

Dragon

11



**Cadbury Castle
and the
Glastonbury Head**

Welcome once again to Dragon,

This issue seems to have turned into a sort of biographical edition with articles on Hengest, Cerdic and Vortigern. Here were three characters one Saxon (Jutish, to be exact), one Celtic and one no one seems to be sure of, the latter being Cerdic. Also, in Review, we look forward to the publication of Osprey's "Arthur and the Anglo-Saxon Wars".

Let me first begin by commenting on this year's Dragon-Moot. However, to be more exact - the lack of a Moot. It had been suggested that this year's gettogether would be held in conjunction with Pendragon, at Winchester. No one turned up from Dragon except myself. To put it mildly I was very embarrassed. Pendragon drew together about thirty members.

I had already made arrangements to go and for dig by the time I realised no one was coming, so I decided to go as a member of Pendragon. We all gathered at cafe in town to have a chat and plan the day. It was very nice to begin to put names to the faces of people. Around midday we split up and folk visited various places - the Cathedral, museums and, of course, the Great Hall with the famous Round Table.

That evening more members gathered at a hall hired specially for the meeting. Kate Pollard, secretary of the Pendragon Society, who organised the whole event, prepared food and drinks. It was not long before lots of different conversations and discussions started. I was introduced by Chris Lovegrove, editor of the Pendragon magazine, to the editor of Earth Giant. There was wine and various eats, including sausage rolls, pizza and cheese. I enjoyed the evening very much.

The next day a number of members met to go on an expedition to St. Catherine's Hill Maze, a couple of miles outside of Winchester. The weather stayed fine, despite a very wet night, and a good time was had by all. After the expedition we went back into the city for lunch. All in all I

had a very pleasant time and must openly give my appreciation and thanks to Kate for an excellent two days.

However, I am most disappointed that not one member of Dragon turned up. I would like to give my thanks to members who did write and tell me they wouldn't be able to come. Unfortunately, a good proportion did not bother to let me know. If members do not want these meetings then that is okay. Maybe most of you just prefer to get and read Dragon. Nevertheless, I would look to a greater participation in the future. I would be grateful if members (I am, of course, here speaking to members in Britain) let me know if they want the Moots or not. And if you still do please give me some idea when is the best time for such gatherings.

I would like to make 1985 a special year for Dragon. The next issue, which I hope will be the Christmas edition, will be number twelve and the final one in first volume. Number thirteen, coming out in the new year, will then be Vol.2 No.1. I therefore intend to make a number of changes. There will be a card cover and numbered pages. Also there may be some changes in policy.

In the next issue I will be announcing a project which I hope the majority of you will take part. There will also be two special interviews: the first with authoress Rosemary Sutcliff and the second with Tim Strickland of Chester Museum.

Having complained about the lack of attendance at the Dragon-Moot I have another, and in someways more important, complaint. I am now starting to run out of articles. There is at present enough to do another two magazines but unless there is more contributions Dragon will tend to get smaller. The same is true of letters for Scrolls. I am sorry to harp on about this in each issue but this is your magazine and it is you with your articles, etc., that keeps Dragon alive and flourishing.

I hope that in the future I can count on your support. Let us try and make the next year something special. I have already made a step forward with submitting Dragon for an International Stan-

dard Serial Number, giving Dragon an air of respectability. I also hope that inauguration of the project mentioned above will produce some worthwhile results. But improvements in Dragon must be backed by YOU, so I am looking for a greater cooperation in the advancement of our little magazine.

I hope you will understand the hardline I am taking. Dragon, I am sure, can be improved and I look to each of you to help. Therefore, I look forward to hearing from you, with your comments, letters and articles. Now please read on:

HENGEST

by STEVE POLLINGTON

The story of Hengest is scattered throughout extant Old English literature, but fortunately enough remains to enable it to be reconstructed (tentatively!).

Bede refers to one Hengest as leader of a band of Jutes who settled in Kent at the behest of Vortigern; less well known is the reference in "Beowulf" to Hengest as an apparently important member of a group of "DENE" or Danes who spent the winter in Frisia as guests of the Frisian King, Finn. This in turn seems to be connected to the so-called "Fight at Finnesburh", a fragment of Anglo-Saxon poetry which was copied out circa 1700, and original subsequently lost. There are, however, enough points of similarity for us to be reasonably confident that "Beowulf" and "Finesburh" allude to the same events (though not necessarily the same version or re-telling of these events).

