camelot, sorry, Cadbury! Assuming that Arthur did have a home base how do we go about finding it? All legend and tradition centres on the West Country, although it is true to say that his name is commemorated in place-names the whole length of England and Wales and into Southern Scotland. However, it is only the South West that gives traditions of dwelling places. The group currently proposing the idea of a Glamorgan based Arthur should perhaps consult some of the early Welsh Triads, for even these firmly locate Arthur in Cornwall. The "Life of St Carannog" connects him with Dunster and the "Life of St Gildas" makes mention of him summoning the troops of Cornwall and Devon. Now all this may appear inconclusive, and indeed it is, but if nothing else it is a beginning.

Having put forward then, the idea of Cadbury as Camelot we can assume some sort of reaction

to it on the part of the Saxons. So which particular band of Saxons were in the locality at the time? Cerdic and his son Cynric, founders of Wessex who landed at Southampton Water in 495. Unfortunately we don't have a copy of Cerdic's diary: "Thursday, raining again, attacked Camelot...". But we have the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which gives us the dates and places of at least some of the battles fought by the embryo kingdom of Wessex. Of course as a piece of Wessex propaganda the chronicle does not mention their defeats at the hands of Arthur. By the same token we cannot expect it to mention Camelot or Arthur either.

What the Chronicle does tell us is where the West Saxons were fighting, and when marked on a map a pattern emerges. From 495 to 577 ten battles are recorded:

- 495 Southampton Water
- 508 Netley Marsh
- 516-518 Badon Hill (Liddington?)
- 519 Charford on Avon
- 530 Isle of Wight
- 552 Old Sarum
- 556 Barbury
- 568 Wimbledon
- 571 Bedford
- 577 Deorham

I have added Badon Hill to this list although it is purely conjectural. Even so it may be seen that although eight battles were fought within 60 miles of Cadbury none were fought nearer than 30 miles. The battle fought furthest West was Deorham (10 miles East of Bristol) but this was not until 577 and it won the West Saxons the cities of Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath, effectively sealing off the Western peninsula.

Were it not for the other two battles we could be excused in considering the West Saxons slow in their expansion. If they were slow in expanding westward they certainly did not encounter the same difficulty in the other directions; battles were fought at Wimbledon in 568 and at Bedford in 571.

So why no further movement westward? Could the answer be that Cadbury stood squarely in the way? Remember though, that other battles may have been fought but since they are not recorded they would certainly have been defeats.

In searching for Arthur's base we must immediately dispel any visions of a "many towered Camelot". Towers and turrets belong to the Camelot of Mallory and Tennyson but not to reality. The Camelot we are looking for is the site of a military base, most probably with some sort of non-combatant/civilian population, serving the fighting men. Let us then try to list the probable requirements:

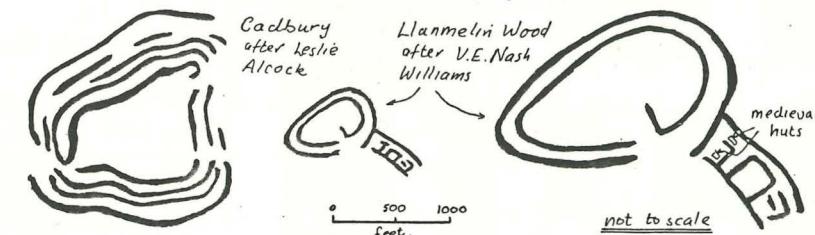
- (1) good defensive position,
- (2) large area,
- (3) central position to which warriors could rally and
- (4) not far from the potential enemy.

So what about Cadbury? To put it bluntly it is huge. A formidable plateau of a full 18 acres. It is by far the largest site known to have been in occupation by the Romano-British during the 6th Century. Built in the Iron Age it was occupied and abandoned at various times up until the Dark Ages. During the Arthurian Period it was re-fortified and a programme of extensive re-building undertaken. Archaeology has also shown evidence of imported luxury goods such as Mediterranean pottery.

What sort of picture have we built up then? A very wealthy and powerful person (Romano-British) re-fortified a large hill-fort. Not only is he rich enough to establish it as a military base but he can also afford to import goods from the Continent. Cadbury would in those days have been almost impregnable, much of the low-lying land around it being under-water. If we can't actually say that Arthur lived there we can say confidently than an "Arthur-type" person was responsible for it. In short Cadbury is far and away the best candidate we have for the position of Camelot.

