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



Artus de Bretania from the Modena Archivolt, Italy, XII century.

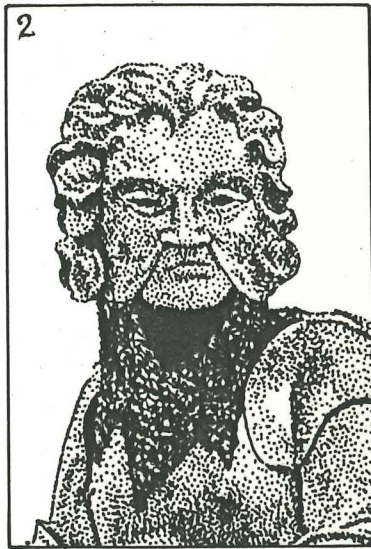
Dear friends,

Welcome once again to DRAGON. I was hoping to bring you a biography of P.K. Johnstone but I am awaiting further information and a photograph which will certainly enhance this article. Meanwhile, here is an assortment of articles which would be equally suited to the DRAGON Project plus a piece in response to a number of letters concerning the pronunciation of Welsh names.

If any members decide to go to the 2nd Merlin Conference (information within) I would be grateful if they let me know. I am at present unsure whether I will be able to attend but if enough members do go then I will make every effort to be there.

I hope that the next issue will be out in August - if not it will be later September/early October due to a visit to Japan.

Now please read on:



What two films did these characters appear in, and which TV fantasy did Modred play another villain? (Illustrations by Graham Sumner)

Solution to the questions can be found later in this issue.

Anglo-Saxon Names

by STEVE POLLINGTON

PERSONAL NAMES

Name-giving among the Anglo-Saxons was very much a matter of tradition, and among the ruling families the given name for the child was an expression of the child's place within the tribe and within the family.

The names fall into a few main types: simplexes, compounds and descriptive names of various kinds. Many simplexes are common words from the language - often words for animals. Examples are: *Wulf* "wolf", *Eofor* "boar", *Hengist* "stallion", *Brand* "flame", among many others. These are common among the earliest settlers in Britain and continue to be popular among the lower orders of society. A further group are names such as *Imma*, *Assa*, etc. which are not known to be words in their own right: they may be abbreviations of longer names which, through frequent usage, have come to be regarded as distinct names. For example, the early East Saxon king *Sabert* was known to his family by the hypocautistic form *Saba*. On the other hand, *Hengist*'s brother's name *Horsa* may be a development of the noun *Hors* "a horse". The addition of the final -a converts this and other such names from the grammatical "strong" declension to the so-called "weak" declension, which thus serves to distinguish the name from the common noun, and so avoid possible confusion - thus an horse's enclosure = *Horses tun*, *Horsa*'s enclosure = *Horsan tun*. The somewhat unwieldy *Folcheort* is known to have been contracted to *Fobba*, and this pattern of "long-syllable + a" is very common during the early Saxon period; here are some further examples of king's names of this type: East Angle - *Wuffa*, *Anna*; Mercian - *Paeda*, *Penda*, *Offa*; Northumbrian - *Ida*, *Aella*, *Acha*; East Saxon - *Sledda*, *Offa*; Kentish - *Octa*, *Horsa*. There are also examples of "long-syllable + i" as *Sebbi*, *Eni*, *Yffi*.

More productive during the later period and among the higher ranks is the compound, usually "adjective + noun" as *Beorht + noth* "bright friend", *Bael + daeg* "shining day", or "noun + noun" as *Wulf + gar* "wolf'spear", *Aesc + here* "spear army" or "noun + adjective" as *Ecg + beorht* "sword bright", *Os + ric* "good rich". These kinds of

names are largely unknown before the settlement period but evidently soon became popular among the ruling families of certain tribes. Another common factor was the alliteration of the names of fathers and sons - a factor which made the composition of alliterative verse much easier. If adhered to rigidly it would produce entire dynasties with alliterating names: thus the kings of the East Saxons all had names beginning with "S" (with one exception), the kings of the Northumbrians all had names beginning with a vowel (in Anglo-Saxon, all vowels alliterate together), while the Danes alliterate on "H", and so on. So strong was this feeling of alliteration that when the Norse in later times came to tell the tale of Sigemund and his son Fitela, they altered the son's name to *Sinfjotli* to allow it to uphold the alliterative tradition. Similarly, it is possible to see that the king of the East Saxons named Offa marks a break with the ancient line of monarchs alliterating on "S", he came to power at a time when the East Saxons were under the power of Mercia, and he clearly bears the same name as two previous Anglian kings of note.

Another practice, by no means as common, is for the sons to bear compound names of which the second element is the same: thus *Hunlaf*, *Oslaf*, *Guthlaf* and *Garlaf* are all members of one family.

Finally, descriptive and occupational names occur, such as *Edweard se langa* "Edward the tall", *Aelfred Cyning* "Alfred the King" (or "King Alfred"), *Benedict Biscop* "Bishop Benedict", etc. These usually follow the given-name and are the originals of many modern English surnames.