Briefly, it seems that a party of DENE under their king HNAEF are invited to spend the winter with his sister HILDEBURH, wife of FINN King of the Frisians. With HNAEF are a number of "WRECCA"s or adventurers who have settled at HNAEF's court, a large number of whom are "EOTEN"s, i.e. Jutes. Unhappily, there are Jutes who have settled with FINN and fighting breaks out (with the Danes

attacked in their lodgings) apparently over some ancient Jutish feud. FINN's own men become involved and many fall on either side, including HNAEF. To bring the feud to a close, FINN arranges a truce with the Danes by which they are to be unmolested in their separate quarters and no Jute or Frisian is to bring up the subject. Clearly, although a common-sense solution to a difficult situation, (the winter has frozen the seas and made return to Denmark impossible) this runs completely counter to the Germanic notion of loyalty which calls for the Danes to attack and destroy FINN, or die in the attempt.

Hengest, although not a Dane, is regarded as the leader after HNAEF's death and is egged on by his men to conceive of a plan by which they may avenge HNAEF. Apparently, when spring came, the Danes returned home and Hengest stayed with FINN. However, the Danes came back with re-inforcements and sacked the fortress of FINN - maybe Hengest was able to betray the Frisians - and carried off HILDEBURH back to Denmark.

Exactly what happened to Hengest now we cannot know but he obviously couldn't stay in Frisia, and with a true member of HNAEF's family on the scene he had small claim to remain leader of the Danes (which was probably only his *de facto* position while the voyagers were besieged in the guest-hall). Next, he probably collected together his warband ("HEAP") and any others he could persuade to follow him and set off in search of a better future.

When Bede mentions him, he is in company with his brother Horsa in Kent, as head of a band of mercenaries, in 453 A.D. The "FRESWÆL", as the fight is known, probably took place circa A.D. 452; Hengest was presumably born circa 425, making him more than 30 upon his arrival in Kent. His brother was killed (according to Bede) in battle soon after hostilities with the Britons began. Hengest is last mentioned as fighting the "WALAS" in 473, and his son succeeded to the kingdom in 488 (which suggests Hengest's death was not violent), when he would have been about 60-65, although he may have died some time before power was passed on to his successor.

In Bede's work, Hengest's son is called AESC ("ash"), but it has been suggested that, in fact, the names Hengest and Horsa are nicknames meaning "stallion" and "horse" and the brothers were really called OISC and EBISSA (both names of unknown meaning) since later kings of Kent are called OISINGAS (people of Oisc) although it may be a variant of AESINGAS (people of Aesc) if Hengest's son was the founder of the dynasty.

TALES FROM THE TWO ELLS
OR NEWLIGHT ON THE DARK AGES

by ROGER WILLCOX



It has been doubted that the Hengest of Beowulf is the same person as the Hengest of Bede's work. However, since Hengest is an otherwise unknown personal name and the chronology links the two references neatly (though this should not be allowed to clinch the matter), it seems to me entirely reasonable that we have references to one man only, and that a piece of valuable histor-

ical tradition has been dredged up from the depths of oblivion.

A fuller treatment of the subject of Hengest, the FRESWÆL and the background to the documentary evidence will be found in "Finn and Hengest: the fragment and the episode" by J.R.R. Tolkien edited by A.J. Bliss.

VORTIGERN

Traitor or Patriot

by PAT LITTON-HAVILL

Those who see the years of Roman rule in Britain as perhaps the only time when this country has merited the word 'civilised' would have us believe that the end of the Roman Empire came suddenly, leaving Britain in a state of turmoil and truly worthy of the name Dark Ages, helped in no small way by an arch-traitor named Vortigern, the enemy of all things Roman, and guilty of all the things written of him by saints and historians. But were both Vortigern and the British he tried to rule as completely devoid of hope as some writers would have us believe?

Over wide areas, the last of the urban and villa people remained in control, albeit through a rather shaky version of the administration system, and stayed in touch with the Mediterranean. They spoke Latin and were mostly Christian. On the other hand, the native peasants spoke the old Celtic British language and were still largely pagan. The end of Roman rule probably meant little more to them than the stopping of compulsory grain exports and the constant benefits of better eating and more land under cultivation.

