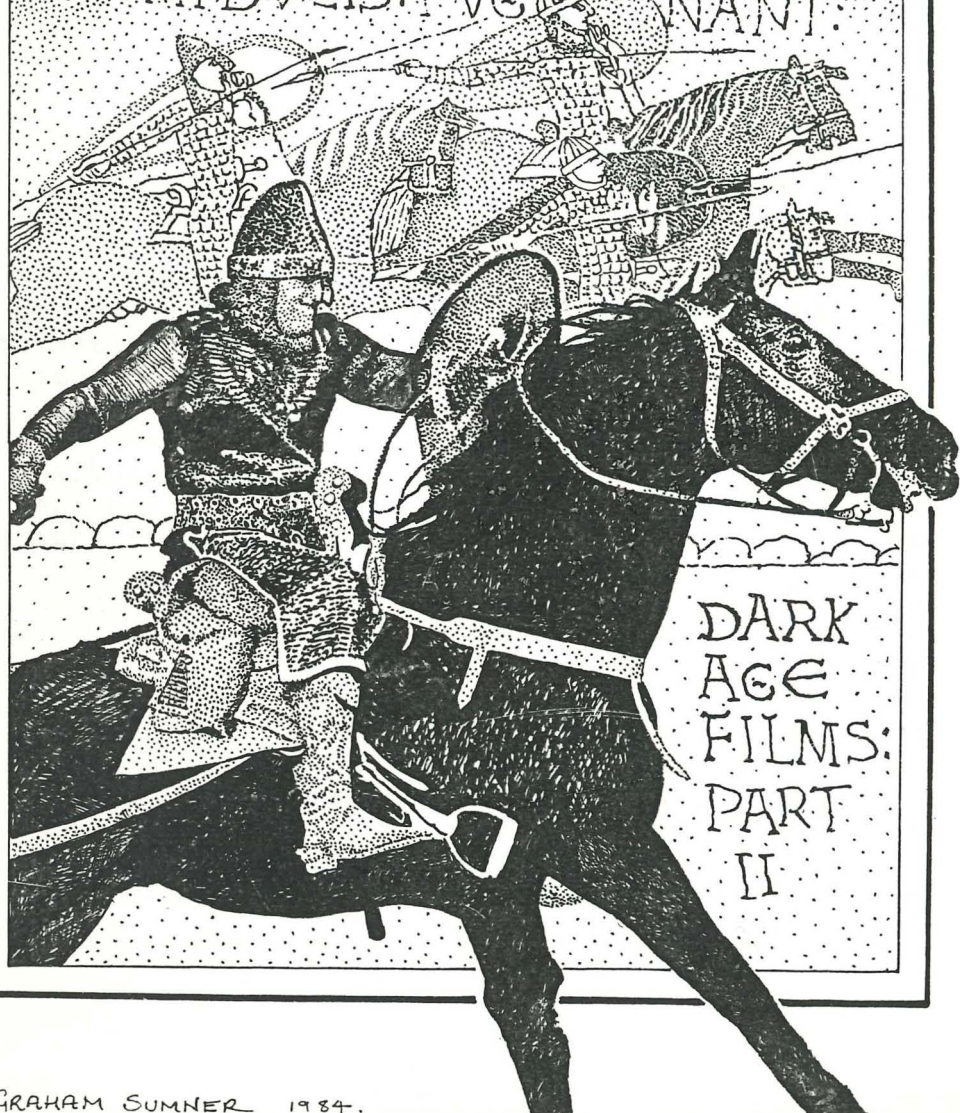


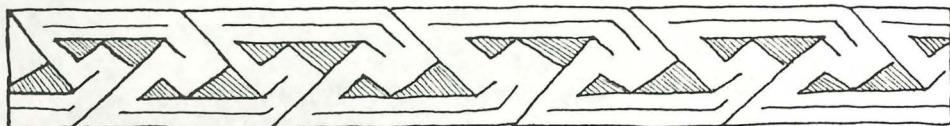
Dragon

9

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DARK
AGE
FILMS:
PART
II



Welcome to Dragon 9...I managed to get another one ready before my trip...not as large as normal but Dragon 8 was a bumper edition in case I couldn't get this one done.