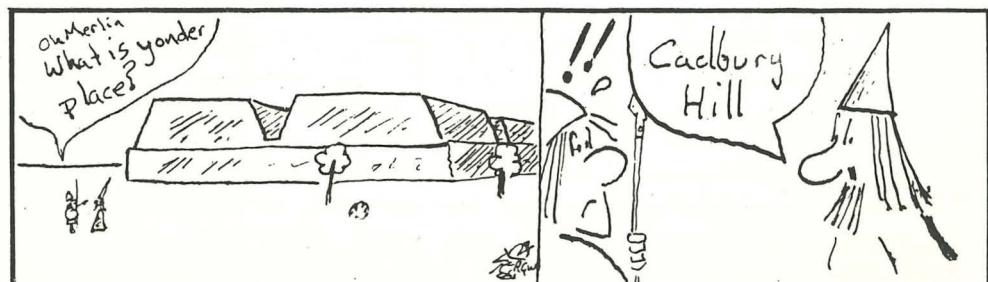
It will be most interesting to see how Caer Melyn compares with it....

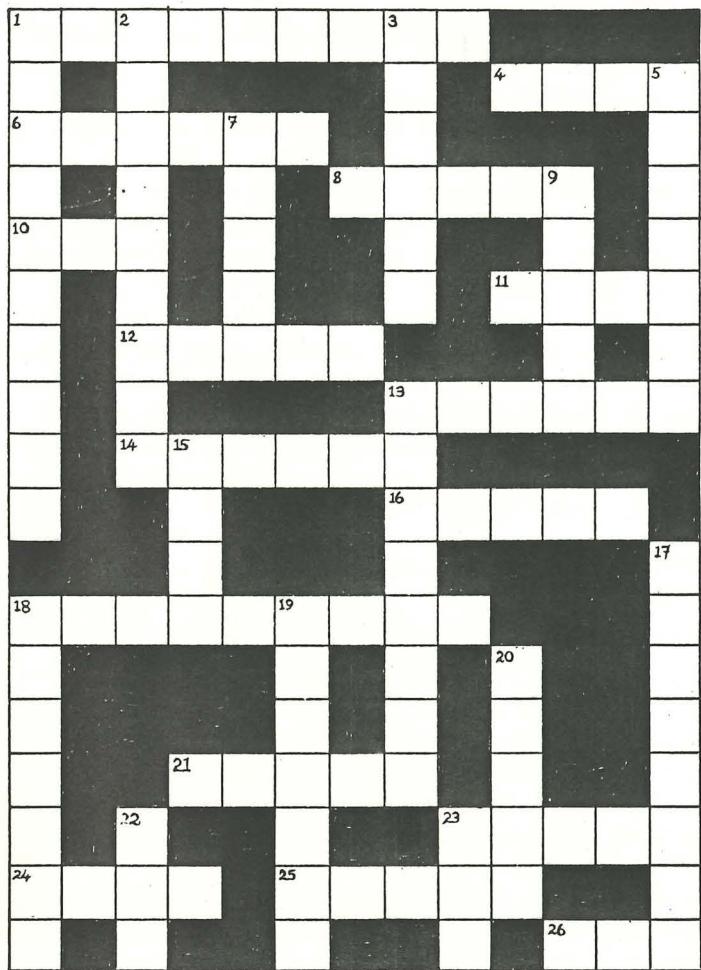
(Ed. I too have been unable to locate a place called Caer Melyn but I have found a site in South Wales with a marked similarity in name. This is the hill-fort of Llanmelyn Wood, situated 9 miles East of Newport and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles N. N.West of Caerwent in the county of Gwent (old Monmouthshire). This Iron Age fort, excavated by V.E. Nash Williams in the 1930s, consists of two parts - an oval main camp of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  acres and an elongated oblong section (the 'annexe') of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres. Situated 300 feet above sea level the fort was occupied up until the defeat of the Silures in 75 A.D. and there is no evidence of re-occupation until the 12th Century.



I cannot say positively Llanmelyn was not occupied in the 6th Century but I tend to agree with Robert the two hill-forts do not compare favourably. May I add - this does not mean that I agree with Bob that Cadbury is either Camelot or Arthur's base.)