Particularly in Wales and other higher and wilder areas tribalism was fast returning (it may never have left completely), and usual regional despots who invariably grab the first opportunity, were beginning to entrench themselves. They based their claims on being legitimate successors of Rome, - a claim probably arising from Stilicho's frontier policy.

As the Roman influence waned, so the old Celtic culture revived further. Craftsmen were again making delicately embellished bowls and designs in linear tracery, perhaps with less flair and assurance of the old work, but it was nevertheless

a start. The old religion also seems to have acquired a brief vigour - for instance Vortigern's magicians may have been descendants of the Druids, not all of whom would have been exterminated on Anglesey.

By the time of the rise of Vortigern the trend away from Rome seems to have reached a point where it would not be absurd to speak of Celtic nationalism. The failure of the last appeal for Imperial help led even more discrediting of the Romanised element in Britain and substantially aided Vortigern in his nationalistic stand.

So who was this man who could begin his career as a nationalist and end it being hated by both Rome and his own countrymen? Even if we take the name Vortigern as being a title rather than a personal name, it is still Celtic, not Latin. His pedigree seems to be very mixed, as his ancestors are believed to be from the Gloucester area, were Romanised and probably Christian. His great-grandfather seems to have been called 'Glovi' (a native of Gloucester) with epithet Gwalltir (Long hair), a term used for German auxiliaries was named Vitalinus, his father Vitalis, both Roman names.

The Roman army in Britain in 342-367 AD were shattered by the events of this time (Pict and Scot raids, barbarian raids, civil war, etc.) and Vortigern gave his son a Celtic name. Things Roman evidently no longer had the appeal which peace and prosperity had given them. Nor is Vitalis's choice of a non-Roman name for his son a unique example, for instance, the Strathclyde Britons had been ruled by Clemens, then Quintilius, yet c.360 the infant heir was Cynlopp. The pro-Roman Votadini by Tacitus, Paternus and Aeternus, but c.370 the new born heir was Cuneda.

Vortigern (with one exception) gave his children Celtic names. The odd one out was his third son, Pascentus, born c. 400, the time of Stilicho's restoration of Roman power in Britain, and a good time for a close relationship of Magnus Maximus to demonstrate his Romanitas.

At the height of his power no-one but Vortigern held sway over such a large area of Britain, but in both gaining and holding his territory he was something more than a military chieftain. His sons were warriors, but for Vortigern the Roman office of vicarius is more likely. A Romano-Briton appointed to be vicarius by the Romans would be able to exert his authority as Vortigern did.

A flash of economic recovery gave him confidence, but even so his resources were not equal to the combined onslaught of Pict and Saxon, and nationalist though he was, he

was not above reverting to old imperial policy when the need arose. The tragedy was that Vortigern lacked the Empire's treasury and a dispute arose over payment in kind.

When dealing with the last events of his 'reign' it must be remembered that by the time of the revolt of the Saxons in Thanet he was an old man of 65-70 years, and when Ambrosius and Vortimer were active, he was no more than a figurehead.

Although he was gone down in history as an evil, lecherous villain, it could be argued that this was a man who did his duty as he saw it, but who in the end was crushed by circumstances which he wrongly thought he could control.

REVIEW

THE SECRET TRADITION IN ARTHURIAN LEGEND: Gareth Knight. Aquarian Press, 1983.

In the long history of Arthurian literature there have been many theories: some good, some bad, others simply lunatic; and there have been some which have changed the way we look at mythos for all time. Such a one, in my opinion, is that put forward by Gareth Knight in The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend. To those whose approach is a purely literary one, or who believe implicitly in the historical Arthur, it may come as something of a shock to learn that there is a symbolic reality behind the legends that is neither historical or literary. Arthur is, quite simply, the soul of Britain (or "Logres" as its hidden self is called) and his knights, his queen, and their court are all aspects of an inner reality with which the science of psychology is familiar - though often mistaken about. Logres, then, is an inner realm, and Camelot a spiritual place just as Sarras in the Grail story; the queen and her ladies represent the feminine mysteries; Merlin and the Fairy Women are the guides and shapers of Arthur's realm. Then there are the "Greater Mysteries of the Grail" which stand at the heart of the Arthurian tradition.

What makes Gareth Knight's book - to my mind - so important is that we have tended to forget this spiritual inner magical dimension of Arthur for too long: to our own loss and that of all who love the stories for the way they can change us; those who read the stories in our youth and

became knights in quest of the miraculous - but, are we still, or have we abandoned our old ideals for other aims?

