Dragon

8

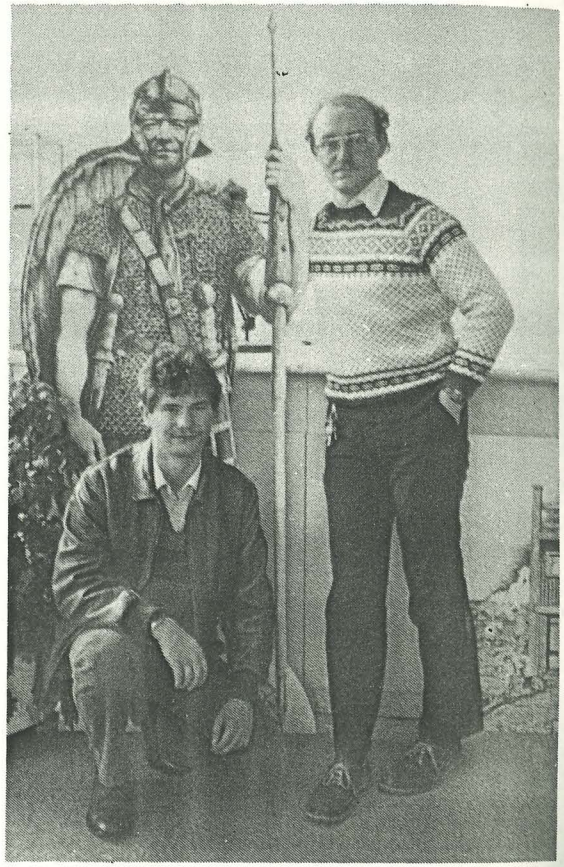
Newsletter of the DRAGON Society for people interested in the life and times of ARTHUR and the cultures of 'DARK AGE' Britain.

MAGNUS MAXIMUS

AD 383-1983

Welcome to Dragon No.8 and a Happy New Year to you all. This issue begins with reports on the two moots held in Manchester and London, and the Arthurian weekend at the European Folk Studies Centre in Llangollen. There are questions being posed concerning names and dates...partially discussed at the London moot and also in an article by Chris Lovegrove. Other articles include part two of Sandra Garside-Neville's Arthurian fiction, the Gods of the English, Magnus Maximus and the name of Arthur. Finally, this issue includes an extended review of Wilson and Blackett's book King Arthur King of Glamorgan and Gwent plus reviews of other recent books and magazines.

Following the rush to get out the invitations to the two moots, and the correcting of the date mistake, the first moot was held at Manchester on the 17th September 1983. Unfortunately attendence was small and the moot ended up consisting of Paul Cregan, Graham Sumner and himself. No real points surfaced during the conversation, nevertheless I would like to thank Graham for allowing us to meet at the Castlefield Visitors Centre (worth a visit if you are ever in Manchester - you'll find it on the corner of Deansgate and Liverpool Road). Suffice to say the conversation took on a Roman flavour once at the Centre.



Paul Cregan Graham Sumner

October 8th saw the next and mucher larger moot. We all met on the steps of the British Museum, the complement this time numbered ten. Once gathered and introduced (sorry Nigel

L to R: Chris Lovegrove Robert Taylor Steve Hacker Nigel Vye Steve Pollington Mrs Tomlinson Anthony Tomlinson P. t Litton-Havill Sandra Garside-Neville

for the triple bad introduction!) we all made our way to the Sutton Hoo exhibition. There Robert Taylor, of the Arthurian Society, showed us around discussing some points concerning the arms and armour exhibited (eg the straps of the shield not being safe). From there it was a cup of tea, or coffee, and a bite to eat. Unfortunately, space was limited and we had to split into groups of four. (This continued through most of the moot...I wish I had had time to reconnoitre the area before the moot.) Discussion covered quite a large field... from Wilson and Blackett to stirrups.

Leaving the Museum we sat outside in the courtyard and discussed topics brought up mainly by Robert Taylor's suggestions for a confederation of clubs. Amongst those present was also Chris Lovegrove of the Pendragon Society. It was agreed that the whole concept should be put forward to the three societies before any important decisions were made. However all those present were happy about the idea. One important point discussed was the narrowing down of

timescale looked at by the groups. It was suggested that ARTHUR should be like a pivot - the midway date - and then with a scope of 150 years each way. This gives a rough area of 350 to 650. The time scale covered ranges then from, approximately, the "Barbarian Conspiracy" to the defeat of the last "King of the Britons"-Cadwallon in 634. Your comments on this would be welcomed.

The cold eventually beat us and we left the Museum courtyard in search of somewhere warmer. Discussions started earlier continued and though we did find a cafe we were unable to get into one group again. I wish I had personally moved around more and chatted to other members. The day was rounded off with a return to the Museum for another drink and a bun.

I would very much like to thank all those who came to the London moot. I only wish it could have been better organised. It is hoped that next year we will meet in Northampton in connection with the confederation of clubs.

Arthurian Legend - the need for a hero

This event took place over three days at the beginning of November (4th-6th). It consisted of a series of lectures about varying aspects of the Arthurian legend. People came from many parts of Britain plus two gentlemen from Holland. Residents on the course consisted of fourteen people, including Mike Rusling and myself from the Dragon Society. The average attendence of each lecture was between 25 & 30. The weekend proved a great success and was enjoyed by everyone. According to Cathryn Gwynn, administrator of the Folk Studies Centre, it is hoped that another course of this type may be held later this year ('84).

I will attempt to give you a report on the lectures - unfortunately space doesn't allow a complete transcript and I have jumped over Mr Donald Moore's piece on "Arthur as illustrated", which was primarily a visual lecture. (I hope the Keeper of Maps and Prints at the National Library of Wales forgives me.)

The first lecture was the "Bardic Image" given by Sir Idris Foster, possibly the foremost expert on the "Culhwch and Olwen" tale from the Mabinogion. Sir Idris, former Professor of Celtic at Jesus College, Oxford, astounded us all with his depth of knowledge and fantastic memory. He began by discussing some of the Victorian writers and poets then mentioning more recent poets like Charles Williams and T.Gwynn Jones. The source for these was Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain (1136). However, the Bardic Image goes back even further.

Sir Idris covered the bardic system from its roots in Pre-Roman times and then explored Arthur's image from the 7th century. He looked at the Gododdin, with Arthur the paragon of valour and the poetry attached to Taliessin: the Spoils of Annwn and the Battle of the Trees - the former having Arthur invading the Otherworld. From there he discussed the poems concerned with Geriant, Dialogue poetry and the Stanzas of the Graves. In these grows a folk lore hero and the 'once and future king'. Connected with the latter was the Monks of Laon who while visiting Cornwall witness a riot over whether Arthur was dead or was asleep awaiting his people's call.

Finally, Sir Idris mentioned the Lives of the Saints in which Arthur is treated as a tyrant to glorify the 'holy men'. Following the lecture there was a period of questions and discussion. (Once again space doesn't allow detail but an extended look at the second discussion period can be found later.)

The second of Sir Idris' lectures was entitled "History and Archaeology of Arthur". He immediately began by quoting Kenneth Jackson: "...nothing is certain about the historical Arthur not even his existence, however there are certain possibilities, even probablities...". Sir Idris announced that he was somewhat less agnostic than that and continued with a short piece on Arthur's name.

He then described the contents of Harleian MSS 3859... touching first on the Annals of the Welsh, beautifully describing how the monks had to depend on word of mouth - "...you couldn't send a telex from St Davids to another scriptorium". Visiting monks would bring news about events for certain years..."Well, it must have been in...". In the same MSS was the chronicle written possibly by Nennius and a section call the "Mirabilia", in which Arthur appeared as a folk hero.

Returning to Nennius Sir Idris discussed Chapter 56... "Then Arthur fought against them...". He pointed out the possibility that the 12 battles of Arthur could be based on a 12 stanza poem. In this chronicle Arthur was described

as 'Dux Bellorum' and Sir Idris suggests that rather than Battle Leader this could, like the Medieval Welsh title 'Tywysog Cad', meaning Leader of the War host or Warband.

From Nennius he moved to Gildas - "Dear Old Gildas..." and told of his love of the Roman way of life, 'Romanitas'. He described Gilds' work as "a rocket of a homily". While discussing the battle of Badon he gave a possibly explanation of why Arthur is not mentioned by Gildas: "If the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote an encyclical letter saying there has been 40 years of peace since the battle of Waterloo which of course was won by the great Duke of Waterloo, would he add which of course was won by the great Duke of Wellington". Sir Idris then examined the names of battles connected with Arthur but cut himself off saying he leave placenames to Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones.
even though Arthur emerged from a time of the collapse of "Romanitas' and 'invasions' this period shouldn't be called the Dark Ages. He felt that to call the important Cadbury excavations Camelot (paraphrasing John Morris' Age of Arthur) "belonged to the 'Age of Walt Disney'". Finally, Sir Idris considered that he "could convert Prof. Jackson's possibility into a strong probability".