TALES FROM THE TWO ELLS  
or NEWLIGHTON THE DARKAGES by ROGER WILCOX





# A Dark Age Cross- word

Compiled by  
Sandra  
Garside-Neville  
&  
Kurt Hunter-Mann

ACROSS

1. He preceded Arthur.
4. Glastonbury Cross material.
6. British kingdom of the North-West.
8. Arthur's 11th battle.
10. Not high.
11. Badon-Mons?
12. Romans spoke this.
13. The British Easter ones!
14. British war leader.
16. Three of everything.
18. 'High chief' man.
21. Native Britons.
23. Famous British victory.
24. Arthur's son -in grave?
25. Dark Age fort in S. Wales.
26. Cavalry wing (Roman).

DOWN

1. Second half of 1 Across' name.
2. Saxon 'Ruler of Britain.'
3. 6th Century ruler of Rheged.
5. Battle name meaning 'blue-black'.
7. British kingdom of the North-East.
9. Early North-East Anglian kingdom.
13. Arthur's name Latinised.

15. A decisive and utter defeat.
17. Constantine's kingdom.
18. 5th Century Roman town - St. Albans.
19. Ambrosius' battle against Vitalinus.
20. ----- Emrys, hill-fort.
22. Arthur was half one of these!!
23. Good---

The solution to this crossword can be found on the inside back page

# BERSERK!

by JOHN IVOR JONES

BERSERKER:- a battle frenzied Scandinavian warrior of old, - the Standard Dictionary

BERSERK:- frenzied, - Collins English Gem Dictionary.

Since man first organised armies, certain military units have, because of their acts, become famous names. The Roman Emperors had their legions. The seventeenth century produced Cromwell's Ironsides and the New Model Army, while the nineteenth century saw Napoleon's Old Guard Grenadiers. In the Falkland War the Argentines were told that the Ghurkas were cannibals.

The units above and others took to the battlefield with a psychological advantage over their opposition the enemy possessed troops of a similar calibre who were not affected by their reputation. Psychology had always played a vital part in warfare. Musical instruments, for instance, not only conveyed orders but also stirred the fighting spirit of the troops (e.g. the Scottish bagpipes). A good general never attacks with troops who are psychologically dominated by their opponents.

The Viking armies of the Dark Ages contained a class of troop who are remarkable for their military prowess. I refer to the type of soldier called *Berserkr*. The *Berserkr* fought in a frenzy with no regard for their lives or the lives of their enemy.

Ian Heath in Armies of the Dark Ages suggests that *Berserkr* may have been a mixture of psychopaths, sufferers of paranoia, lycanthropes (Hollywood's werewolves) and epileptics. While not disagreeing with Mr Heath, I would like to put forward a theory of a doctor called Fabing, that the *Berserkr* may have gone into their frenzied battle rages by taking a hallucinogenic drug, in addition to any mental disorders. Fabing suggests that the *Berserkr* may have taken the mushroom *Amanita Muscaria* which contains the hallucinogenic

substance *Bufotenine*.

The process of going *Berserk* is known as *Berserkgang* and the *Berserkr* had the habit of throwing off their armour and going almost naked into battle, which of course identified the *Berserkr* to his enemies but often this had the result of undermining the nerve of the opposing troops. In effect the *Berserkr* was a human psychological warfare weapon - and an effective one at that.

Imagine a hastily thrown together force of Franks, with only a nucleus of regular professional troops, confronting a Viking raiding force in the front of which are half naked, shield



Based on an illustration by Ewart Oakeshott in "Fighting Men" by Henry Treece and Ewart Oakeshott

biting *Berserkr* backed up by more conventionally equipped Viking troops - all trained soldiers (to use a modern British army term). The end result was often Vikings' enemy fled the field once

contact was made and the *Berserkr* once again proved that their name was no empty title.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*A History of the Vikings* by G. Jones.  
*The Viking Achievement* by P. G. Foote.  
*Saxon, Viking and Norman* by T. Wise.  
*Armies of the Dark Ages* by Ian Heath.  
*English Weapons and Warfare 449-1660* by A. V. B. Norman and D. Pottinger.  
*Drug Dependence* by J. H. Willis.