Biblical names were known among the Anglo-Saxons but seem to have been adopted in later life rather than given in infancy. Obviously, in pre-Christian times such exotic forms would have been correspondingly rarer, though a good many Celtic names did occur among the Germanic settlers, probably as a result of mixed marriages. The British names are usually Anglicized (Saxonized? Juticized?), as *Caradoc* = *Cerdic*, *Catamandua* = *Caedmon*. It may even be that Saxon fathers, unable and unwilling to grapple with the finer points of Celtic pronunciation, involuntarily reduced the long native names to a form with which they could deal, and created the short, mysterious names like *Imma*, etc., mentioned above. In later times, Norse names also became common, again usually in forms which harmonized with local pronunciation.

FAMILY, TRIBE AND KINGDOM NAMES

The ruling families, that is to say the families from which the kings were chosen, in "Dark Age" Europe tend to have something in common:- the Vandals were ruled by the Asdings, the Franks by the Merovings, the West Saxons by the Cerdicings. These family names are all formed in the same way: a man's name with the suffix "-ing-". The significance of this "ing" was originally "son of" as on the 2nd century gold horn from Gallehus, Denmark, which bears the runic inscription "*Ek Hlewagastiz Holtingaz...*" "I, Hlewagast son of Holt...". By the early Migration Age the use of this form had come to mean "descendant of" and so came to embrace the entire family, tracing its origins back to one ancestor; as such families (occasionally) rose in importance and came to dominate the tribe to which they belonged, the family name could come to denote the tribe - thus "Merovingians" or "*Merewioingas*" became a by-name for the tribe of the *Hugas*. The *Hugas* themselves became dominant among the Franks and so "Merovingian" can denote "early Frankish" in less precise usage.

In the period of Anglo-Saxon settlement in Brittain, the use of "-ingas" to denote small tribes is characteristic of the very early stages of settlement. Its meaning appears to be "dependents of" rather than "descendants of" - the small communities of perhaps a few dozen families may have had no historical connection beyond their joining together under one leader and taking to their boats in search of land to settle. Upon finding a suitable area and settling it they named their region after their leader, and the tribal name came to have a geographical significance. Thus "*Fobbingas*", "dependents of Fobba", came to mean "Fobba's tribe" and so "Fobba's district", the region where Fobba was lord. Interestingly, such names often survive into modern times as place-names when all memory of the small local groupings they commemorate has long since vanished. Thus, place-names such as Fobbing (from *Fobbingas* just mentioned), Barking, Mucking, Barling, Wakering which all occur on a stretch of coastal marshland on the north bank of the Thames Estuary and other such names which preserve "-ing" names in an altered form, such as Corringham (home of the Corringas), Canvey (island of the Caningas) and Potton (Pottingas) all also occur in the same region and point to an area of intensive early settlement by mixed groups of Germanic farmer-warriors.

That this region was of little importance earlier also suggests that the settlement may have been sanctioned, or at least not actually discouraged, by the authorities at that time.

By studying the distribution of these "-ing" names and others since lost but preserved in old records it is possible to determine just where early Germanic settlement took place - mainly along the south and east coasts as we should expect of men sailing from southern Denmark, the Rhineland and Flanders - though caution is necessary since, although "-ing" names are always early, other names may be just as early in a specific region and some "-ing" names may have disappeared already by the time of our earliest records.

Quite early, certainly before they crossed to Britain, the element "-ing" was added to words (perhaps cult names?) to give a meaning "men of" as "*Brondingas*", "*Rondingas*", "*Helmingas*" - men of the sword, shield and helmet respectively. These names are usually labelled 'heraldic' for want of any more appropriate name. In later times, these names tended to 'generate' mythical ancestors, so that *Scyldingas* 'men of the shield' came to regard themselves as descendants of an ancestor or progenitor called "*Scyld*". This was made easier by the fact that names such as *Brand*, *Helm*, etc. were known to have been used by actual people.

A number of names used in Britain and on the Continent are of the type known as 'simplexes', that is they are short names of one syllable (plus inflexions) and are often of unknown meaning. Examples are: *Mierce* 'Mercians, borderers', *Seaxe* 'Saxons, men of the knife', *Dene* 'Danes', *Eote* 'Jutes, eater (?cannibals?)', *Engle* 'Angles, Englishmen, men of the hook', *Friese* 'Frisians?'. (Whether *Engle* means that the Angles lived on a 'hook' of land or that they used a hook for fishing - like modern *Angle-rs* - is not known.) These names all belong to a very ancient period and must pre-date the passage to Britain as tribes with the same names are known on the Continent.

A further group of names which are connected with the last group are the 'geographical' names which are often compounds of the simplexes with geographical elements, for example: *West-*, *Sud-*, *East-*, *Middel-Seaxe* 'West, South, East, Middle Saxons'. A large Anglian Kingdom was called *NORDHYMBRE* 'Northumbrians, men north of the Humber' and the name of the *Mierce* 'borderers' is at least nominally

geographical.