First many thanks for all your letters and articles - please keep them coming. In this issue we have the second part of a series of articles on films by Graham Sumner, a report on a series of lectures on the Pagan Saxons, a review of "The Making of Britain" and an article on food and drink in the Early Middle Ages from Austria. This latter article is something I'm sure we would all like to see more of in the future. So please let's have some pieces on everyday life - even warriors have to eat!

"The Lost Kingdom of Rheged" (see enclosed leaflet) is a series of lectures and tours to be held in October at Ambleside in the Lake District. I would very much like to attend the whole course but due to my Japanese trip I will not be able to take off an whole week from work. However, I hope to go to the first three. Sandra Garside-Neville has pointed out that Dr Rachel Bromwich may be doing the first lecture and I think that will be well worth seeing. So if you do decide to go please contact me after you have written to Tom Clare at the address included in the leaflet. Possibly there will be more information on this course in future issues.

Well, that is all for now...the next issue I hope will be out in August on my return from Japan. If you have any articles, letters, etc. please write to the usual address. However if you would like an answer before mid June then drop me a line c/o:

243 Izuruhara-cho, SANO-CITY, Tochigi Pref.,
JAPAN, 327-01.

'DARK AGE' FILMS

a series of articles by GRAHAM SUMNER

As in the first article on Dark Age films I have continued to select films which try to reconstruct the life and times of the period 410 AD -1066. Conveniently two films in this list fall near to both these dates and in style and techniques there are as many years apart. They are "Revenge of the Babarians" and "The Warlord", which rivals and possibly has the edge over "The Vikings" as being the best film to date about this intermediary period.

King Arthur appears in four films during the 60's once in cartoon format, but never out of his 'Medieval' world.

REVENGE OF THE BABARIANS Italy 1960 Oriental

Directed by Giuseppe Vari

Starring: Anthony Steele, Robert Alda and Daniella Rocca.

Steel and Alda make unlikely Roman and Gothic adversaries and Honorius' pet chicken 'Roma' walks away with the acting honours in this film. Was the sack of Rome really this dull?

LANCELOT AND GUINEVERE G.B. Emblem (Cornel Wilde)

Directed by Cornel Wilde

Starring: Cornel Wilde, Jean Wallace, George Baker and Brian Aherne (as Arthur).

The husband and wife team of Wilde and Wallace star in this re-telling of the famous Romantic legend. Bearing the realistic stamp, a Wilde trademark, this version proves to be superior to the others. Brian Aherne makes a second outing as Arthur (see Dragon 4).

THE LONG SHIPS G.B./Yugo 1963 Columbia/Warwick

Directed by Jack Cardiff

Starring: Richard Widmark, Sidney Poitier, Russ

Tamblyn, Rosanna Schaffino and Colin Blakely.

A motley collection of Vikings search for a golden bell, tongue definitely in cheek. A film perhaps remembered (or forgotten) for its iron horse sequence.

SIEGE OF THE SAXONS G.B. 1963 Columbia/Ameran

Directed by Nathan Juran

Starring Ronald Lewis, Janette Scott and Mark Dignam (as Arthur).

An outlaw (Lewis) saves England from the Saxons while Arthur is ill.

SWORD IN THE STONE U.S. 1963 Walt Disney

Directed by Wolfgang Reithman

Based on T.H. White's 'Once and Future King' a somewhat disappointing full-length feature cartoon from the Disney stable.

THE WARLORD U.S. 1965 Universal/Court

Directed by Nathan Schaffner

Starring: Charlton Heston, Richard Boone, Rosemary Forsyth, Guy Stockwell, Maurice Evans and Henry Wilcoxon.

Taking possession of his allotted territory a Norman warlord faces trouble from rebellious serfs and marauding Frisians. A haunting atmospheric picture which brilliantly captures the clash between Dark Age and Medieval worlds. One of the most intelligent but sadly underrated films from the 'epic' genre.

WHOM THE GODS WISH TO DESTROY W.Ger/Yugo 1966

Directed by Harald Reinl

Starring: Uwe Beyer, Maria Marlow, Karin Dor, Siegfried Wischenewski and Herbert Lom as Attila.