## A TRIP TO AMESBURY

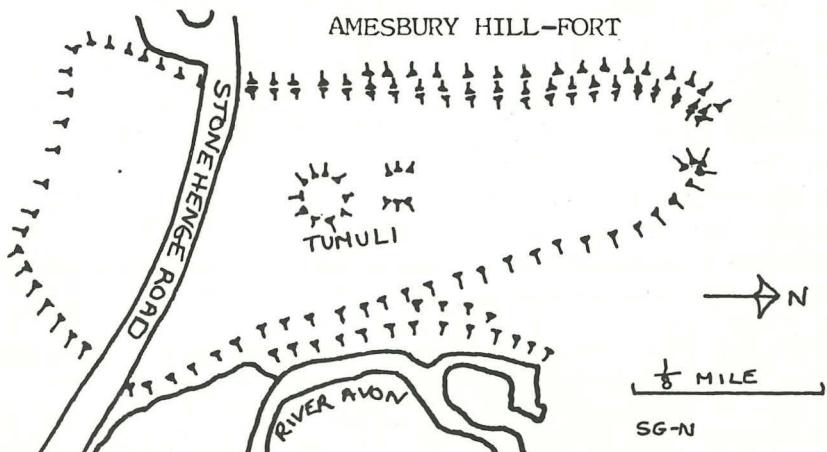
by SANDRA GARSIDE-NEVILLE

Amesbury is a small town in Wiltshire, a few miles north of Salisbury. The name is believed to have come from 'Ambres-byrig' that is, 'the town of Ambrosius'. It perhaps refers to the man mentioned in Gildas, although this cannot be proved, and the town counts itself as being found in 980 A.D., when a Benedictine Abbey was built there. However, Amesbury is said to have had one of the 'Three Perpetual Choirs' of Britain, which means that there was a religious community present as early as the sixth century.

A short walk to the West from the town centre is the church of St Mary and St Melor. The latter person is an obscure Breton saint, who was murdered in the sixth century. He is one the very select band of British saints to be commemorated in the English lowlands. Behind the church (which is Saxon and Norman in date) is the reputed site of the original monastery. Across the meadows some way, the ground rises and is covered by trees - this is the first indication of the hill-fort. Its impact on the surrounding countryside is severely muted by the trees covering its banks and the houses that have been built on it to the south of the road.



Vespa's Camp, as it is called, is a large Iron Age fort, enclosing 37 acres, and that was all we could find out on this reconnaissance trip. Another visit to the area, but to the library in Salisbury, should tell us whether the fort has been excavated. If dug in the Victorian (or earlier) times it would need further investigation to prove fifth or sixth century occupation, as modern archaeology is now sensitive to the fragile remains that are typical of the Dark Ages.



There is a whole bevy of hill-forts that were reoccupied in the Dark Ages in the area, and there is no reason to think that Vespa's Camp was left out of the trend - particularly as the town at its foot seems to bear the name of one of the fifth century's greatest figures. But this remains to be seen! One cannot help speculating that if a town called Arthursbury with a hill-fort above it was known, that hill-fort would have been long since excavated.

#### References

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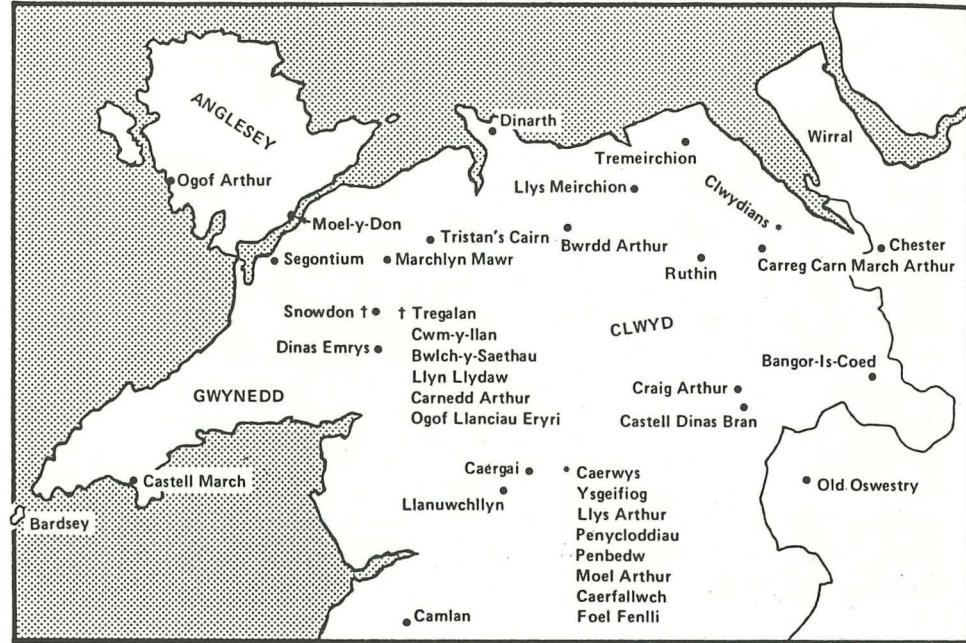
## ARTHUR in North Wales