Gareth Knight puts all this back where it should always have remained - centre-stage, larger than life in the true sense of the phrase. For those who know only a one dimensional Arthur it can add a great deal to their appreciation of the stories. To those who have left the Quest it may well bring them back to it with renewed vigour. For the rest, I can only suggest you read it - you may never be the same again!

c. John Matthews. 1984

This edition's Review section contains two Osprey books both written by David Nicolle and illustrated by Angus McBride.

THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE Warfare in Western Europe 750-1000 AD. Text by David Nicolle Ph.D. Colour plates by Angus McBride. Osprey Men-at-Arms Series No. 150 1984 £3.95 in U.K. only.

This beautifully illustrated book contains masses of useful material about arms and armour in the second half of the Dark Ages in Europe. Two illustrations are of particular interest. In plate B is depicted an Armorican cavalryman. He wears a long coat of mail, a late Roman helmet (or at least part of one) and carries a shield and javelin. His horse is clothed Roman *clibanarius* style horse armour.

The other picture is plate with with a Saxon infantry levy. He is without armour of any kind but wears a sword and seax and carries a long bow.

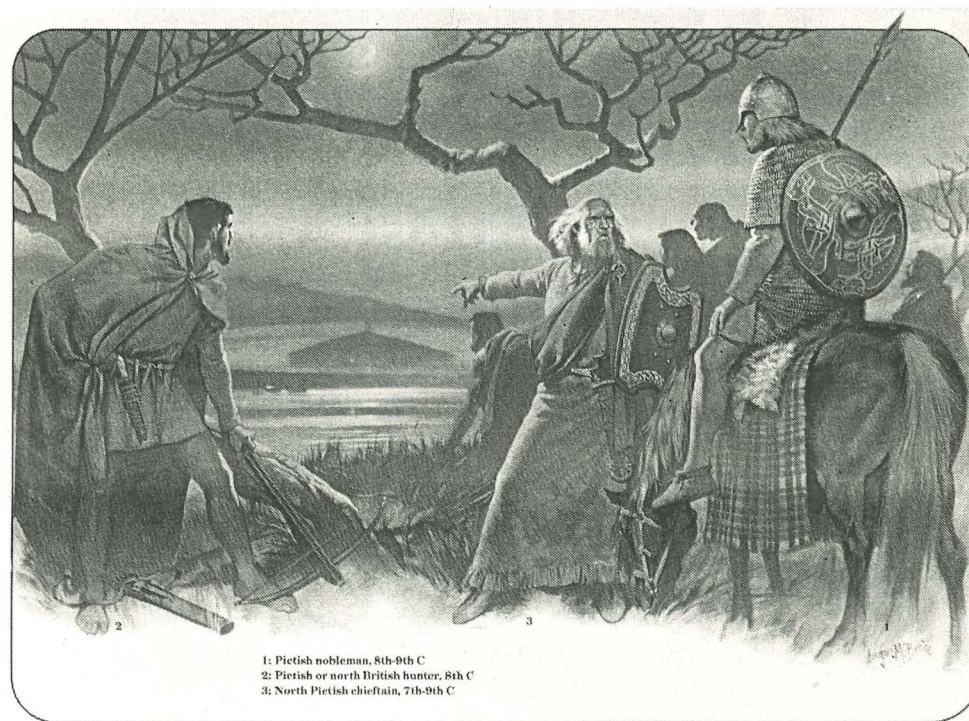
Overall this is an excellent book with great illustrations and a fascinating text. A must for those interested in the European side of the period.

ARTHUR AND THE ANGLO-SAXON WARS Anglo-Celtic Warfare, AD. 410-1066. Text by David Nicolle Ph.D. Colour plates by Angus McBride. Osprey Men-at-Arms Series No. 154 due to be published November 1984 £3.95 in U.K. only.

It is here at last and it is worth waiting for! Osprey have kindly sent me a review copy of

this book and I certainly advise you to go round to your nearest bookshop and order it.

David Nicolle looks at various aspects of the Dark Ages ranging from "The End of Britannia" to "Anglo-Scandinavian England" not forgetting the Welsh, the Picts and the Scots and Irish. He covers this most difficult period in a masterly fashion for such a limited space with only a few mistakes. While dealing with what he calls the "Sub-Roman" period he makes a most interesting point. In comparing Britain to Europe we find that the places easily conquered by the Germanic invaders later became absorbed into the Latin or Latinised Celtic population. While in Britain where the Romano-Celts put up a forceful defence it was the Germanic tribes that took over the country. A fascinating "what-if?" here.