The re-make of Fritz Lang's 20's classic 'Die Nibelungen' is really two films in one. It starts like a fantasy with Siegfried fighting the Dragons and Sorcery but after his murder concentrates on his wife Kriemhild's revenge. Attila and his Huns seem strangely out of place.

CAMELOT G.B. 1967 Warner

Directed by Joshua Logan

Starring: Richard Harris (as Arthur), Vanessa Redgrave, David Hemmings, Franco Nero and Laurence Naismith (as Merlin).

Beautifully photographed film version of the stage musical. However the stars are miscast for such a venture.

ALFRED THE GREAT G.B. 1969 M.G.M./Bernard Smith

Directed by Clive Donner

Starring: David Hemmings, Michael York, Prunella Ransome, Colin Blakely and Julian Glover.

'Young Alfred' as the critics of the time called it. But the battles are impressive and the scenes of crumbling Roman buildings are effective.

THE LAST ROMAN 1969 Filmkunst

Directed by Robert Siodmak

Starring: Laurence Harvey, Orson Welles, Honor Blackman, Sylvia Koscina and Robert Hoffman.

A curious mish mash of fact and fiction about the siege of Rome by the Goths under Witigis and Totila and the Prefect Cethagius's schemes to play the Goths against the Byzantines. Justinian, Theodora and Belisarius also take part.

Whilst on the subject of Justinian and Theodora readers may be interested to know that they have figured in at least five other films. 'Theo-

dora' made in 1908 and remade in 1913, 1921 and 1954 obviously concentrated on the exploits of Justinian's amazing wife, and 'Sword of the Conqueror' made in 1961.

Depending on ones Dark Age viewpoint readers may also like to look out for two films set during the rise of the Emperor Constantine. 'Fabiola' made in 1951 and the superior 'Constantine and the Cross', a 1962 version starring Cornel Wilde.

Many more films such as some of the 'Dark Age' epics probably missed when on cinema release and not always shown on British Television can now be obtained from Video library.

Readers comments on any Dark Age films would be appreciated.

Pagan Saxons in Eastern England

A Conference presented by the Council for British Archaeology, Group 7, on Saturday 18th February 1984, at Chelmsford, Essex.

Chairperson: Margaret Jones, Director of Mucking Post-Excavation.

The first speaker was Gillian Hutchinson, of the National Maritime Museum, and of course her subject was boats. She discussed the type of vessels in which the Saxons may have travelled to Britain. Due to lack of examples from this island, she mainly had to refer to boats found on the Continent, such as at Nydam.

David Buckley, of Essex County Council, told us about the excavations at Springfield, just outside Chelmsford. He said he had expected to concentrate on prehistoric remains, but had to cope with a Saxon settlement and cemetery.

Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle is based at Winchester, but excavates at St Albans with her husband during the Summer. She examined the continuity of

the cult of St Alban, who was martyred at the town in Roman times, and whose shrine became a focal point of the Saxon and later town.

Dr Babara Raw (Univ. of Keele) spoke of the value of Old English literature to the archaeologist. Her lecture had no slides, but was quite delightful and certainly aroused our curiosity about the poem 'Beowulf'. Dr Raw pointed out a number of interesting details in the poem which can provide us with information regarding the type of buildings people lived in, and the weapons warriors used.

Martin Carver is Director of the Sutton Hoo project, and gave a lecture entitled 'Sutton Hoo, 1860-1990'. This brief history of recent activity on the site of the famous Saxon cemetery showed how it has been ravaged by Victorian digging, metal-detector users, even used as a mortar range and tank driving course! The current project intends to examine not only the cemetery, but also the whole landscape around it, so as to elucidate the function of Sutton Hoo as part of the kingdom of East Anglia.

Richard Darrah was next, telling us about his interesting work at West Stow village, where he is reconstructing Saxon buildings and experimenting with various building techniques.

Dr Catherine Hills talked on her excavations of the Saxon cemetery on Spong Hill, Norfolk. Her long-term excavations (now finished) unearthed the entire cemetery of over 2,000 burials - cremations and inhumations. The value of this complete excavation is increased by Dr Hill's consideration for the individuals represented at the site, ranging from craftsmen who made the grave goods, to the occupants of each burial.