by A. GOG

Recent claims have been made for Arthur living, fighting and dying in South East Wales. However, as anyone with intelligence knows Arthur was from North Wales. Arthur's spirit ranges high and wide throughout Gwynedd and Clwyd. There are also more stories from England bordering on N. Wales. Leaving out sites which are prehistoric here is a list of places connected with the legend of Arthur:

Bardsey, a place of pilgrimage connected with Myrddin (Merlin). Bwrdd Arthur, a strange place with 24 seat-like holes in a circle cut into rock.

Caergai (also called Caer Cynyr, after Cai's father), an old Roman fort believed to be the home of Cai where Arthur spent his childhood. Camlan, where Arthur fought his last battle (see also Snowdon). Carreg Carn March Arthur, a stone with the imprint of horse's hoof. Castell Dinas Bran



was said to be the Grail Castle while Castell March was the home of March son of Meirchion. Meirchion is also connected with Llys Meirchion and Tremeirchion. Craig Arthur, a place where it is said Arthur is sleeping awaiting the call of his people.

Dinarth is the City of the Bear.

Near Llanuwchllyn it is said Arthur defeated the giant Rhitta Gavr.

Marchlyn Mawr is the site of a cave said to contain the crown of Arthur, but beware the strange ferryman! Moel y Don is where Arthur fought the King of Anglesey.

On the Isle of Anglesey is a cave called Ogof Arthur where he rested following a battle against the Irish.

At Ruthin Arthur had a rival of his named Huail beheaded on a stone in the centre of the town (still called Maen Huail).

Segontium, now Caernarfon, has strong Arthurian connections, including Magnus Maximus, and it was called Senadon in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

North east of Marchlyn Mawr is Tristan's Cairn though no legend is remembered in connection with

it.

Two Welsh areas yet unmentioned are the hills of the Clwydians and Snowdon. Looking at sites in Clwydians we start from north and work south:

Near Caerwys is said to be Arthur's palace and there is a Llys Arthur near Nannerch. After a battle near Moel Arthur our hero is said to have rested in a cave named Arthur's Parlour which is now beneath a small lake at Ysgeifiog. Not far away on the slopes of Pen y Cloddiau tradition says Arthur's sword is buried. Penbedw is where many of the dead who fought in Arthur's 8th battle were buried. The battle itself took place at Cefn y Gadfa not far from Moel Arthur. To the north east of here is a hill-fort now called Moel y Gaer but once called Caerfallwch - the fort of Afallwch, said to be the ancestor of many great Celtic families. The final site is Foel Fenlli the home of a king who defied St Garmon.

Snowdon area is mainly connected with the end of Arthur's life:

According to a local tradition Arthur's enemy was held up in Tregalan. Arthur gathered his troops together at Gwaen y Gwehilion, near Dinas Emrys and marched up to Cwm y Llan driving his enemy out of the city. He followed them up a pass but they turned and showered arrows at Arthur and his men. Arthur was fatally wounded there (the site became known as Bwlch y Saethau - the Pass of Arrows) but before he died he demanded that his sword should be thrown into Llyn Llydaw. The men of Arthur buried his body beneath Carnedd Arthur then marched to a cave where they are still sleeping today awaiting Arthur's return. This site is called Ogof Llanciau Eryri - the Cave of the Youths of Snowdon.

Finally there are few sites in England near to the borders of Wales. Moving outwards first is Chester, called the City of Legions by Bede, where Dark Age pottery has been found. Could this be Geoffrey of Monmouth's City of Legions instead of Caerleon in South Wales (both are called Caerleon in Welsh). South of Chester is Old Oswestry, called in Welsh Caer Ogyrfan - Gogyrfan was the father

of Gwenhwyfar - Guinevere. Returning to Cheshire near Alderley Edge we find a story of a wizard who looks after a sleeping king and his warriors. To the north of Chester is the Wirral which is mentioned in Gawain's quest for the Green Knight. Following his battle on the Douglas river near Wigan, which boasts a cave used by Lancelot, Arthur fought a bad knight, called Sir Terrible, near Longendale where he was holding court.