1: Pictish nobleman, 8th-9th C
2: Pictish or north British hunter, 8th C
3: North Pictish chieftain, 7th-9th C

Moving to Angus McBrides illustrations - what can you say but excellent. His depiction of the various peoples of this period is thoroughly pleasing. I find it difficult to fault though I

do not completely agree with the overall colouring of the Romano-British of plate C. Many folk believe the Celts to be like many Welsh people - small and dark - yet early Welsh poetry many times draws attention to the pale skins and fair hair. Nevertheless, I am sure that they were a mixed bag by the time the Saxons came in any number.

There is no doubting that every serious fan of this period should have a copy of this very satisfying book. (No I haven't got shares in Osprey!) I think it has a bit for everyone and not only does it answer many questions but also poses quite a few more. For me this is the book of the year.

Finally, in Review, I wonder what will have been your book of 1984. Will Geoffrey Ashe's "The Discovery of Arthur" be the most important book of 1985. We will have to wait and see. If you have any reviews of books, films or whatever please let me have them. (By the way, just a note the reviews are normally done by himself unless otherwise stated.)

CERDIC The Forgotten King

by ROBERT TAYLOR

There are some figures in history who seemed to have been ignored or dismissed as if by common consent. It is as though a convention of historians had at some point decided that history would be neater without these characters. Over the last twenty or thirty years the figure of Arthur has slowly begun to emerge from the "Dark Ages", but others remain in the murk, cloaked in mystery.

Let us leave Arthur and have a look at one of those neglected figures, namely Cerdic. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Cerdic and Cynric (his son) landed at Southampton Water in 495 A.D. I was once argued that this founder of Wessex was a purely mythical character because the nucleus of West Saxon settlement at this time

seems to have been based on the Upper Thames Valley. However finds of early Saxon burials have been made near Southampton Water and Winchester which seem to back up the advances attributed to Cerdic by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

So far so good, archaeology agrees with the Chronicle. Or does it? The "Dark Ages" are not only dark but also misleading. The eminent archaeologist E.T. Leeds found that objects discovered in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in the Thames Valley, especially at Abingdon and Dorchester indicated the presence of settlers there in the early part of the fifth century. Is the Chronicle wrong then? Why does it not mention these earlier settlers. The answer may be that these people were living passively under the control of the Romano-British or that they were prepared to fight on their behalf.

Back now to 495. If Cerdic landed with his son, and the Chronicle specifically mentions Cynric, then we may assume that the boy was considered to be a warrior, i.e. more than twelve years of age. Cerdic himself would probably have been between 25 and 40 years old at the time. In 534 (according to the Chronicle) Cerdic died; probably between the ages of 65 and 80. If he had been 80 when he died it follows that he would have been born in 455 or thereabouts. In that particular year the Saxons under Hengist and Horsa fought the British under Vortigern. Geoffrey of Monmouth, repeating old legends, describes a new treaty after this battle (Aylesford) and the marriage of Vortigern to Hengest's daughter. If there had been a child of this union he would have been 79 years old in 534. Why then did he not succeed his father? The answer may be that "Vortigern" was a title rather than a personal name. Some authorities suggest that it meant "tyrant" or "overlord", rather in the manner of the Gallic "Arviragus" and as such was an appointed position rather than hereditary.

Vortigern disappears from the scene during the 460's when Ambrosius Aurelianus comes to prominence, most probably he died about this time. Now, the son of a Celtic warlord and a Saxon princess would have found little favour with

Ambrosius and his pro-Roman party, so the young Cerdic would probably have returned with his mother to her people. At any rate he disappears until 495. Did he reappear in British territory intent on claiming a crown he saw as his by right?

To recap then, so far we have a fanciful theory and some juggling with dates, nothing more. However, there are one or two other clues to be found. To begin with, "Cerdic" is a Celtic name, as are many personal names of the Wessex royal family. In Wales near the abbey of Valle Crucis there stands a pillar (once part of a cross) put up by the royal family of Powys in honour of king Eliseg or Eliset. The inscription shows that Eliseg traced his descent from a son of Vortigern by Sevira, daughter of Magnus Maximus. Geoffrey of Monmouth tells a story implying that Sevira inherited rights in the Powys area from her mother, Maximus' British wife. Geoffrey gives the title as "Dux Gewissi" and it was apparently transmitted to Vortigern.