An aside to the lectures were the discussion peiods and during the session after the above lecture Dr Brown, a local worthy, postulated some interestin ideas. He suggested that Arthur was not British but either a Saxon or a Gaul. Would the British kings have followed a British leader or did the authority come from some other source. According to the Gallic Chronicle: the Britons "passed under the rule of the Saxons"-"...in dicionem Saxonum...". Dr Brown points out that the Latin used was a legal term. He also suggested that Bretwalda was the Saxon equivalent of 'Vicarius Britannarum' and it means 'ruler of the British'.

Arthur's campaign he proposed were not against the Saxons but the Irish, Picts and unruly N. Britons. The battles of Arthur can be positioned in areas affected by such troublesome people: Chester, Bassingwerk (Bassas?), Agned and Breguion...Badon was added at a later date. Dr Brown said that early Welsh writers had been influenced by Bede making Vortigern the villian of the piece. Arthur had been Cymrised because Nennius was writing at a time when his patrons were at war with the Saxons.

Sir Idris agreed with that the British kings would more likely accept an outsider than one of their own kings. He added that Dr Brown's theory was not improbable but rather "tenable and attractive".

On the Saturday evening we were treated to a lecture by the charismatic Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones, who began:- "Eight o'clock on a Saturday night, Good God, hardly the time for a lecture...I should tell you a story, shouldn't I?" He then went on to weave a fabric of words - like a bard of old. His lecture was entitled "The Popular Image".

He continued with a question: Who was Arthur? and then posed a second: Whose Arthur? Looking at the earliest of records (the Gododdin, a poem to Cynddylan and the battle list from Nennius) he showed that the first image was that of a warrior who fought the Saxons. "That was the interpretation that suited the needs of the 7th century Welsh..." and equally suited Nennius' 9th century patron.

The second image began with the "Mirabilia" section added to Nennius' History of the Britons. In this Arthur becomes the hunter, the superhero. By the 9th century he was a performer of miracles and fantastic deeds - half god half man. Prof. Jones continued with the hunter/superhero by quoting from the tale of "Culhwch and Olwen". Here the Prof. became that bard of old, bringing life to an ancient story. Having taken us into the world of legend he brought us back to the twentieth century by calling the tale an excellent piece of Television. He described the way the story used panaramic technic, sweeping across the action narrowing in on the individuals and then focusing on on the boar in the river. "Good tales, supremely well told". For me the Professor's telling of the hunt of the Twrch Trwyth brought it more to life than anything I had ever read or heard before. He told a good tale supremely well.

The tale of "Culhwch and Olwen" protrayed Arthur - the warrior, the miracle worker, the host with a court. Already the Arthur of the Middle Ages was there in embryo. The Stanzas of the Graves and the Monks of Laon point to another image in Pre-Norman times - that of the mystery of Arthur's passing.

He then discussed the Arthurian explosion that took place in the 12th century following Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain. "His work quickly became a best-seller." In fact Arthur is found in Europe wherever the Norman were present - from Britain to Palestine (there is even an Arthurian tale in Hebrew). Prof. Jones commented:

"Geoffrey was the most brillant singular writer ever to tackle the Arthurian legend." He kept the warrior image but also the superhero and the mystery of Arthur's passing. Geoffrey turned Arthur into the ideal ruler of the Medieval period.

Arthur in the later Romances is very much in the background. It is his court - his knights - that are now important. Here more of the later elements are added - Merlin, the Round Table and its Fellowship. It is this "Frenchified - Normanised" Arthur, through Malory, that we all read about as children. "This is the Arthur of films and television."

"That ultimately in my view is my answer to who is Arthur? Whose Arthur? So lttle has been known for certian that he has been so capable of so many transformations."

Following the lecture there was a short discussion period in which the Prof. answered many questions. One concerned why he thought Arthur had become this image of warrior, folk hero, etc. His answer was that he became a magnet for many tales and adventure by accident. Lindsay Evans, who chaired the course, rounded off the evening by comparing Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones to the hero-bard Gwydion (mentioned early in the lecture). The lecture was without doubt captivating and a first class performance.

The final day of the course began with lecture entitled "Arthur as Illustrated" by Mr Donald Moore. As the title indicates this was primarily a visual lecture and so it would be difficult to report without showing the paintings, etc. used. Suffice to say the lecture covered a large field and was expertly put over.

Second lecture of the day, and the last, was "Arthurian Placenames" by Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones, Professor of Welsh at Bangor University. "...It's not a easy subject...nor a fruitful subject...", he began. He excuse himself saying that he didn't think he would be able to cover it adequately. Then went ahead and gave an excellent lecture.

The Prof. continued by locating some of the Nennian battle list sites, e.g. Badon - Badbury Rings or somewhere near Bath, plus Camlan being Camboglana on the Wall. Other sites connected with the Nennius chronicle are Carn Cafall (a number of other similar Arthurain sites also are stones with imprint on them) and Licat Amr - source of the R. Gamber.

Most placenames are later in their recording but there are a few earlier ones. Placenames found in the Mirabilia, Lives of the Saints and the Mabinogion seem to point to an area around the Wye-Severn Estuary. "Perhaps", says Prof. Jones, "preoccupied with Welsh tradition we have minimised the place of the South East of Wales and the South West of Britain (Devon and Cornwall) in the early evolution of the Arthurian legend...". Early placenames do seem to indicate the early growth of the legend in the South. He also points out that this area was the meeting-place of Welsh and Normans.

Sites connected with Arthur's name include: Ogof (cave), Llech (slab), Maen (stone), Carreg (also a stone), Bwrdd (table), Buarth (enclosure), Bedd (grave), Cist, Moel (hill), Eisteddfa (seat) and Coetan (quoit). These are likely to be of a late date in origin. However, one name that may be a pointer is Bwrdd Arthur in Anglesey. Once called Din Silwy, then in the 16th century called the Hill of the Round Table, this Bwrdd Arthur may have connections with the post-Norman cult of the Round Table. A survey of placenames in Wales is badly needed Prof. Jones remarked.

He continued by looking at the earliest recorded story of Arthur sleeping in a cave awaiting the call of his poeple. This occurred near Gloucester in c.1520. Other such sites include Llantrisant, Caerleon, Ysgeifiog, Bala and near Snowdon. Placenames, he re-emphasised, show the continuation of the growth of the Arthurian legend and folklore.

In conclusion, Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones made some remarks about the position of Arthur in the 20th century. Arthur as the sleeping messianic lord continued in the poetry of folk like Sylvan Roberts and T. Gwyn Jones. Saunders Lewis, so prominent in the establishment of the Welsh political party, saw Arthur as a symbol of the hopes and aspirations of Wales. However, today Arthur is " as dead as a dodo" and his place as national hero is taken by Owain Glyndwr and Llywelyn the Last who aspired in the Middle Ages for an independent Wales. Finally, he summed up by saying that placenames pointed to folklore but told us nothing about the historical Arthur.

So ended the last of the series of lectures. I am quite sure that everyone left Llangollen well pleased both with the lectures and the service given at the Hand Hotel. I would like to thank Cathryn Gwynn and the staff of the European Folk Studies Centre for an excellent course. I certainly look forward to another one.

MAGNUS MAXIMUS

(A short article to commemorate the anniversary of Magnus Maximus.)

Clemens Magnus Maximus was born in the Spanish province of Gallaecia during the first half of the fourth century. He was a contempory of Emperor Theodosius who was born in 346. Theodosius was the son of the wealthy landowner and soldier from Cauca,near Segovia in North West Spain - Count Theodosius. It is very likely that Maximus had served as part of the Theodosii household because later he was spoken of disparagingly as "Theodosius' home'bred slave". Little else is known of him until the year 367 when he accompanied Count Theodosius to Britain in order to quell the 'Barbarian Conspiracy'. (See Dragon 7) Maximus,historians point out,distinguished himself in the re-establishment of Roman control.

The Count was rewarded for his work with the title Magister Equitum and marched off to the Upper Danube where he defeated the Alemanni. Whether Maximus went with the Count cannot be asserted but he was definitely with him in North Africa putting down the rebellion of Firmus the Moor in 373. Three years later Count Theodosius was executed for unknown reasons (though there was a hint of political conspiracy). Theodosius the Younger meanwhile had been making a name for himself in Moesia Superior where he had halted a Sarmatian invasion. However with the death of his father he was retired to his lands in Spain.