The task of summing up the lectures was given to Keith Wade (Suffolk County Council). He reflected the staunch support for the Saxons evident throughout the conference. The feeling was that the study of Pagan Saxon England

has long been neglected; this is probably true, but it is true for the whole period 400-700, the Dark Ages whose illumination is long overdue.

The conference was organised by the CBA Group 7. Every area of Great Britain is covered - there are 14 Groups in all - and if you would like to join your local group please contact us. They need your support (as does archaeology as a whole), and you will benefit by hearing of such worthwhile conferences as this.

S.Garside-Neville & K.Hunter-Mann
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THORNTON HEATH,
Surrey,
CR4 7DB.

The Making of Britain

by CHARLES W. EVANS-GUNTHER

Over the last twelve weeks Channel 4 Television broadcasted a series called "The Making of Britain". This series basically covered the years from the leaving of the Romans till the beginning of the Middle Ages in Britain, in other words the Dark Ages.

The series began on the 8th January 1984 and finished on the 24th March, the first and the last presented by Philip Dixon. Titles included 'The Angles and Saxons', 'The English Kingdoms', 'The Celts', 'The Christian Connection', 'The Viking Raiders', 'The Kingdom of the Scots' and 'Myths of the Dark Ages'. While presenters were different for each programme including: Richard Hodges, Patrick Wormald, Wendy Davies, Liam de Paor, Klavs Randsborg, Alfred Smyth, Pauline Stafford, Archie Duncan and Jinty Nelson.

Nothing was mentioned of Arthur until the eleventh programme 'Myths of the Dark Ages'. Here is how Jinty Nelson dealt with these myths:

"...the best known Dark Age myth is the story of King Arthur. We can trace it back to

ninth century Wales but it didn't really blossom until the 12th century in a romance called 'The History of the Kings of Britain'.... The Arthur myth became a best seller....

"The second myth is the myth of Anglo-Saxon freedom...the Golden Age before the fall...etc.

"The third Dark Age myth is that of Anglo-Saxon England's unity and independence, of English nationhood created and sustained by a Christian monarchy, secured by an invincible navy and a distinguishing English culture and language...."

After spending a third of the programme introducing the myths she continued:

"How much do these myths reflect the historical reality of Dark Age England (Ed. I find it interesting here that from the 'Making of Britain' it becomes 'Dark Age England'.).

"In the first case, the Arthur story, the answer is, it's pure fiction. It illustrates beautifully the aristocratic tastes and values of the 12th century when the myth was elaborated, but it tells us nothing about the period around 500 AD when Arthur was supposed to have lived. I'll leave the Arthur story to the literary critics.

"The myth of Anglo-Saxon freedom is more interesting...."

Well, there we are folk Arthur dealt with in a few sentences and the story dismissed as "pure fiction". Of course the words were interestingly loaded:- notice the emphasis is on Geoffrey of Monmouth's work, which may or may not be "pure fiction" and Dark Age England...England...not Britain. The series is called "The Making of Britain" but the myths reflect only England. What a pity that such an interesting series should dismiss one of the most read about of all the myths...few people care of Anglo-Saxons freedom or Alfred the Great's navy these days.

I must admit I was a bit disappointed with this penultimate programme and it soured the rest for me somewhat.

Food and Drink in the Early Middle Ages

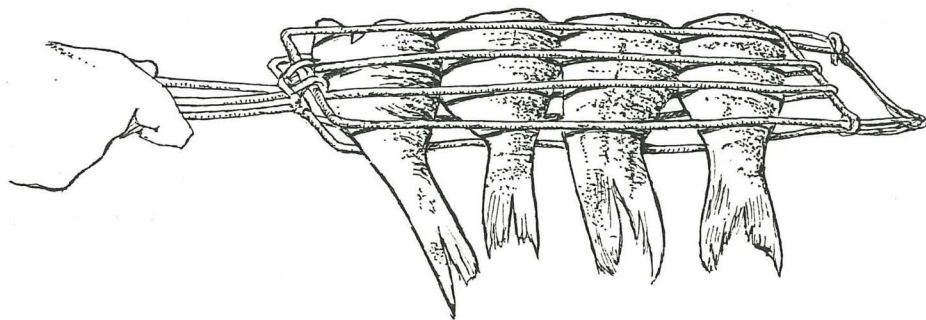
by ROSWITHA RUTTER

After the fall of the Roman Empire people forgot how to produce and use effectively cooking-stoves. The folk of the Early Middle Ages cooked, baked and stewed their food over open fireplaces again.