GEWIS

|
ESLA

|
ELESA

|
CERDIC

and the Anglo-Saxon
Chronicle says
GEWIS was the son of WIG

WODEN

|
BAELDAEG

|
BRAND

|
FREOTHOGAR

|
FREAWINE

Bede refers to the West Saxons as the "Gewissi" or "Gewissae"* and in Cerdic's pedigree his father is named as Elesa which could well be a corruption of Eliseg. Remembering that Vortigern was most probably a title and not a proper name, could Cerdic's father's personal name have been Eliseg/Elesa after whom the king on the Valle Crucis pillar was named?

Finally, and as a parting shot, is it to fantastic to suggest that the story of Cerdic gave

rise to the legend of Mordred? That perhaps it was not Arthur's disinherited son who returned to claim a kingdom but Vortigern's....

*Some authorities translate this as meaning "confederates" - at least in this context. This could indicate that the early West Saxons were of mixed British/Saxon blood.

(Editor's note: In all fairness it must be pointed out that this theory was also postulated by Geoffrey Ashe, he who leaves no stone unturned, on pages 275-6 of his book From Caesar to Arthur, Collins, 1960. I would also like to add that I have read of the possibility that Cerdic's father appears in Bede's History of the English Church and People under the name Elafius which is remarkably similar to Elesa. This event took place around 446 and all we know of Elafius is that he had a son "in the flower of his youth". Could Elafius be Cerdic's father?)

SCROLLS

This issue's Scrolls begins with Steve Pollington asking why no Scrolls in Dragon 10. The simple answer is that there were no letters to put in that issue. However, we do a little more this time. Graham Sumner asks:

"Would readers be willing to offer their explanations as to why historians assume that the battle of Badon was fought at one of the re-occupied Iron Age hillforts, i.e. Liddington Castle or Badbury, etc....

"For we are often informed that warriors such as the Saxons for example had difficulty in storming defended positions lacking the sophistication and technology required for such a feat.

"These hillforts had been re-occupied we are informed because they were more defensible than miles of crumbling Roman town walls. The task of taking them must therefore have been harder, or why bother defending them.

"It is true that Aelle captured the old Saxon Shore fort at Pevensey, but the site had been built in a desolate spot and there is little to suggest that it was otherwise after the Romans left, so this might be Saxon propaganda.

"Are we to assume therefore that the Saxons were in the process of be-sieging an outlying hillfort and were routed by a relieving force, or captured one of these fortifications and had then allowed themselves to be besieged in turn. Or had they actually succeeded in surprising the main British army in their own base.

"It seems more likely to me that like the later Medieval and Civil War armies who also lacked proper intelligence and scouting systems that the two sides simply collided with each other in some remote spot and fought for the higher ground. Perhaps some other reader could shed some light on the subject."

Thanks for the interesting question and let's hope someone has a go at solving this problem.

Unfortunately that is it for Scrolls - well, one letter is better than none. (May I just add that this doesn't mean that I haven't recieved any letters at all, just letters that don't call to be in Scrolls.) So come on folks, if you want Scrolls to continue in Dragon then you must write something for this section. I hope that the response will improve in the future.

Finally, I must make a plea to ask for more material for Dragon. At the moment I think I have enough for two more issues. I have some ideas myself but I would prefer your contributions. So if you have anything, it doesn't matter what, please write in. I am not interested in masterpieces of prose or artwork - what I would like to see is your thoughts, opinions and ideas in print. So please don't be shy give it a go and write an article or draw an illustration.

I look forward to seeing your contributions. and reading your letters.

DRAGON c/o Charles W. Evans-Gunther
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Dragon

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A society for people interested in the life and times of ARTHUR and the cultures of "DARK AGE" Britain.

9 Earls Lea, FLINT, Clwyd, CH6 5BT, N.Wales, U.K.

Dear friend,

a short note to mention two points:
First I wish to apologise to anyone who has written to me and not received an answer. This is due to a couple of months of hard work. So please forgive for not replying, I promise that I will answer your next letter.

Secondly, I forgot to mention that the Quest Heritage Tours also run an inexpensive version of their tour, consisting of seven days at £179.

Well, that's about it for 1984 have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
Best wishes,