The last main group of names used by the Anglo-Saxons are those taken over by the incomers from the natives. Thus, the Celtic tribes of the Cantii 'dwellers on the rim' lived as 'Centings'; the West Saxons encountered the Dornuarii and called them *Dorn-ware*, where 'ware' is also a Germanic word for "men", but imitates the pronunciation of the Celtic name. (Similarly, Celtic Eboracon became Roman Eboracum, but was re-interpreted by the Angles as *Eoforwic* = *Eofor* "boar" + *wic* "town".) In general, the only terms taken over into Anglo-Saxon from the Celtic Britons were river-names, e.g. Avon, and names of towns such as the name for York given above, and Roman forts, which usually contain the element 'chester'/'caister' Latin caester "stronghold".

ARTHURIAN RE-ENACTMENT

by KENNETH BAMFORD

The two heavily armed Saxon mercenaries carefully picked their way along the pot-holed muddy cow track, furtively scanning the tall gorse thickets on either side of the path, they were far more intent on keeping their boots dry than watching for what they should have already seen. The four painted warriors who had been lying in wait all day for such an easy ambush as this.

As the unwary Saxons drew level, the Picts broke cover, and shrieking wildly smashed bodily into the surprised Germans, the latter hardly having time to raise their heavy shields in any form of token defence. Helplessly thrashing on their backs in the mud, the Saxons were quickly dispatched as the murderous javelins stabbed again and again into their helpless targets.

Suddenly all was quiet. All that could be heard was deep drawn breathing as the four warriors from beyond the ancient wall looked down in triumph onto the two muddled corpses from across the southern sea. The leader of the Picts noticed that one of the Saxons had one of those curious shaped throwing axes tucked into his belt. He had seen these before and knew of the power and accuracy that these German warriors could hurl such a weapon over short

distances. Smiling he bent down to claim his war prize, then knew no more as an arrow took him cleanly through the neck. That missile was but the first of a hail of flying death that scythed down the Picts just as surely as the Saxons had been smashed down before.

Cautiously, the half dozen British archers approached the tangled bodies strewn across the bloodied cow path. Gaheris, their leader, lowered his bow and smiled broadly. "Four Picts and two Germans" he said at last, "not a bad days work". "What about the Germans" replied one of his men, "Hengist won't like losing two more of his beloved cut-throats, they are supposed to be on our side you know". Sullen mumbling from the rest of the men followed the last remark, as for Gaheris, he merely shrugged his shoulders. "Saxons, Picts, I'm sure I don't know who are the worst. For my part I'd see them all dead, for I fear there is worse to come, yes a whole lot worse to come". While Gaheris was deep in thought, the rest of the group ritualistically collected all usable weapons and slowly returned from whence they came. After a short while the birds began to sing again, a hesitant wandering fox catching the smell of human blood in his snout, scurried off down the path. Slowly but surely, life in this tiny spot of 5th century Britian was once again appraoching something like normality.

If you assumed that the charming little scenario you have just read was taken from a rather badly written dark ages novel, then you would be wrong. In fact it was part of an Arthurian re-enactment that I took part in over two years ago. Alright, the leading Pict didn't actually get an arrow in the neck - in point of fact it took him cleanly between the legs, but the effect was the same, and poetic licence allowed me to give the poor chap a more heroic (if not less painful) finish.

So what are re-enactments? Basically they are an attempt by a collection of individuals to relive a particular period in history. I must stress here and now that it is not a question of time-tunnel escapism, although that of course can be found by those who would wish it. But generally, all discerning re-enactment types really do try to extend their understanding of a particular historical period further, by submitting their research and theories to the ultimate acid test, and attempting to live them out.

So now that we have established exactly what re-enactments are, how does an interested party get started? Well, in the U.K. at least, there are lots of Dark Age societies. Mind you, they do tend to be Vikings period orientated, and seem to exist purely for the combat side of things alone. But there are now a few who are turning toward the Arthurian period, and even those are placing less emphasis on combat and more emphasis on the general day to day life style of the periods they choose.

Having found your club (dare I suggest Dragon members form their own!) you will then require clothes/jewelry/weapons etc. all of which can be bought ready made, but naturally for clothes, at least, you may like to try your hand at making them. This of course is where your own ideas and theories come into play. Whether you weave your own material and experiment with vegetable dyes, or quite simply run something up from modern fabrics, the final effect will be the same. Once you look 5th century, you will begin to feel 5th century. Suddenly the dim and distant past doesn't seem so distant after all.