Although meat was very popular with all people pap, fruit sauce, soups and porridge were the basic food stuffs for the whole population.

From time to time the kings had to command that the slaughter of animals should be stopped until they had brought forth young. This is because the herds and flocks had to be bred so as to increase. Some animals were regarded as a form of wealth. Little lambs, kids and sucking pigs were therefore seldom found on medieval tables. In spite of this poultry and most game of good quality were available in great quantities. But of course the poor people had to eat old meat which was often very stringy while the rich got the best juicy meat. Sheep were seldom eaten because of their wool. Cattle were used as draughts and because the value of their hides oxen and cows were slaughtered only when they were fully grown.

Fish was a food for everyone. It made no difference whether it was stewed, put into



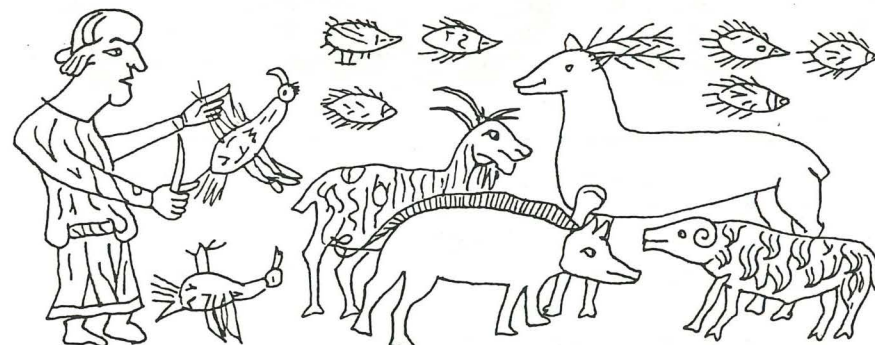
soups or roasted. One of their favourite recipes was to squeeze the whole fish washed, descaled, gutted and spiced in a wire netting and put it on live coals (charcoal is better). After a quarter of an hour the fins were carbonized but the fish tasted excellent.

Where fresh meat and fish was not available the noble men and women ate air-dried and shredded meat and fish, like the natives did. Stockfish (that is air-dried codfish) was very popular with the nobles too. Poultry was liked very much but they ate more geese, ducks and pigeons than chickens. It is interesting that since the Roman period hen's eggs took over from geese eggs in their kitchens.

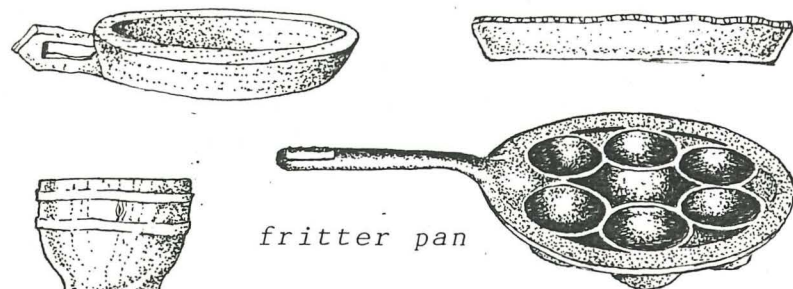
Bread was a common food but poor people could not have it every day. This was because the flour was often not well milled and the dough was apt to rise only a little bit. So their bread was frequently stale. To get it mellow they had to dip it in sauces, milk, wine, beer or soups.

People of the Early Middle Ages thought that the consumption of green vegetables caused weakness, melancholy and wind so they hardly cultivated it. However they did have small kitchen-gardens where they grew herbs and plants such as chervil, carrots, leeks, white beets, onions, garlic, parsley, dill and poppy. If there was enough room and a good climate they planted apple-trees, pear-trees, mountain-ashes, plum-trees, nut-trees, mulberry bushes, hazelnut-bushes and almonds.