Maximus had been posted to the Danube frontier where he is said to have attended a conference held at Sirmin. The Emperor Valens,in 379,died following a defeat by the Romans at the battle of Hadrianople by the Goths, and Emperor of the West Gratian summoned Theodosius to Illyricum as Magister Militum to deal with the marauding Goths. On the 19th January 379 Theodosius was proclaimed Emperor of the East.

Four years later Magnus Maximus was in Britain again, probably in command of Roman force as Dux or Comes Britannarum. Sometime before 383 he led the army against an invasion of Picts and Scots. He proved victorious and in the summer of 383 A.D. he was proclamed Emperor by his soldiers. Some say he protested the proclamation while other historians say that resenting his 'friend' Theodosius the Yonger's elevation to the purple it was of his own making. There is,however,a third possibility. Theodosius may have connected the death of his father to the young Emperor of the West,Gratian. The new Emperor trying to consolidate his position may have backed Maximus. Later Theodosius was very quick to recognise Maximus as the new Emperor of the West and it wasn't until Magnus Maximus invaded Italy did he come out against him.

Little is known of Maximus' personal life except that he had a brother,Marcellinus,an infant son,Flavius Victor, an uncle,a mother and a daughter. Welsh tradition says he married Elen,daughter of Eudaf who was a chieftain from North Wales. A story called "The Dream of Macsen Wledig", Magnus Maximus was called Macsen in Welsh,situated Eudaf in the Roman fort of Caernarfon - Segontium. It has been suggested that Maximus' personal bodyguard were the Auxilium Palatinum Seguentienses later found in Illyricum where he was defeated in 388 A.D.

Whether Magnus Maximus was a great hero or a despot later generation claimed descent from him and stories about the Emperor and his sons and daughters were passed down over the ages. Vortigern is,according to the Eliseg Pillar,a son-in-law to Maximus by marriage to a daughter,Sevira.

Finally to bring Magnus Maximus into the 20th century and the 1,600th anniversary of his proclamation S4C (the Welsh language TV channel) put on a film called "Macsen". It updated the legend of Macsen Wledig changing him from a Roman Emperor into a famous international pop singer, played by Geraint Jarman. The tale was filmed appropriately in and around Caernarfon.

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ARTICLES TO COME: Anglo-Saxon Heathendom, Stilicho,Berserk!,Cerdic,the Forgotten King, Arthur in Cardiff,The Northern Arthur,A Trip to Amesbury,Pelagius,Dark Age Films (2),Hero, The North Walian Arthur,Reviews and Scrolls.

Review

KING ARTHUR - KING OF GLAMORGAN & GWENT
by A.T. Blackett and Alan Wilson. M.T.Byrd, 1983

This A4 size book consisting of 315 pages with hansome black ornamented cover tells: *"The history of the Kings of the Arthurian Era. Proving the existence and power of the Dynasty, illustrating the Anscestors and Successors of Arthur"*. The book is full of information, photographs, drawings, maps and tables. Its design is marred only by the lack of an index and a series of inept illustrations depicted Arthurian characters. The text covers a wide variety of subjects including written evidence (e.g. the Welsh Annals, Nennius, Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, interpreted by the authors), cultural memory, folk lore and legends, literature and the 'history' of Arthur. Overall the text is not particularly exciting and at times heavy-going - but certainly not unreadable.

The central premise (as covered in D*7) is that the Arthur of Geoffrey of Monmouth and others is a composite character made up of at least two 'Arthurs'. It also lays out in graphic form a pedigree going back Bran son of Llyr and from 'Arthur' to Iestyn ap Gwrgan (1091). Though they show four 'Arthurs' two are studied in detail.

Arthur I is Anthun or Annun ap Macsen Wledig (the authors persist on calling Macsen *Mascen*) though he is shown as son of Victor son of Magnus Maximus and they point out that he was called Andragathius. (Victor they say becomes Uther in Welsh...yet Victoria in Welsh is Buddug, like the Brittonic Boudicca.) Historians, however, call Andragathius a native of the Black Sea area (Zosimus IV 35.6) and Flavius Victor died an infant. Later the authors told me Annun was a son of Magnus Maximus by a previous marriage. It is from this first 'Arthur' that the more famous 'Arthur', who fought the Saxons, is descended.

Magnus Maximus
|
Victor (Uther)
|
Arthur I
Andragathius
|
Teitheryn
|
Thathal
|
Teithfallt
|
Tewdrig
|
Meurig
|
Arthur II
Arthwys/Athrwys

This pedigree is a composite of three or more seperate genealogies:

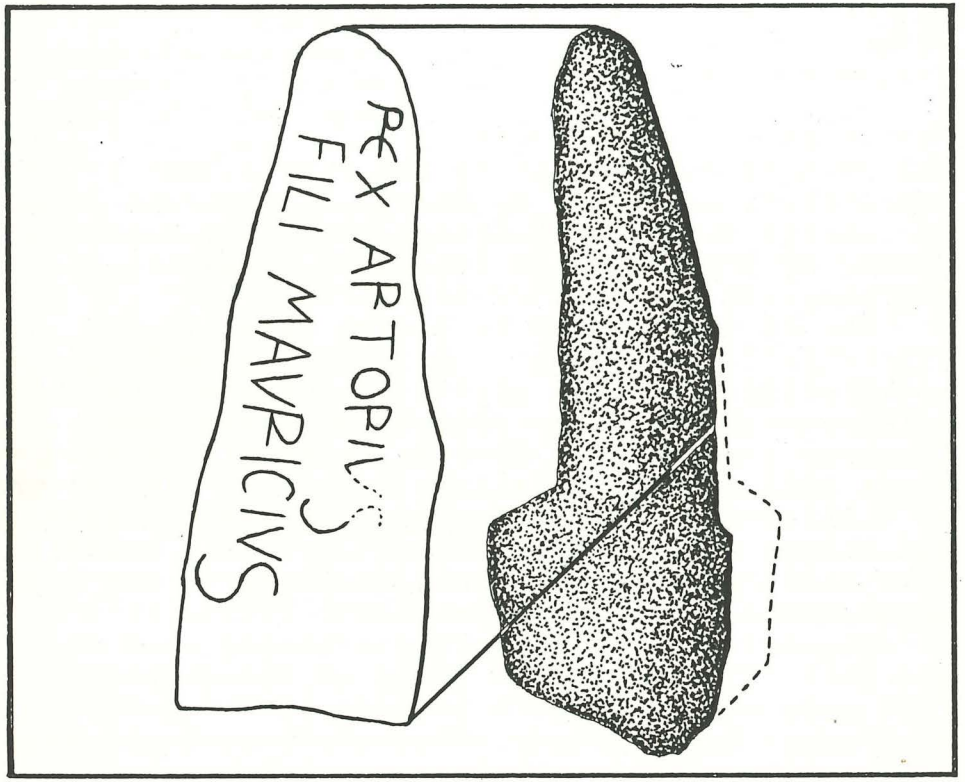
Harleian MS 3859 No 4	*Cotton MS Vespasian (+ others)*	*Harelian MS 3859 No 28*
Macsen Wledig		
Annhun →	*Annwn Ddu*	
	Thathal	
	Teidtheryn	
	Teidfallt	
	Tewdric →	*Teubudric*
	Marchell	*Mouric*
	Brachan	*Arthuis*

The question is are those the authors consider to be the same actual interchangeable. Is Annhun ap Macsen Wledig = to Annwn Ddu, called the King of Greece, and Tewdric, grandfather of Brychan, = to Teudubric, grandsire of Athruis, whom the authors call Arthur II?

The Athrwys, called by Messrs Blackett and Wilson Arthwys, Arthwyr or Arthur II, is definitely not fiction. There is plenty of evidence for his existence. However, the authors were not the first to suggest that Athrwys ap Meurig is synonymous with Arthur. This idea was first put forward by William Owen in his Cambrian Biography (1803) and though considered incorrect by early writers like Rice Rees and Taliessin Williams, it was later taken up by O Morien Morgan (1836-1921).

Blackett and Wilson bring evidence such as the Book of Llandaff, the Lives of the Saints, folk lore and literature to bear on the reality of Athrwys being Arthur. They use genealogical evidence to pinpoint those saints who were related to Arthur. Then they show that these saints were actually relatives of Athrwys. There is a lot of research needed here to see if their corelations are correct and unfortunately space doesn't allow for such indepth study. Other suggestions made by the authors include certain famous Arthurian sites can be found in South-

East Wales...including Camelot,Mount Badon, Arthur's burial place and so on. For instance, Camelot they say is a French corruption (Ca-Melot) for the hill fort Caer Melyn. One of their reasons for searching SE Wales,they say,is that Walter Map,who wrote a story of Arthur in which his body is found in the Black Chapel,lived in this area. There is a Blackfriars in Cardiff and the Black Monks (Benedictines) had a monastery there. The monks at Glastonbury were also Black Monks but the authors write off Avalon as this place completely (and possibly rightly).