Now you come to the juicy bit....combat! In order to be realistic as possible, all Dark Age societies use real steel weapons, with the only provision being that there are no sharp edges. I should point out that there two exception to this rule. The Society for Creative Anachronism, which is a U.S. based society which uses fake weapons and padded armour, and the Ermine Street Guard, which does have sharp weapons but does not engage in man to man combat. But even with no sharp edges, a steel sword can give you a hefty wallop if you're not too quick to block or parry, and extra care has to be taken with javelins and those naughty throwing axes that the Franks seem to favour. But by and large, the average British or Germanic spear and shield warrior can engage in fairly realistic combat with no more danger of injury than that encountered during the average game of football (British or American versions). For those who wish to take part in all this but do not fancy the hand to hand business, then archery is a viable alternative. Various types of bows can be used, but the arrows have special fletchings which have the effect of the slowing down the arrow in flight (which means you can see them coming) and the arrows are tipped with rubber blunts, so that when they do make contact, far from being skewered, it's more

like receiving a mild punch. In other words, you know you have been hit! Now all this may seem dangerous, but suffice to say that with reasonable care from all concerned, a realistic time can be had by all those who would sample the nastier side of Dark Age life. Being a combat enthusiast myself, I could rattle on forever, but I will close this particular point with one intriguing thought. Densely packed Saxon spearmen are more than a match for heavy cavalry (with or without stirrups) - I know because I've experienced it several times on the re-enactment field. (Letters of disbelief please to the Editor.)

But if Dark Age combat isn't your cup of tea/horn of mead, then a rousing good banquet surely is. Whether in Mead Hall or Villa, to eat/drink/talk/sing/play music or recite poetry all in period must have its attraction. Many is the time when with mead horn in hand I have stared into the glowing embers whilst listening to the glee man's tale of Beowulf. It's almost as if the enchanter himself had waved his magic wand and transported me back to the time of my dreams.

Escapism? Yes. Practical historical research? Yes. Whatever your preference for Dark Age re-enactments are, one thing must surely ring true. It has to be the ultimate answer to those critics of ours who argue that Arthurian research is purely a question of burying one's nose into a pile of dusty old books.

If you are wonder how a particular weapon was used, or how a particular dish was cooked, or even how a particular item of clothing was worn, don't just think of it! You will be surprised at what you learn, and you will never learn until you try. Re-enactments then have something for everyone old and young alike. It brings the past to life, and life to the past. And that can't be bad can it?

PICTURE QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. John Hallam who played Tyrion in "Dragon-slayer".
2. Richard Addie played Modred in the film "Excalibur". He also played Sir Guy of Gisburne in "Robin of Sherwood".



THE 2nd MERLIN CONFERENCE

"TWO DAYS OF ASTONISHMENT"

SAT JUNE 13th 1987, 10am-9pm

SUN JUNE 14th 11am-5pm

COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE, KENSINGTON HIGH STREET, LONDON W8

GENERAL PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AND SPEAKERS.

(Subject to final times and changes without notice)

Saturday

Geoffrey Ashe	King Arthur and Merlin
Caitlin Matthews	Mabon, the Celtic divine child
Gareth Knight	Doctor John Dee, the Elizabethan Merlin
John Matthews	Merlin, Prester John, and Virgil
Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki	The power of the Imagination
Michael Green	Merlin and the Vessel of Glass
Dr. Kathleen Raine	William Blake and King Arthur
Bob Stewart	Early Tarot Images in the Vita Merlini

A STORY TELLING SESSION WITH MUSIC: CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE:

Peter Dickinson, Peter Vansittart, John Boorman, Bob Stewart, Howard Goorney, Philip Dunbar, Stuart Gordon, John & Caitlin Matthews, plus surprise guests.

EXHIBITION OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND OTHER WORK BY ALAN LEE, MIRANDA GRAY, CHESCA POTTER AND OTHER INVITED ARTISTS. (SATURDAY AND SUNDAY)

THE FILM "Excalibur" (Showing time to be advised)

Sunday

THE BIRTH OF MERLIN Readings with music from this comedy spectacular by William Shakespeare and William Rowley. This play will be a major production in 1988 directed by Denise Coffey with original music by Bob Stewart.

MERLIN AND WOMAN A symposium and discussion with a panel of the various contributors; open to questions and contributions from all comers.

There will be various catering facilities, a bar, ample space for socialising, and a bookstall featuring "The Book of Merlin" published from the 1986 Conference by Blandford Press, plus books by the contributing speakers.

Tickets are £12 for both days, from The Merlin Conference, BCM Box 3721, London WC1 3XX

THE MERLIN CONFERENCE IS A NON-COMMERCIAL NON-PROFIT MAKING EVENT

A Triad of Thoughts on the British after Arthur

by REG DAND

Many scholars have wondered why the British apparently became so quickly overcome in the years after Arthur. They had after all shown themselves capable of dealing with the incoming Germanic peoples, but these people, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, had taken seven towns between 571/577, and never looked back after that.

A number of reasons have been advanced: that the British were "soft" from years of peace, that they were reduced by a number of attacks of Plague, which apparently did not affect the Saxons, and most interesting perhaps, that the end came with an uprising of slaves. What follows is no more than speculation, though based upon analogies, and some evidence; it takes the form of three ideas:

1. Military Characteristics: Thoughts normally turn to cavalry attacks by the British, a tactic at which they excelled, and the Saxons retained Welshmen as Royal couriers long after, and were themselves unhandy upon horses. But this kind of guerilla warfare is unlikely to be a winning one in the longer term, and they seem to have avoided the essential solid head-on attack. We know from hindsight that the American Indians, the Boers, the Eskimos and indeed many native forces failed against superior numbers and equipment, despite successful small attacks and ambushes often expensive to the enemy. In modern terms Navy and RAF, and mobile troops, can soften up the enemy and make victory easier....but at the end of the day it is the land forces which need to hold the ground, and to apply the coup de grace.