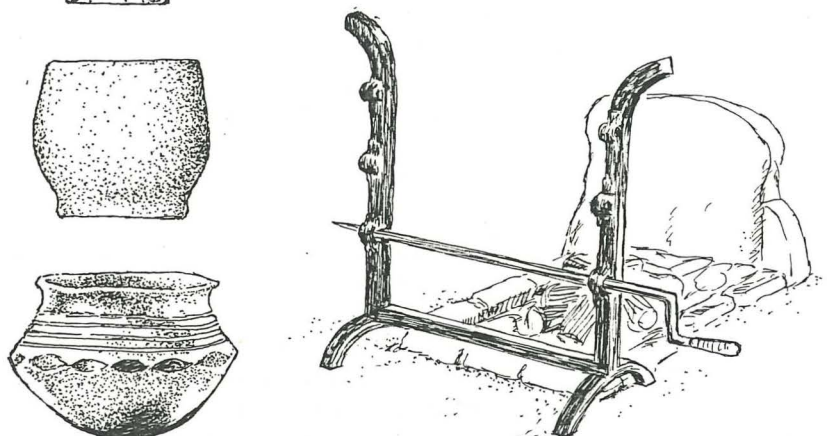
COOK AND ANIMALS FROM THE LAWS OF HYWEL DDA



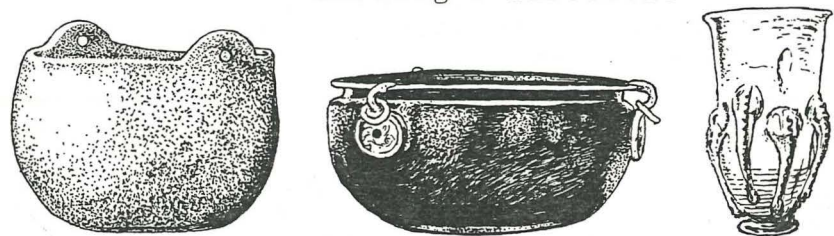
DOMESTIC UTENSILS OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES



fritter pan



firedog + firestone



The most important form of seasoning was, like today, salt. Salt - they used sea salt and where they could get it rock salt, too - was expensive, therefore it was usually kept locked up in a box. Of course medieval people loved gingerbread, sweets, cakes, waffles and fritters like people

nowadays do. Waffle irons and fritter pans are very ancient cooking utensils. They were already known in the Roman period. Medieval women sugared their sweets with honey.

When it came to quenching one's thirst people of the Early Middle Ages drank water and milk, sometimes sweeten with honey, and lots of beer and wine. I have found a recipe which as come down from Roman times, but it may have also been used later on. One jug (1 litre) of dry white wine should be mixed with two small spoonfuls of honey. They drank this drink cool and called it honeywine.

Finally, I found out that their meals certainly had a pleasant taste and if times were good there was a great variety in the medieval kitchen, but their food might not be very nice in appearance.

SCROLLS

Scrolls, in this issue, begins by continuing the stirrup discussion with two more letters: The first is from Steve Hacker:

"I would like to make a few points about the letters on the use of stirrups. To begin with I think this is a worthwhile and interesting topic - but to be honest I cannot see it makes a great deal of difference if they were around in the Arthurian period or not. I must admit I have never ridden a horse so I have no practical knowledge of the problem of fighting without stirrups. However, you only have to look at contemporary historical writers to see that armoured cavalrymen could and did fight on horseback. Perhaps the best example is that of Alexander the Great's Companion cavalry. They fought (without stirrups) on horseback against a variety of opponents ranging from enemy cavalry to Greek hoplites.

"Although Roman cavalry are often thought of as no more than 'mounted infantry' this is also

to do them an injustice. There are examples of them dismounting to fight on foot but they are outnumbered by those showing them fighting on horseback.

"The stirrup does certainly seem to have increased the riders stability and enabled horsemen to attack 'shieldwall' infantry formations with at least some chance of success."

The second letter on the subject is from Nigel Vye:

"I have read (in Military Modelling) that in some ways the effect of stirrups is overstated. Much of the effect may come from standing above an infantryman, although they do help in a charge. High saddles would also help put more thrust behind the thrust in charges and keep the rider on the horse."

Nigel goes on to talk about the article "King Arthur's Invisible Kingdom":

"It would be nice to prove that 'he' existed but perhaps 'he' is more important as an ideal; that is the myth and all that it stands for has outgrown the reality."