So from this you can see that there is plenty of site evidence for Arthur being from North Wales rather than the South.

(If you haven't realized Mr A. Gog doesn't exist - a Gog is the nickname for an inhabitant of North Wales from the Welsh Gogledwr. I wrote this to show that there is ample evidence in North Wales for a North Walian Arthur. Equally South Wales has many Arthurian sites...so too has Cornwall and the North of England and Scotland. There are numerous places with Arthurian connections, though the vast majority are old Celtic areas. Of course Arthur may well have been from South Wales or Cornwall and his fame spread to the rest of the Celtic world (this includes Brittany but not Ireland or Isle of Man, though later legends did reach Ireland in 15th century). Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones suggested in his lecture on Arthurian place names that a serious study was needed and particularly of early place names since most of the ones mentioned in the above article do not go very far back.)

#### URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to my recent move I have unfortunately misplaced a number of pieces of information dealing with subscriptions. I would be very grateful if members would send me details of what of what issues of Dragon they have had and what is the first copy they received. I must apologise for this but I'm sure that those who have moved house in the past will appreciate my dilemma. So please send me details as soon as possible. I do not want to do anyone out of an issue.



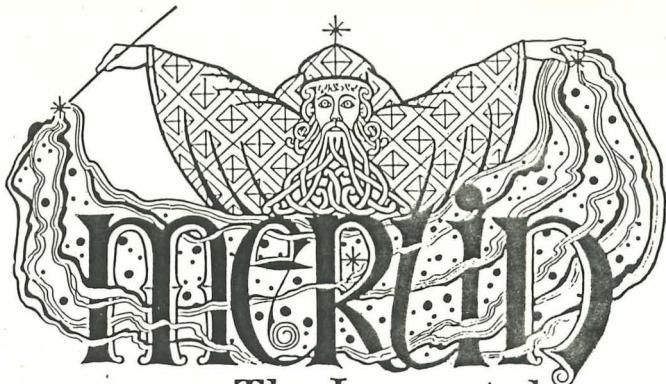
## Pre-Excalibur

The following comic strip panels appeared in the "Daily Express" and the 16th, 17th and 18th of December 1983. The series portrayed a Boudicca-like British queen.



#### CROSSWORD SOLUTION

**ACROSS:** 1. Ambrosius. 4. Lead. 6. Agned. 10. Low. 11. Hill. 12. Latin. 13. Annals. 14. Arthur. 16. Triad. 18. Vortigern. 21. Celts. 23. Badon. 24. Anir. 25. Powys. 26. Ala.  
**DOWN:** 1. Aurelian. 2. Bretwalda. 3. Urbgen. 5. Dubglas. 7. Elmet. 9. Deira. 13. Artorius. 15. Rout. 17. Dumnonia. 18. Verulam. 19. Guoloph. 20. Dinas. 22. Wit. 23. Bye.



## MERLIN The Immortal

MERLIN The Immortal written by Peter Quiller,  
illustrated by Courtney Davis and edited by  
Michael Joseph.

"MERLIN, onetime Archmage of Britain, who helped Arthur to unify these islands, has returned to awaken us to the challenges of this crucial Planetary Moment..." .

I pride myself on being open-minded and even though I don't normally agree with mystical writing about Arthur I feel I can endorse the sentiments expressed in this beautifully produced book.

MERLIN The Immortal tells of the experiences (reputed to be real) of a group who have had encounters with a 'force' which seemingly identifies itself with the name 'Merlin'. This 'force' is part of the coming Aquarian Age and is here guiding to avoid quote: "a future that is unspeakable" and to help us progress to one that is 'beyond our wildest dreams'. Personally I'm not into guardian spirits and saviours believing that man is capable of rectifying wrongs done in the passed. However, I find myself agreeing with the philosophy of this book.

MERLIN The Immortal though strangely printed on only one side of a page is magnificently illustrated with Celtic designs by Courtney Davis.

At £15.50 + £1.50 P&P (Overseas £4) Handbound, Limited First Edition, and £9.99 + £1.40 P&P (Overseas £4) 2nd Edition Paperback, MERLIN The Immortal can be obtained from Spirit of Celtia 107, Edgehill Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 2PU, England.