2. Religious Characteristics: Tolstoy in "The

Quest for Merlin" is among those who have drawn attention to the divisive effect among the British of the two "religions - the old and the new", placing Merlin somewhere in the old. The acceptance of Christianity was no immediate affair and in times of stress there would be many who blamed the loss of the old gods. Tolstoy again suggests that Arthuret was indeed a battle between Christians and pagans. Northumbria, originally settled by pagans, later may have suffered from the same problem for two reasons. It was frequently the king's relatives who took high office in the Church and they were able to speak to the king on equal terms - this is quite clear from Bede. The second reason is that the pagan forthrightness in matters of war go with difficulty in the peace-giving Christian ethic, but one must admit that at different times Christianity and peace have been completely at odds. The Crusades, medieval military Popes and the Norman Bishop Odo come to mind, but it would be difficult to deny the possible taming of the dragons by the Church over the years. There are historians who hold that Northumbria's loss to Mercia may have had this reason.

3. Communal Characteristics: In Dragon 2.6 our Editor offered a very interesting article on "The House of the Welsh Laws" explaining the importance of the gafaelion/gafael in this context. The Welsh Laws, he wrote, were originally codified during the 10th Century but were probably older it seems, and the "Agrarian History of England and Wales" (1972) suggested that Wales returned to at least some Celtic customs after the Romans departed. There seems to be a link between the "house" and the "community or family" in the form of the gavelkind, that custom where by upon the decease of a landowner the land was divided equally by those with a family claim, a custom which has a deep source in Celtic history.

The word gavelkind according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary has a Middle English source

(like many other odd words with old Welsh origins) with only an inferred Old English one. It was a form of "land tenure existing chiefly in Kent", which of course suggests a Celtic connection with the Continent. The precise meaning is for the skill of the philologists but a general idea of "house-kin" from gafol + gan, does not seem unreasonable.

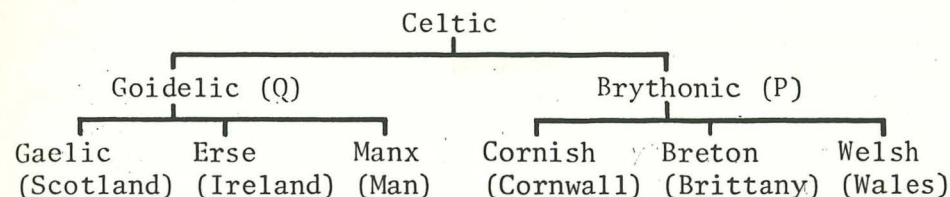
The precise point of all this is that a succession of historians have pointed to the bad effects of gavelkind in reducing the size of land holdings to successive generations leading to subsistence farming and poverty. It was a system which prevailed for example in the old British areas of Redesdale in Northumberland until the 18th Century, which meant that the "modernisation" of farming with larger, sometimes communal fields hardly existed. A nation reducing itself in this way would form an ever increasing society of men on the fringe, unwilling or perhaps unable to resist the incursions of a strong forceful enemy.

It will be seen that these are no more than ideas - and we shall probably never know the real reason, or perhaps there were several reasons. What is interesting in almost all these questions is their application to modern affairs: the odds of ultimately winning is very unlikely in Afghanistan for example, despite the skill of the Pathans in guerilla warfare, and the modern Church has constant problems in trying to relate to minor wars, to the "Bomb" and the violence in support of "just" causes!

"CYNANIAD CYMRAEG" **Welsh Pronunciation**

by CHARLES EVANS-GUNTHER

Welsh is one of the Indo-European languages and is classed as Brythonic or sometimes called P Celtic.



The name Welsh, of course, is an English word - as is the name of our country - in our own language the country is called Cymru and the language Cymraeg. It is a very old language and developed from the pre-Roman Celtic - affected by Latin and later influenced by Norse, French and English. Many Dark Age poems were written in an early form of the Welsh language - somewhat similar but without certain letters such as the difficult "ll".

Pronunciation of Welsh is, in the main, not at all difficult - it is basically a phonetic language.

CONSONANTS:

b as in boy; c as in cat (there is no soft 'c' as in the English circle); ch - there is no equivalent in English but it is the 'ch' in Scottish Loch - very guttural; d as in dog; dd is the equivalent of 'th' as in the; f is like the 'f' of of or the 'v' of love; ff is more or less the same as the English 'f'; g as in garden (never as in gentleman); ng as in long; h as in hand; j as in jam (rare); l as in ladder; ll has no equivalent in English and is quite difficult to say, but if you try to pronounce 'l' and they make a hissing sound like a snake, keeping your tongue on the roof of your mouth, you should get something like it. M as in man; n as in name; p as in pet; ph as in philosophy (mostly used in mutations); r as in rat but must be pronounced, never silent, and with a trill; rh is an aspirated letter - imagine a 'h' after the 'r'; s as in sail, except when before an 'i' when it becomes 'sh', so eisiau is pronounced ay-shee-eye; t as in town; th as in think and w as in wind.