Our next letter is from Austria, Roswitha Rutter writes about the book "Mists of Avalon":

"In the summer I bought the book 'Mists of Avalon' and having read it, despite of nearly 1,000 pages, there was not a moment or page which I would like to miss.

"It is really more of a romance than a historical book but there are some interesting aspects which I must search out in other books that deal with this period.

"You read about the conflict between the lower class and the nobility. The natives still believe in their gods and goddesses. To them the whole world is full of myths and taboos, and then suddenly someone comes and tells them that they worship the devil and they must deny their gods. But all they have is their religion.

"It is also notable that the nobility come into inner conflict too. In this case especially Lancelot but Arthur also and last but not least

Morgaine herself.

"I think the author is correct when she writes about the narrow-minded priests. I think of the crusades some centuries later. I can't believe that this attitude had just arisen in the following centuries.

"In conclusion I would like to recommend this book to everyone who wants to read an interesting and, in some way, new book. You not only feel that the characters are alive but get to learn something about their way of life."

Many thanks Roswitha for your comments (and for the article on food and drink seen earlier in this issue). There we are Sandra, you're not the only female to write for Dragon. And talking of Sandra, she too has some comments to make:

"Chris Lovegrove's article on what to call AD 400-700 was very interesting. He said that Sub-Roman and Post-Roman are primarily archaeologists' terms, but I might add that 'Post-Roman' in particular is much abused with in the field. It is sometimes used thus:

'The Post-Roman features

They consist of 12th century pits and a 14th century barn building.'

So anything after the Roman era is Post-Roman. The 20th century is Post-Roman, because it comes after the Romans. Exercise caution if you read that a site had Post-Roman features. Make sure you're given a specific century before going over the moon about your many tower'd Post-Roman castle."

In a letter to Sandra I mentioned that I felt that a club of 30-40 members was about all I was able to cope with and Sandra replied: "I believe Pendragon has many readers, and their magazine is produced by a group of people, which makes the task easier. Is there no one you can rope into helping you at your end?" The simple answer is 'no'... most of the members lives many miles away and it would end up costing far more transporting the

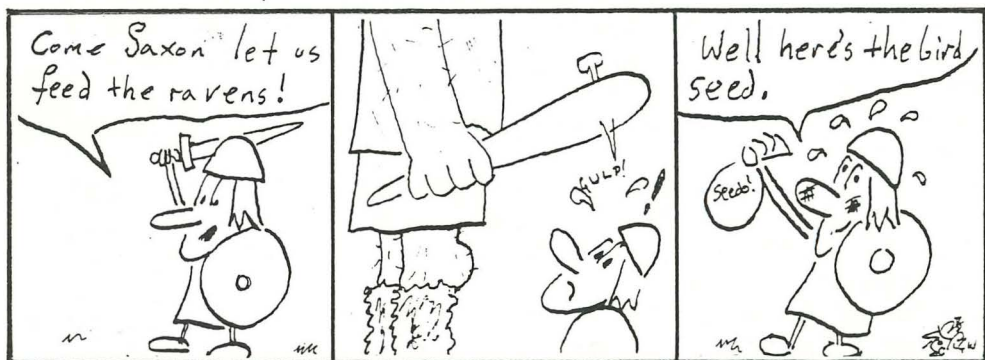
magazines from one place to another. In fact it could end up far more complicated than it is at present. I must admit that I would like to see more people interested in Arthur (and of course the efforts being made by Dragon) but I cannot see a solution at the moment. Coping with lots of letters and printing, collating, putting in envelopes and sending the magazine takes some time and effort. I do enjoy reading letters and producing Dragon, but if anyone has any suggestions to help with its production I will gladly listen.

I would like to thank Sandra for vocalising what many members may have been thinking, for your report on "The Pagan Saxons in Eastern England" Conference and for introducing Kathleen Herbert, authoress of "Queen of Lightning" (a Dark Age tale about Rheged), to Dragon. Finally, I would formally like to welcome Kathleen and the new members Dragon has recruited from the USA, with no small help from the new American magazine Avalon to Camelot. For that, thanks Freya.

TALES FROM THE TWO ELLS

OR NEWLIGHTON THE DARK AGES

by ROGER WILLOOX



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