An illustration based on a photograph in King Arthur - King of Glamorgan and Gwent p.305. It translates,according to the authors,as:- King Arthur son of Maurice (in Welsh: Brenhin Arthur ap Meurig). *(I have,following a comment by Geoffrey Ashe,consulted some experts on this Latin inscription and the translation is confused.)*

Returning finally to Athrwys ap Meurig,he can be found in the Book of Llandaff - once as a witness to a grant made by his father,once represented in a grant by this father and making a grant of his own. He is described as a King of the region of Gwent and it can be shown that he had some influence over an area called Erging. However,it cannot be shown that he was king of Glamorgan as well as Gwent. Certainly his father Meurig was king of Glamorgan,or as it was called then Glywysing,while Athrwys' son Morgan became king of both kingdoms on the death of his grandfather. There is every indication that Athrwys died before his father. The authors put Arthur II dates as 491 - 570 saying that he was only wounded at the battle of Camlan. They also point that the reason why Gildas doesn't mention Arthur is that he had yet to become a king. According to Wendy Davies,who has done a recent study of the Llandaff Chaters, Meurig lived from c.585-665,Athrwys was alive c. 605-655,active between 625-655,and Morgan ap Athrwys,lived from c.635-710,being active from c.665.

For those who wish to read up the Book of Llandaff Messrs Wilson and Blackett have written a second book called Arthur and the Charters of the Kings reprinting the Rev. W.J. Rees' Liber Landavensis (1840) almost word for word. There is also two recent books by Wendy Davies: An Early Welsh Microcosm,Royal History Society,1978 (subtitled "Studies in the Llandaff Charters") and The Llandaff Charters,National Linbrary of Wales, 1979.

I feel at this point that I should stop and leave further discussion to Prof.Bedwyr Lewis Jones who is doing a review of this book for the Welsh Books Council. My feelings are mixed and I am without doubt confused by some of the material in this tome. There is no doubting that legend connects Arthur with South Wales...the writings in Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth's Caerleon, to name a few. Have Blackett and Wilson discovered something significant or have they misinterpreted information avialable. I must leave the question

unanswered...but I personally am doubtful.

THE KING ARTHUR COMPANION The Legendary World of Camelot and the Round Table.
by Phyllis Ann Karr,Reston Publishing Co., Virginia,USA,1983.

A glossary of people,places and things. Seven hundred entries with additional notes on such subject as strategy,cultural heritage,knighthood, etc. It covers the later tales,e.g. Malory,but touches on some of the historical aspects. One interesting part is a tentative chronology of Arthur. This covers the years 410 A.D. to 465 A.D. You may find it strange to see such early dates for Arthur but two dates are specific in Malory: 435 and 454...the first concerns Lancelot's return to Camelot and the second is about the arrival of Galahad. However in my edition it doesn't say 454 A.D. but: *"And thus they went so long till that they came to the Seige Perilous, where they found letters newly written in gold which said: Four hundred winters and four and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled."*
So you can add roughly thirty years on to the figure 454 giving c.484.
For those interested in the tales of Malory,etc., this book is a must.

THE KING ARTHUR ILLUSTRATED GUIDE
by R.J. Hutchings,Turan Publications,1983.

This book concentrates mainly on the later material concerned with Arthur...Tennyson in-particular. Consisting of a mixture of text and photographs of places like Tintagel,Glastonbury, Caerleon,etc.,the book does take a glimpse at the historical Arthur. Unfortunately,unless Mr Hutchings has priviledged information,some of the material seems very imaginative. For example: Ambrosius Aurelianus leads the Britons against the Saxons at Badon,however *"during the battle he died,and it seems that Arthur,then a young man, took over the command and totally defeated the enemy..."*.
It does have some interesting bits and pieces in it but overall not really a book for students of the historical Arthur.

A TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO THE KINGDOMS OF ARTHUR
by Neil Fairburn,with photographs by Michael Cyprien,Evans Brothers Limited,1983.

In contrast to the last book this is a real illustrated guide.... Consisting of 157 pages, covering nearly 200 places with more than 250 photographs plus maps,this tome makes a good reference book,though a bit pricey at £8.95 (hope it comes out in paperback). Apart from covering Arthurian sites in Britain and Brittany, from Alderley Edge to Wookey Hole (not Chewbacca's home),it also has sections discussing the Round Table,Camelot,Camlann,Arthur at War,Avalon,the Quest for the Holy Grail,Arthur in Brittany,Wales, the North and the West,Badon,Rex Futurus and the Birth of Arthur.
I think this tome is a real must for students of Arthur the historical,folk lore,legendary and literary figure.

AVALON TO CAMELOT Volume 1,Number 1,Fall 1983. Publisher: Freya Reeves Lambides,Editor: Debra N. Mancoff, Chicago,USA.

Here is a real professional magazine A3 folded in size with excellent quality art paper and card cover. If the premier issue is anything to go by the future bodes well for this magazine. Features include: A long time ago in a kingdom far,far away.... about the Arthurian connections with the Star Wars saga (I must admit it had never hit me before reading this article). About Arms and Armor (Armour over here) in the Age of Arthur...a most interesting article covering a difficult field. "Because my heart is pure"...concerning Burne-Jones and Tennyson's "Sir Galahad". Columns include the Arthurian Legend in the Arts,Primary works in translation,Arthur and Ancient Britain,

Etymological explorations,the Quest for the Historical Arthur,Methods and Approaches to Teaching,plus reviews,news and information on other societies and journals.
I found little to criticise about the magazine except for a badly drawn map.

Finally,a number of other books have come to my attention recently which I have yet to get copies of or haven't yet read. One is Mary Stewart's latest: The Wicked Day (if anyone would like to review it I would be very grateful). The others are history books called: Barbarians and Romans The Birth Struggle of Europe,A.D. 400-700 by Justine Davis Randers-Pehrson,and Dark Age Britain by Robert Jackson. More about these in the next issue.

The whole truth and nothing but the truth?

by KURT HUNTER-MANN

I began to read Chris Barber's article on the work of Tony Blackett and Alan Wilson with interest and hope; but I find myself writing this reply filled with doubt and disappointment.

Blackett and Wilson discredit the Glastonbury legend by claiming that Aballach/Afallach,the allegd burial place of Arthur,is derived from the name of the province of Valentia. If this is true,it places Arthur's grave not in Glamorgan (as they suggest) but in Northern England,which is almost certainly the location of this province.

It is stated that their Arthur I,Andragathius (son of Maxen Wledig) invaded Gaul in 383 A.D.,killed the Emperor Gratian and fought Theodosius in 388 A.D. However,the Latin form of Arthur is Artorius,not Andragathius. Moreover, Andragathius was not Commander-in-Chief of the rebellion of 383-88 A.D.,but a subordinate of the actual leader,Magnus Maximus - and the Welsh name for Magnus Maximus is 'Macsen Wledig',which is the name given by the authors for Andragathius' father. Clearly either Blackett and Wilson,or Chris Barber,have got their facts confused here.

Their Badon is located on the Western coast; how does this make any strategic sense in the context of the struggle between the Britons and Saxons around 500 A.D.? Surely this location is far too far to the West.

A date of c.575 A.D. is claimed for Arthur's death,and they do seem to acknowledge the existence of Camlan; so have they valid reasons for ignoring the date of Arthur's death at Camlann given in the Welsh Easter Annals as 539 A.D.?

From the glimpses we get of Blackett and Wilson's work, they seem to have relied heavily on bards and inscriptions. Bardic sources are notoriously unreliable,as the passing on of information by word of mouth from generation to generation is far more susceptible to addition,omission and alteration than written records (witness the Illiad,another product of bardic work,which brings all sorts of heroes from a number of generations in Greek history and legend together to sack Troy). This would explain why so many of the characters in the bardic sources mentioned related to Arthur and each other. Also,the alledged ancestor of Arthur,Bran,is not a king,but a Celtic god,adopted by the Britons into genealogies in order to increase the status of their kings - just as the Saxon genealogies regarded Woden as the founder of their dynasties.

Inscriptional evidence is no better. It is generally so vague as to open all sorts of interpretation. If the inscribtions illustrated in Dragon 7 are intended only to prove that notables named Arthur existed in Migration Period Wales,this only confirms an already generally accepted point; as Blackett and Wilson state,several members of British royal families over a number of generations were named Arthur.