VOWELS:

These are usually of two kind long (l) and short (s): a as in hard (l) and ham (s); e like 'a' in lane (l) and as in then (s); i like 'ee' in tree (l) and as in pink (s); o like toe (l) and as in gone (s); w like zoo (l) and like look (s); u and y are in most cases like 'ee' or 'i'. Vowels are also affected by an accent called a 'to bach' (little roof) that lengthens the sound. Then there are

diphthongs: ai, ae, au, ei and ey all sound like 'eye' or 'aye'; aw is like the comic Indian's greeting 'how' without the 'h'; oe and oi are like 'oy' in boy and iw, yw and uw are all similar to 'ew' in new, and wy is like 'wi' in win.

To complicate things there are mutations and variations in pronunciation between North and South Wales, but I shall ignore those completely because, unless you want to learn to speak Welsh, they will not effect you at all. What is wanted is how to pronounce personal names and place-names. Here then are but a few:

Some Arthurian characters: Arthur is pronounced like Arthir remembering to trill the 'r's (very like saying Arthurian); Gwenhwyfar = Gwenhooeevar; Cei = Kay; Gwalchmai = Gwalchmy; (the Welsh Gawain); Bedwyr = Bedoor; Culhwch = Kilhooch with the guttural 'ch'; March is like Mark and so on.

Placenames such as Gwynedd are pronounced Gwineth, Dyfed = Duved, the 'd' a bit like a 't' and Powys = Powis.

If the reader pronounces each letter of a Welsh word he or she should have no problems, except for 'll' and 'ch'. Just always remember that there is no soft 'c' or 'g' in Welsh - Celtic is not pronounced like the Scottish football team but always 'Keltik'.



I must admit we are a bit low on reviews for this issue but the two we have are both interesting and connected:

THE GRAIL SEEKER'S COMPANION by John Matthews and Marian Green, Aquarian Press, 1986, paperback, £6.99.

This is a fascinating book divided into two parts - the first looks at the texts, characters, places and theories concerning the Holy Grail. The second part is about the application of the Holy Grail as a spiritual quest.

To be fair I do not think I can comment too much on the second part since spiritual beliefs and

the belief in the spiritual is a personal thing. For this reason I think that it would be better for the reader of this review to make up their own mind whether the Holy Grail does have any relevance to the modern day. If the reader does not believe that it has any use then the second part of this book will not interest him/her at all. For my part I would like to say that I am unsure of this application of the Holy Grail - but then I am equally unsure of other systems of spirituality. It would be very interesting to know how much effect the Holy Grail had on the people of the Middle Ages - or was it's fame restricted to those who could read the poems and stories, while the illiterate knew nothing of the fabulous "thing".

Let me return to the first section, of which I feel somewhat safer discussing. As an introduction to the literature of the Grail, this is done very well. I particularly like the easy to follow flow chart on page 30. The authors' covering of the people and places are very well covered and I learned a few things I had no knowledge of at all. (May I point out that I personally have no interest in the Holy Grail as a historical fact - in fact - I am very dubious of its reality and prefer to believe that it has some symbolic meaning!)

The section on theories is without doubt the highlight of the first part, something which the authors have brought right up to date. That the Grail should have Celtic connections is not usually doubted but that that is should be connected with the Jewish Qabalah and the Tarot is strange, or is it? The German story Parzival seems to have Arabic connections and Wagner even tried to explain the name Parzival is Iranian terms (not mentioned in this book). One theory that particularly interests me is that of the Spear of Destiny. Here an Austrian writer claims Adolf Hitler had occult connections with the Hallows of the Grail story - the Spear specifically. What puzzles me is that the authors don't mention that the Spear Hitler

coveted was, and still is, in Vienna. However, I would like to point out the authors and the readers that the basis of Ravenscroft's book is without doubt a fallacy and that Hitler had no interest in the Spear in the way the book indicates - it was the Crown Jewels of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that he wanted and got. That is not to say that the Fuhrer wasn't interested in the Holy Grail, and so too was Himmler. But it was a symbol to them, twisted from Wagner's opera Parzival and plays on the mixed up words SanGreal (joined here on purpose) - was it San Greal - Holy Grail or Sang Real - the True Blood? Hitler saw the Grail as a simple of pure Aryan blood but I doubt very much if he ever connected it or dabbled in the occult, despite so much written on the subject.

I certain feel that a lot of readers would find this book very interest to read and those with a spiritual "bent" will be fascinated by the second part. (By the way one of the authors, John Matthews, is a member of Dragon.)

Y SEINT GREAL / THE HOLY GRAIL edited and translated by Robert Williams (1810-1881) with illustrations for this new edition by John Vane. Jones (Wales) Publishers, 1987. £22.