If the authors are suggesting that these inscriptions refer to the Arthur (alleged victor of Badon),how can they be sure that any of the Arthurs mentioned on inscriptions are their Arthur and not some relatively unimportant namesake? As a case in point,the two inscriptions illustrated in Dragon 7 have markedly different lettering styles indicating that they are not contemporary,and therefore refer to two different people. These inscriptions most certainly cannot be used as evidence that the Arthur was a king of Glamorgan.

It would be unfair to condemn the whole of Blackett and Wilson's studies from such limited material received second-hand,but if the rest of their work is of a similar nature it does not bode well.

. . . . to the sublime.

(Part Two of a review of 'Arthurian' fiction since 1950)

by SANDRA GARSIDE NEVILLE

The list below includes what I consider to be the best novels written about the 'Arthurian' period. There is no magic,the storyline is realistic. They give a good impression of what living in the Fifth and Sixth century may have been like. They are,in fact,historical reconstructions.

The lists are,obviously,incomplete and I hope to add to them as I get hold of the books.

THE SUBLIME

Count Belisarius
Cassells, 1938
(Also in Penguin,1954,paperback. Still available)
by Robert Graves

Although not set in Post-Roman Britain (in fact in sixth century Byzantium) this book gives some idea of how the military Britain may have been arranged. The author's style is a little impenetrable at times,but it's worth reading.

The Conscience of the King
Faber & Faber Ltd., 1951
by Alfred Duggan

Again out of print. The grime and the grimness of the period is all there as seen through the eyes of British turncoat, Cerdic. The author's black comedy is hilarious,and,as Cerdic ends the book by saying,"It was fun while it lasted." Highly enjoyable. Second only to Sutcliff's 'Sword at Sunset'.

The Lantern Bearers
Oxford Univ. Press, 1959
by Rosemary Sutcliff

Happily still in print,like most of the author's 'Children's' novels. The period is treated sensibly,and believeably. It deals with the period just before Arthur's rise.

Dawn Wind
Oxford Univ. Press, 1961
by Rosemary Sutcliff

Britain/England after the demise of Arthur. Shows the conflict between Britons and Saxons as they come to terms with one another

Sword at Sunset
Hodder & Stoughton
by Rosemary Sutcliff

Lamentably out of print,and also never been in paperback. The definitive 'Arthurian' novel. Realistic -the only magic is in the lyricism of the story telling. This book cannot be recommended too highly.

The Eagles have Flown
John Lane The Bodley Head, 1954
by Henry Treece

The author's 'Dark Age' novel for children. It includes Gildas' 'Infamous Five' kings. Quite readable,with a good setting.

Lancelot
Peter Owen, 1978
by Peter Vansittart

A very modern novel. It tends to be jerky,but is constantly interesting. Fairly realistic,the best 'Arthurian' novel of the seventies.

MORE FROM SANDRA:

The Way of the Wyrd
Century, 1983
by Dr Brian Bates

A young Saxon monk is sent to an area of Britain not yet converted to Christianity,to find out about pagan religion. He meets a shaman and sorcerer,and learns about the pre-Christian world view.

Raven's Wind
Heinemann, 1983
by Victor Canning

Set in 9th century Britain.

The High Kings: Arthur's Celtic Ancestors
Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1983
by Joy Chant

A retelling of the stories of the legendary British kings from King Lear to Vortigern. Beautifully illustrated.

The Lady of the Fountain
Bran's Head Books (Frome Somerset)
by Kathleen Herbert

Set in the kingdoms of Lothian and Cumbria in around the 7th century.

(Many thanks to Sandra for all her hard work...she is fast becoming Dragon's book correspondent. One thing that puzzles me is why are there so many female writers on Arthurian matters?)

THE NORSEMAN

by ANTHONY TOMLINSON

Another character from the 11th century; this time one of the warriors who followed Harold to the north of England on his ill-fated expedition which met with disaster at Stamford after the triumph of Fulford Gate in 1066. I've depicted him just after Fulford Gate as he surveys the carnage; at his feet lies a much battered shield,perhaps his own; and on his arm he bears his cloak which he'd removed for the fight. From his armour,helmet and mail shirt,he shows that he's a wealthy warrior; his wealth also manifests itself in his voluminous trousers,gathered at the knees. Just showing from under his mail-shirt is his padded under-garment which provides further protection,particularly from arrows and clubs; for mail is very poor at cushioning blows to the body and such a garment also,to some extent, prevent broken links from driving into a wound. His axe is the usual type in use amongst household troops in both Scandavavian and English armies of this period; note also the handle-binding which gives a better grip when plying the axe.

This figure has been composed from a number of different sources,tombstones,extant weapons,with a bit of guesswork thrown in.

The Dark Ages Restored

by CHRIS LOVEGROVE

One of the stated aims of the Dragon Society is to find an alternative name for the Dark Ages,a designation which presumably must be regarded as perjorative (Dark meaning Barbaric). Alternative names have of course been already considered in Dragon and some are already in use by scholars. These include:

Sub Roman/Post Roman period
Early Christian
Arthurian
Late Celtic
Migration/Early Medieval

Let us consider these for a moment.

1. SUB-ROMAN/POST-ROMAN

These are primarily archaeologists' terms,as they are generally applied to structures and artifacts which indicate a degraded Roman culture (sub-Roman) or a culture without direct links with the Roman world (post-Roman). Sometimes these are equated with the fifth century (sub-Roman) or the sixth century (post-Roman). Their use as terms have the drawback of defining culture only in relation to the Roman world (inapplicable to Ireland for example) and by implication disparaging other cultures. Such a use also ignores the continuity that individuals (eg Gildas) of the so-called post Roman period (the 6th century) felt with Roman language and institutions despite the departure of the legions. *An unsatisfactory term therefore for non-archaeologists.*

2. EARLY CHRISTIAN

This term is used by Charles Thomas,among others (eg in his Britain and Ireland in Early Christian Times 1971). This suffers from the same problems as the use of sub- and post-Roman. In defining a period (400-800) by reference to a religious culture it by implication disparages the strong pagan tradition that underlies much of this period,as well as ignoring the British Christian tradition before the 5th century. *Another unsatisfactory term.*

3. ARTHURIAN

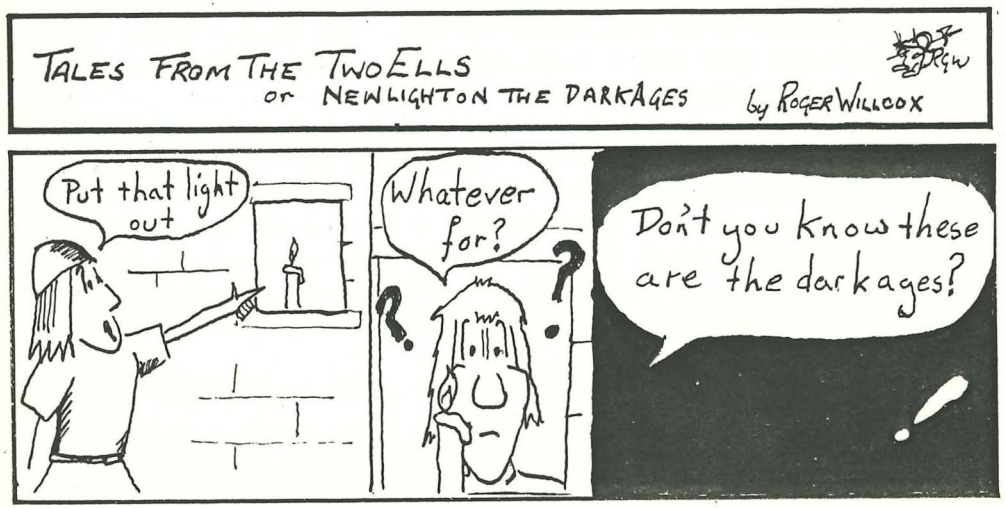
Leslie Alcock and to a greater extent John Morris both favoured an identification link to the figure of Arthur (even if Alcock is now 'agnostic'). Alcock did so because Arthur stood midway between 367 and 634 (key dates when Britain came under external pressure). Morris did so by analogy with the Carolingian period in France. Both historians made the assumption that Arthur not only existed but flourished c 500 (the border between the sub- and post-Roman periods). But by strict scientific standards this will not do. *The "Arthurian period",like the "Dark Ages",is an intensely emotive term,and is therefore also unsatisfactory.*

4. LATE CELTIC

This term is much favoured by Lloyd Laing (eg The Archaeology of Late Celtic Britain and Ireland 1973). Although it is disputed how much Celtic Britons were displaced by invaders,we cannot ignore the contributions made by these invaders,mainly from the Continent. And do Celts stop existing in the 13th century as Laing's book might imply (where Late Celtic = c 400-1200)? He acknowledged that Early Christian,Dark Age, Post-Roman Iron Age,Arthurian or Early Medieval "seem to be emotive,restrictive or vague" but he must have found problems in justifying the inclusion of Scandavian influences in a book on Celtic Britain.

5. MIGRATION/EARLY MEDIEVAL

There terms are used by the Council for British Archaeologicy to describe excavations which are neither Prehistoric,Romano-British,Medieval or Post-Medieval. By now the drawbacks of these terms are obvious - the first is "restrictive",the second "vague" (to use Laing's terms). Medieval in any case



means anything between the Ancients (ie post-Roman) and now (ie Modern). In reality the Renaissence period,when classical ideals and ideas were "re-born",is taken at the end of the Medieval period (though in some parts of Europe classical ideas never really died). In any case,migration (ie folk-movements) occurred both before and after the period in question (and,of course,still does).

6. DARK AGE

This brings us back to that much abused term,the Dark Ages. A recent essay by Philip Rahtz ("The Dark Ages 400-700 AD", Chapter 10 in The Archaeology of Somerset ed M Aston and I Burrow 1982) has examined models of "Dark Age" societies,not just in Britain but also in Greece (Mycenaean) and Central America (Mayan). By looking at the collapse of Roman society in Western Britain in the light of similar collapses in other times and places we can start to make sense of what is happening. Here are the relevant areas examined:

(1) Collapse of central administration organisation
(2) Collapse of traditional elite class
(3) Collapse of centralised economy
(4) Collapse of settlement and population
(5) Aftermath development of romantic Dark Age myth
(6) Aftermath transition to "lower/earlier" socio-political organisation.

What emerges from such a study is that the main characteristic of such periods is that they are *TRANSITIONAL* (one of the terms considered in the Dragon questionnaire). To label them with some of the terms we have looked at is to imply a unity which they do not have,whether a unity of religion, population,political structure or personal rule. (Even "Medieval" now implies a culture rather than a transition, its original meaning and use).

What I am advocating is that the term Dark Age is the best term we have to describe this transition period between the collapse of centralised Roman power and the establishment of the concept of nations and states in Europe in later centuries. It best describes the nature of the material we have to deal with - scant archaeological remains and the difficulty of its interpretation; and unreliable historical documents - because

(1) new power groups attempted to legitimise themselves by genealogies or deeds of conquest;
(2) early chronicles personalised historical processes;
(3) the old Golden Age is confused with the new Heroic Age.

This ties in with what has been recognised in the Mycenaean and Mayan Dark Ages. It fits in well with much of continental European history as well as insular Britain (though not with Ireland),the areas most directly affected by Roman rule.

The main agrument against the term "Dark Ages" is that it is emotive. It does not fit in with cultures defined by technology - Stone,Copper,Bronze,Chalcolithic,Iron,etc - or political power but appears to extol barbarism. (However we must remember that Barbarians were originally simply those who went "bar-bar",ie did not speak Greek!)

But it is in the nature of transition periods that they are neither one animal or the other. And,in any case,what is wrong with the use of this emotive epithet? Does it not exactly capture the essense of whatever it is that draws our interest to this still obscure period in Northern Europe? Is anyone really fired with enthusiasm for the exact but rather clinical term "early Middle Ages" which demystifies merely to fit a rather exciting period into an unexiting historical scheme?

ARTHUR
What's in a name?

by CHARLES W. EVANS-GUNTHER

The name ARTHUR has intrigued scholars for many years. Today there seems to be a general acceptance that it is derived from a Latin source. In this article the writer intends to investigate the name approaching it from two possibly different directions: a) Latin and b) Celtic.

a) The Artorii

The name *Artorius* is first mentioned by Prof. Heinrich Zimmer in GOTTINGISCHE GELEHRTE ANZEIGEN (1890): "...dass *Arthur* ein romischer Name *Artur* oder *Artorius* sei...". In the same year John Rhys wrote that the Latin name *Artorius* and a Celtic god's name,*Artor* and the genitive *Artoros*,could yield the Welsh name Arthur. However,it was not until the nineteen twenties with James Douglas

Bruce and Kemp Malone that the Latin name of *Artorius* was really considered in any detail.

The earliest recorded member of the Artorii (which seems to be of Etruscan origin) was the physcian to Octavianus (later the Emperor Augustus) *Marcus Artorius*. He drown after the battle of Actium in AD 31. Tacitus in his ANNALS mentions an *Artoria Flaccilla* wife of Decius Novius Priscus who was exiled because of his friendship with Seneca in AD 65. Five years later during the siege of Jerusalem another Artorii appears. In the writings of Josephus we are told a legionary named *Artorius* who by his wits saved himself from a burning house.

The next Artorii is *L.Artorius Castus*, but we will return to him a little later. *L.Artorius Pius Maximus*, of Ephesus, was appointed legate at Heliopolis, Palestine, in the year AD 286, a year later he became proconsul and in 298 held the office of Prefect of the City of Rome. Fifty four years later *C.Artorius Proculus* held the senatorial office of rhetor, public speaker for municipal assemblies, in 352. A number of other Artorii are recorded including *G.Artorius Germanianus* and *Artorius Iulianus Megethius*. However of all the above only one has any substantial biographical details and equally only one is recorded to have been in Britain. This was *Lucius Artorius Castus*.

Information concerning *L.Artorius Castus* has been found on two inscriptions found at Podstrana in Yugoslavia. They tell us of a soldier who began his career as centurion of the III Galliica legion, moving on to the VI Ferrata, then the II Adiutrix followed by the V Macedonica. While with this legion he was promoted to Senior centurion. After that he became commandant of the Fleet at Misenum and then quartermaster of the VI Victrix in York. During his stay in Britain he led an expeditionary force against a rebellion in Armorica (Brittany). *L.Artorius Castus* finished his career as a second-grade procurator in Dalmatia where he had a tomb made for himself.

The dating of this character is not so easy and scholars seem to be divided between 184 and 284. The author prefers the latter. The earlier dating comes at a bad time for Britain, first a war with the Scottish tribes followed by a mutiny of Roman soldiers. In 284 Britain was a much more stable province while in France the *bacaudae*, bands of peasant brigands, terrorised the countryside. It is very likely that the British expeditionary force went over around this time. The rebels were eventually defeated by Maximian in 286.

A number of scholars have connected the above member of the *gens Artorii* to Arthur. Emphasis has been placed on the similarity between the Roman *dux* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's King...both going into Europe to defeat an enemy. Certainly the names are similar and Malone points out that it is possible for the name ARTORIUS to become ARTHUR, at least phoneticallly. He shows that the 'O' is a longer 'O' more like the 'U' of ARTHUR. When transliterated in Greek ARTORIUS becomes APTΩPION thus indicating the longer 'U'. Other names have gone through similar transformations as Geoffrey Ashe in his SPECULUM article shows: Riothamus becomes Rhiadaf in Welsh. However, Riothamus is a Latinised version of the Celtic name Rigodamus. Though the name ARTORIUS can definitely be recognized as being of Roman origin it is possible that the name ARTHUR is not derived from it but rather from a Celtic name.

b) Artorix

Let us first look at the appearance of the name Arthur in both historical and mythological material. In the legends of the Invasions of Ireland we are told that a tribe under the leadership of Nemed arrived sometime before the Celtic peoples. One of his sons was called Artur and he fought against the monsterous Formori.

Moving into the realms of history a British Arthur is found during the period when the Romans occupied most of the British Isles. It seems that Lughaidh mac Con (who was according to tradition deposed by Cormac mac Art around AD 250) had been exiled to Scotland. There he was taken in by one

Beinne Britt,possibly a chieftain of the Votadini. Lughaidh married the chief's daughter and returned to Ireland regaining his throne with Beinne Britt and his army's help. One of the sons of this British chieftain was called Arthur. Later this Arthur joined the *Fianna*,a militia-like army led by the famous *Finn mac Cumaill*.

Following the Arthur in question (who according to tradition fought at the battle of Badon and died at Camlan) we move to later Arthurs. There was a son of *Aedan mac Gabrain* of Dalriada who died at the battle of the *Miathi* at the end of the sixth-century. Another Arthur was called the son of *Pedr* and ruled as prince of Dyfed at the turn of the seventh century. (His son Noe or Nowy is mentioned in one of the Llandaff Charters.) Then around AD620 a warrior called *Mongan* was slain by an Arthur who was called the son of *Bicoir* the Briton. A monk recorded in some Scottish documents of the late seventh century is listed as being *Feradach* the grandson of another Arthur. Finally in the LLANDAFF CHARTERS a witness to King Ithel ap Morgan of Glywysing giving land to Bishop Berthgwyn,in about 720,is yet another Arthur.