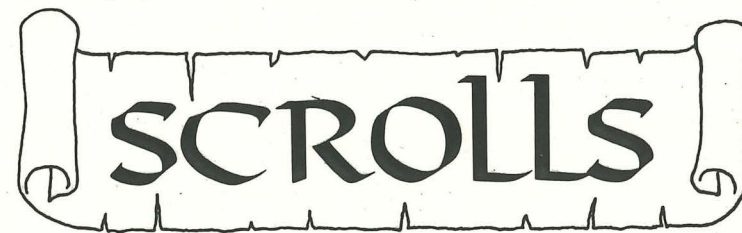
This reproduction of the original bi-lingual publication from 1876 is the vertual culmination of Jane Frost's own quest - she is as the previous reviewed book called a Grail seeker! Ten years of research have gone into find and getting this book printed. "It will be the realisation of a long-standing goal for me" said Jane before the goal was accomplished.

Y Seint Greal is based on a manuscript found in the famous Peniarth library. It was translated from Norman-French into Cymraeg (Welsh) and English by the Reverand Robert Williams, canon of St.Asaph in 1876. The original was called "Roman du Queste du Saint Greal" and credited to Walter de Mapes. The story itself is the Quest for the Grail has found in the "Morte d'Arthur" but with extra adventures of other

knights of the Round Table. The hero of the tale is Galaath, Galahad, taking over from the much earlier Grail heroes Percival and Gawain. Our heroes not only search for the Grail but also fight evil knights and monsters. It is, as Jane Frost puts it, "a rattling good tale".

This is a beautifully bound book - an excellent facsimile of the original nineteenth century production. The cover is adorned with a gold Grail design and the text is interdespersed with eight colourful illustrations by John Fane. It is consists of over seven hundred pages, divided into English and Welsh, plus a glossary of Welsh terms. If you enjoy Medieval tales of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and want something more, this is worth getting.

Jane is also producing a facsimile of The Life of Merlin by Thomas Heywood later this year.



This issues letters are primarily related to the main topic of the last issue - that is the theories that I put forward for your comment. (By the way, I would still like to hear from more of you so as to feel sure that it would be worthwhile further research on the subject.)

The first letter is an extract from a correspondence by Grosvenor Museum, Chester, Field Officer Tim Strickland:

"I found your own thoughts on Arthur particularly fscinating since I live near Hawkstone and Bury Walls! I will do some exploring in the weeks ahead. Your reasoning sounds impeccable to me."

I certainly appreciate Mr Strickland's

comments and hope that his "explorations" prove of some interest. I also hope he gets back to me on any feelings he has about the site.

Next we have a rather longer letter from Steve Pollington making an interesting comparison between Arthur and the hero Beowulf:

"I found your piece on Arthur in the Midlands very interesting - it certainly makes a change to see some research being done which does not accept the usual association of Arthur with Cornwall. It seems to me that if Arthur's intention was to force the Saxons back to the east coast, Cornwall would be among the most disadvantageous places to have a base: how could you have kept in contact over such a distance? The idea of a base in the west Midlands certainly makes more sense strategically, but it may simply have been accidental that he happened to be in the right place at the right time.

"As to the historicity of Arthur, the position is simply parallel to that concerning a Saxon character - "Beowulf". Briefly, Beowulf appears only in one poem, but within the context of the poem he is presented as partly a legendary, partly a historical character. The problem is: - is the legendary material an intrusion into a history; or conversely, is the historical milieu an intrusion into a legendary or mythical tale? Some argue that Beowulf's deeds are pure invention (monster-slaying, dragon-slaying) while others declare that the historical character has "attracted" legendary material (exactly as one may argue that Arthur's name did). Interestingly, some of Beowulf's deeds are also assigned to an early Iclander called Grettir and the parallels are too striking to be ignored. It really does seem that there are certain tales or traditions which attach themselves to the character of the hero in some strange way; as if the hero has to have these attributes to be complete, to conform to the idea of the hero in tradition.

It might be interesting, and not unprofitable, to check whether any of the tales belonging to Arthur are also told of other figures in early European history; those that are will presumably not be original, while the remainder may well be the core of truth peculiar to Arthur."

What Steve has to say makes a lot of sense. The hero is a fascinating subject and has been well covered in at least two interesting books: Baron Fitzroy Richard Somerset Raglan's "The Hero" and Joseph Cambell's "The Hero with a Thousand Faces". Both books open up a complete picture of the hero and state some controversial facts - see Raglan's formula for looking for a hero.

In the next letter Wolfgang and Rosweitha Heindl point out another similarity:

"Your article on Arthur in the Midlands was one of the most interesting articles I have ever read in Dragon. It offers a complete new point of view....

"Why should there not have been other Arthurs in Wales? In history and legend often people with or without the same name get mixed up like the Ostrogothic King Theoderich. In the legend of the Nibelungen, Theoderich (in the legend his name is Dietrich of Bern) is at the court of the Huns. He is vassal of their King Attila. There Theoderich fights and defeats the last King of the Nibelungen Gunther (Editor's note: as far as I know no relation!) and the hero Hagen. Thereafter Attila helps Theoderich to recover his country by battle.

"In history Attila (c.434-453?) may have been dead when Theoderich (c. 471-526) was born, but there was another Theoderich. He was King of the Visigoths, who helped Aetius to defeat Attila and his Huns at Chalons-sur-Marne 451. Maybe there was an earlier Theoderich who was vassal at the court of the Huns and maybe it is possible that the king of the Huns was another Attila at this time. In the legend of the Nibelungs all these people get mixed. So why

should this not happen to King Arthur? Maybe there was a local hero in the Midlands and people said this one is their Arthur (he fights, rules, holds court, etc., like Arthur). Later on people didn't remember his original name and called him Arthur in their legends....

"In this way is there a possibility that the name Arthur is not only a name? Is it possible it means something like leader, king or even cleric? There is always something of religion around him in legends. Roman emperors were called Caesar. How many emperors would have melted into one person by today had it not been for so many clerks and historians at the time of the Roman empire?"

Many thanks to Rosweitha and Wolfgang for these comments. I fully appreciate the possibility that Arthur is more than a name. It is fascinating that the name is so rare in Wales until the time of Geoffrey of Monmouth - after that it became very popular. I must admit that I am far from sure about this idea. However, Mary Thompson also points out this possibility:

"I would like to suggest that Arthur is a title, which increased the likelihood of accretion of various episodes into a narrative about one leader. The likeness of the consonants in Arthur and those of the German epithet *Alte* and those in the old Irish word for father started me on this theory. The Celtic chieftains in Caesar's Commentary have names that contain elements suggesting they are titles. For instance, the last syllables of *Vercingetorix* are translated to mean a battle commander, not unlike the *dux bellorum* attributed to Arthur."

I do not discount the possibility that there could have been more than one Arthur or that Arthur covered a number of people not necessarily having the name Arthur. However, that Arthur is a title rather than a name, as far as I can see is doubtful. There have been discussions in the past that names found in the Dark Ages and certainly before - as Mary points out

in the early Roman period - are titles. Geoffrey Ashe suggested that the name *Riothamus* meant 'generalissimo', but K. Jackson refuted that, saying that that it is an acceptable personal name which evolved into *Rhiadaf* in later Welsh. I must admit that I subscribe to the later.

I would be very grateful for any more comments on this subject. Finally, a letter from author Arthur Young:

"Many thanks for your most interesting and informative article on Arthur in the Midlands....

"...Your mention of Sir Key and Caynham Camp near Ludlow reminded me of Richard Castle. The castle, of pre-Conquest origin, was built by Richard FitzScrob who came to England about A.D. 1052. Later it was held by Osborn son of Fitz-Scrob and at Domesday it was called *Castella Avreton*. Now if you look up Avebury in Ekwall you will see it was called *Avreburie* at Domesday, meaning Afa's burg which I ultimately deduce as being Arthur's fort after comparison with similar names (Ed. see Vol.2 No.3). Therefore *Avreton* means Afa's enclosure and, therefore, Arthur's enclosure! It's about four miles south of Ludlow and commands a great view down the valley of the River Teme. (Mr Young also points out that Hereford means Army ford - whose army? Arthur's?)

"...'*Demetia* had Irish kings until roughly A.D. 500 when they were displaced suddenly with British kings who, initially, had Roman names'. This is an exceedingly important clue in your context, lifted straight from John Morris.... It needs extremely careful and deep research. What was this "Roman" force? Where did it come from? Gloucester? Who commanded it? Ambrosius? The indications are that you've found Arthur as Arthur son of Pedr of Dyfed and grandson of Vortipore. Who was the latter? His name looks a bit Roman. But it would be very worthwhile pursuing this line of research.

"I wouldn't worry too much about incidental mentions of Arthur. The time element is bound to enter into them and he was obviously a very

active character. What date was Culhwch and Olwen? Can you give it a Sequence Date? (Suffice to say I was not able to fit all of Mr Young's letter in and Sir Flinders Petrie's Sequence Dates mentioned earlier in this correspondence.)".

Mr Young goes out to suggest that I should approach an archaeologist with a 'pilot dig' in mind. Well, I hope that Mr Strickland, mentioned earlier, may be able to give some advice on this subject. I would like to thank Mr Young for the time taken to write his letters - he has not been well for some time and I certainly appreciate his comments.

I would like to reply to some of the questions in the above. The late Sir Idris Foster suggested that the story of Culhwch and Olwen would have been composed no later than 1100, which may make it the earliest Arthurian adventure. Arthur son of Pedr can be traced back to Irish origins with Eochaid Allmuir son of Artchorp coming to Dyfed from Leinster (see Harleian MS. 3859 No.2 and "The Expulsion of the Deisi" - Bodleian MS. Rawlinson B. 502.)

TALES FROM THE TWO ELLS

OR NEWLIGHTON THE DARK AGES

by ROGER WILLCOX



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