In the centuries that followed the names *Artur*,*Artuir*,*Arturus* and *Arthur* pop-up quite often. And then following the HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF BRITAIN by Geoffrey of Monmouth the name ARTHUR becomes as well used as some movie-star's name has been in the recent past. However,how Celtic is the name.

Celtic names are usually made up of elements: *Vercingetorix - ver=over,cinget-=warrior + rix=king,or Eporedorix=king of horses,or Dumnorix=king of the world*. This making up of a name from different elements continued to be used by the descendents of the pre-Roman Celtic cultures. In Wales you have such names as: *Maelgwn=dog of battle,or Cynfal=defence chief,orBrynmor=big hill, or Rhodri=circle king* and so on. This system is not limited to Celtic peoples here are some Saxon examples: *Aethelwine=noble friend,Cynric=royal ruler and Edward=rich guardian*.

The elements of ARTHUR are arth and ur with the possible meanings of 'bear' and a transformation of 'orix' being 'king or leader'. Let us look at the first element first. An ancient Celt whose name was found inscribed upon a stone in France was called *Artogenus*=bear born. Later we find this arth element becoming very common in Early Medieval Welsh names. Here are some examples: *Arth*,*Arthafad*,*Arthafal*,*Arthanad*,*Arthbleid*,*Arthcumaun*,*Arthen*,*Arthfael*,*Arthfoddw*,*Arthgal*,*Arthgen*, *Arthlwys*,*Arthneu*,*Arthual*,*Arthur*,*Arthwg and Arthwys*. Incidentally,tradition tells us that Arthur had an uncle *Arthwg Frych* and a cousin *Arth ap Arthwg Frych*.

The component *arth* primarily means a bear,as in the animal,but it also represents the attributes of that animal. So someone with the name Arthwg could be 'bearlike' or 'rough' or 'fierce' like a bear. It is likely to stand for warriors of the most warlike kind. In fact in one of the versions of Nennius' HISTORY OF THE BRITONS a pun on the meaning of arth can be found.

The ending of the name ARTHUR could well be a transformation of the ending of ARTORIX. A similar transformation can be found in the name *Teutorigos* or *Teutorix* becoming the modern *Tudur*. Variations of this name include: Tewdwr, Tudri and Tudor (Henry Tudor is called *Harri Tudur* in Welsh.)

Rix is a common element of compound Celtic names and comes in a number of different forms including *reg*,*reix*,*rex*,*ri*,*ric*,*rig* and *ris*. Its meaning however is unclear. Certainly in many cases it means 'king,lord or ruler' but it can also mean 'pre-eminent of its kind,great,immense' as shown in a note from D.Ellis Evans' GAULISH PERSONAL NAMES. Another possibility is adjectives 'royal,regal or kingly' mentioned in the above book and in Kenneth Jackson's interpretation of the name *Rigotamos - 'most kingly,most royal'.

So we end up with the equal possiblities of the name ARTHUR being derived from either the Latin ARTORIUS or the Celtic ARTORIX. It is

probable that ARTORIX could be a transliteration of ARTORIUS but that seems doubtful since there was a Celtic goddess called ARTIO and her symbol was a bear. ARTORIUS could however be a Latin version of ARTORIX but Latin for bear is *ursus*. Nevertheless we are told that the family of the *Artorii* came from Etruria and the Etruscans had strong links with the Celtic peoples.

The author would like to finish this article by calling for further research into the names ARTORIUS and ARTORIX and their relationship with the name ARTHUR.

Postscript: In a recent letter from Prof.D. Ellis Evans,Jesus College,Oxford,he remarks about the possibility of Artorix thus:- "Whether Arthur itself is a native name...we cannot tell,although it is possible (unless it be from a form Artorius or the like). If *Artorix (a native rix name) is the source one would expect to find examples of *Arthyr,not Arthur - although here Arthur might be secondary."

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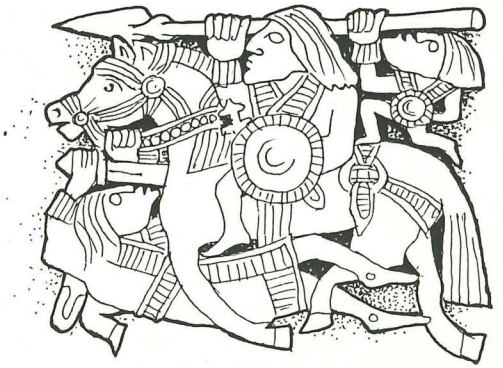
THE GODS OF THE PAGAN-ENGLISH

by NIGEL VYE

The purpose of this short article is to give an outline of the main gods of the pagan English who invaded Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries.

The chief god seems to have been Woden,the Norse Odin and Old German Wotan. His main attributes were concerned with wisdom and cunning although he may have also been a god of war. The pagan English do not appear to have considered him fickle and deceitful as the later Norse did, but undoubtedly regarded him as reigning in the sky and "the Allfather". The majority of the royal families claimed descent from him. He is said to have gained his knowledge of the runes,a secret and magical alphabet,by the sacrifice of one of his eyes. The Norse associated the Valkeries, fiercesome female warriors,with him and although there is no evidence that the pagan English did the same,it is worth noting that the spear held by a warrior on the Sutton Hoo helmet appears to be guided by a winged figure. Placename

Charm of Thunor's Hammer to be worn around the neck.

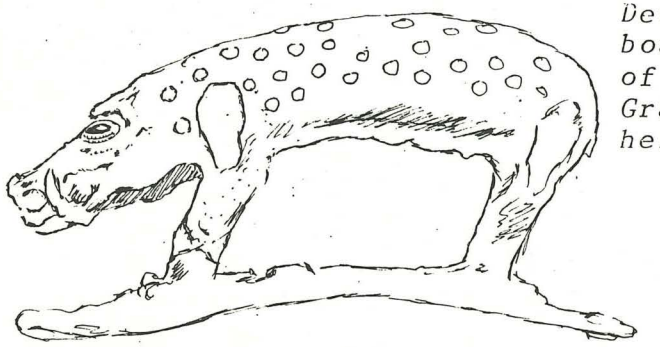


Detail of Sutton Hoo helmet showing figure clasping spear

evidence gives us the sites of several of his temples in this country such as Woodnedborough and Wormshill in Kent, Wednesbury in Staffs and Wensley in Derbyshire.

Next in reverence to Woden is Thunor, the Norse Thor. Traditionalists associate him with thunder and lightning and a generally aggressive nature. Woden may have been worshipped by the nobility, the lower classes held Thunor in greater reverence. His symbol of a hammer was worn as a charm and the oak was sacred to him. This may have been caused the spectacle of lightning hitting such a tree, a reminder of his awesome might. He was said to ride across the sky on a chariot drawn by two goats, this causing the thunder and lightning. He is remembered in placenames such as Thunderfield in Surrey, Thurstable in Essex and Thundridge in Herts.

Tiw was undoubtably a god of war and was held by the German tribes to be the chief god, under the name Tiwaz. The Norse named him Tyr. Sacrifices of both humans and valuables, including such things as swords, armour and horse harness, found in Danish peat bogs are thought to have been made to him. It is known that some tribes sacrificed all captives and booty to him in order to ensure victory. The runic initial of his name was also carved on swords, spear and shields in order to obtain protection in battle. His name is remembered in Tysoe in Warwickshire and Tuesley in Surrey.



Detail of boar crest of Benty Grange helmet.

Tiw's initial in runes.

Finally the pagan English worshipped a number of fertility gods and goddesses in order to secure the abundance of crops and fertility of livestock. The Norse gods Frey and Freyja appear in this context and interestly their names mean lord and lady in Old English, perhaps indicative of these gods original function. Their particular symbol was the boar and once again, this was used for protection. This is borne out by the symbol's use on helmets and also on swords, as mentioned in the epic Beowulf and seen on the Benty Grange helmet.

Other fertility gods appear although mostly we only know of their names. This includes Eostre, who gave us the name Easter, Hretha, Njord and Saxnot, from whom the East Saxon Dynasty claimed descent. It is worth noting a particular Spring rite associated with these gods. This involved the driving of a sacred wagon around the country in which was said to ride the god. This action brought fruitfulness to the earth. After the journey was over the wagon was washed in a sacred lake by slaves who were then killed.

For those wishing to put some 'meat' on these bare bones the following books are recommended:-
The Beginnings of English Society by D.Whitelock (Pelican)
Gods and Myths of Northern Europe by H.R.Ellis Davidson (Pelican)
The Foundation of England by H.P.R.Finberg (Paladin)
Gods of the North by B.Branston (Thames & Hudson).

SCROLLS

We begin this issue's Scrolls with two letters on the stirrup discussion begun in D*7. The first letter is from Peter Wilcox, author of Rome's Enemies: Germanics and Dacians. Osprey 1983:

"...As you will realize I can assume no kind of ultimate authority on ancient military equipment.

"Modern historians claim that the use of the stirrup by the Gothic cavalry at Adrianople enabled them to use shock tactics against the doomed legions of the eastern Empire.

"Short of direct evidence for the use of the stirrup by the Goths or completely denying its use we can compromise. The earliest examples are found in Siracian graves dated to 1st century A.D. Unless these steppe nomads kept them secret and

they were reinvented in the 6th century; there must have been some kind of continuity of use through to the arrival of the Sarmatians in the western steppe,the adoption by the Goths of Sarmatian equipment may have included the stirrup. Wooden stirrups have been known in the Americas since the Spanish conquests. In Spain,they are rustic and ancient and may have been introduced by the Visi-goths. Their wooden composition could explain archaeological non-survival.

"I would not dig my heels in regarding the existence or not of the stirrup among Sarmatians, Goths or Post-Roman Britons,the known fact is that they did exist at least as far back as the 1st century A.D. (Ref: Prof. T. Sulimirski The Sarmatians. Thames Hudson,London.) among Indo-European nomads."

Mr Wilcox then adds a P.S.: *"New finds on the Eurasian steppe could push the advent of the stirrup back even further into antiquity"*. He also wishes our society "all strength".... Many thanks for his best wishes and the interesting letter. The second letter on the subject emanates from another Peter...Peter Dearing Lambert...author of the original letter to the Guardian mentioned in the last issue of Dragon.

"Referring to 'Scrolls' of the latest issue it is courageous of you to re-open the stirrup question after Roger Webster,in 'The Horse at Badon' in the Summer 1982 Edition of Pendragon has characterised it as 'vexed and tedious'. Of course I do not agree with the sweeping suggestion that it is devoid of interest,and it is news to me- and apparently to the Oxford Professor of Roman History- that it has preoccupied historians in the past,but this excellent article by Mr. Webster makes the valid point,overlooked by writers of historical fiction,the stirrups are quite unecessary for normal riding. As you point out the Plains Indians,the modern Afghan tribesman,are proficient horseback warriors who would probably regard stirrups as an effete nuisance. As long as the horse is merely a means of transport and the warrior dismounts to fight there is no need for them.

"I suggest that a heavily armoured man would need them,because with stiffer joints and a raised centre of gravity he probably could not remain on board without them. That is conjecture. What is not conjecture is that he would first need a big horse. Presumably a suitably large bred of horse was available to the Eastern Romans to mount their cataphractarii (incidentally there is no evidence of stirrups in represention of these,e.g. on Trajan's Column) but Mr. Webster makes a good case for the unlikelihood of the presence of large horses in fifth century Britain,pointing out that without careful maintainance it inevitably reverts to something like a New Forest pony.

"A final paragraph of the letter in the Guardian which was not published went on to suggest two lines of practical research. Firstly it seems to me that archaeologists may be able to tell us about horse skeletons of the period (and indeed of the Romano-British period in general). If large horses were not available in the island it is probably idle to speculate about heavy cavalry needing stirrups. If Arthur used cavalry it was probably in the traditional Roman fashion and his only advantage would have been high mobility. Alternatively there is the theory of the horse-archer beloved of some fiction writers (e.g. John Gloag: Artorius Rex). Against unarmoured infantry this would certainly be an instrument of attrition although,as the Crusaders later found in dealing with the Turks,the relatively small and weak bow which can be used from the saddle is not effective against rudimentary armour. Incidentally I have always assumed that the chariot was used in ancient times only because horses were not big enough to carry armoured man individually. As used by the Celts in a much more densely wooded and over-grown Britain it must have had severe limitations.

"The other line of enquiry would be for someone who is a better rider and braver than myself to don armour and try riding without stirrups,and

in particular to go through the motions of fighting on horse-back. With all due respect to Roger Willcox in the cartoon in the back of the last issue and to the repeated assertions in Encyclopedias I have never understood how stirrups would help someone charging with the lance,since they would not resist a reaction force longitudinal of the horse. High pommels would,at the risk of breaking the rider's back. Where stirrups would come into their own would be in laying about one with a sword,axe or the like,if I am right in thinking that a heavily armoured man could not otherwise resist a tendency to fall off sideways, his legs rotating around the horse's belly. I think we can assume that leg-armour would be found essential because the thighs of a rider in conventional Roman equipment would be too vulnerable,but this would add to the difficulty of gripping with the legs in approved riding-school fashion."

Roger's cartoon actually appeared in Dragon 6 otherwise I tend to agree with the points you have made. Maybe we should call upon Robert Taylor and the Arthurian Society to try out an experiment with horse,armour and stirrups... how about it Robert.

From one experiment to another and Roger,of the two Ells,who writes a little more about his Arthurian lessons:

"On teaching - in general I follow a course of 'skills' based history,i.e. I give them material - both secondary and primary -and then we set out the facts and everything else we can find. Dragon as I have said is very useful - it shows them current research,not just by academics but by people who are interested,it gets them involved,not only the brighter ones but even the low ability children enjoy working on Arthur - they've all heard of him but most don't know the real man - they really enjoy finding out about him. The doubt surronding his actual identity,etc. also fascinates them - he's an ideal subject bringing together legend,archaeology,history, literature and a sort of 'detective' work. The Arthurian Romances also lead on to a study of chivalry and the Middle Ages. I was delighted when one of my kids came up to me and discussed a film he had seen on TV about Arthur - I think it was 'Siege of the Saxons' - referring not only to Dragon's film info. but also pointing out the film's inaccuracies.

"I find that Arthur appeals to all levels of the children I teach,my lower ability ones do 'project work' on the Arthurian period,e.g. housing,towns,costumes,warfare,etc. - they too refer to Dragon. One or two of them have given me germs of ideas for the 2 Ells cartoons."

I must admit I am most impressed with Roger's work and would like to make a few suggestions... first I would very much like him to write up on his lessons (this could also be sent to Avalon to Camelot which shows an interest in the teaching side of the subject); secondly,I would like to see the results of the children's work, projects and so on and finally,I would very much appreciate comments on Arthur from Roger's pupils. Many thanks Roger for the rundown on the teaching of Arthur in your school.

Maybe Roger's students would agree with Richard Norton's request:

"Can anyone enlarge on horse,mule and donkey colours in Roman and Arthur's times. Most illustrations show horses in shades of brown with black manes and tails. Yet King Arthur was reputed to have ridden a white steed? Again were are the greys,piebalds,paliminos,etc.

"Dogs to come to that were they milky hounds or shades of brown and black or doormat colour!!?"

Good points Richard. He also asks for more on buildings,farming,weapons,dress and general living. I can tell you that I am planning an article on food and drink in the Dark Ages,if that is any help. However,I call on all members to write on something less military if possible...not only to Richard's benefit but to us all.

Finally Sandra Garside Neville makes a few suggestions concerning Dragon-moot type visiting places:

"MUCKING POST EXCAVATION

"Mucking was a multi-period site dug from 1965 to 1978. At present, Post-Ex. work is being undertaken, under the direction of Mr M.U. Jones. The site is chiefly known for its Saxon phase, although it also has indications of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman settlement. To quote a report about Mucking:

'Military belt fittings...and weapons from graves, imply that at any rate the first Saxons to settle at Mucking were soldiers. It has been suggested that they were Germanic mercenaries posted to warn Roman London of suspicious shipping in the lower reaches of the Thames....'.

"So it has obvious appeal to serious Dark Age enthusiasts...."

Sandra points out that it would be adviseable to have a reasonably large group and that she can give further information if wanted. She also mentions an advert in The London Archaeologist:

"GUIDED WALKS

"'Walking tours through Roman and Saxon London, from the Museum of London, 2.30pm, Tuesdays to Sundays....Each walk lasts about 2 hours and costs £1.80, including an information sheet, or £1.20 for under 16s, students, claiments, senior citizens and parties by arrangement. Topics covered are: Roman London (Tuesday & Saturday), Saxon and Medieval London (Wednesday & Sunday).'"

Many thanks for the information Sandra, it will come in use whether for moots or visits which are nothing to do with the club.

Please keep the articles and letters coming. Finally, the size of this issue calls for an explanation: I may be visiting Japan in the Spring so I will not be able to do much work on Dragon after that for about two months. So this issue is a bumper 40 page mag...the next, which will appear around the middle of April (depending on whether the visit materialises), will be less than half this size.

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