

Motley Edition

30P



♦ PENDRAGON



PENDRAGON



The Pendragon Society Journal

Autumn Volume 12 Number 4

The Secretary, Pendragon Society, 27 Roslyn Road, Redland, Bristol 6
Editor: Chris Lovegrove, Production: Kate Pollard, Roger Webster.
All material © Pendragon Society and individual authors. Opinions
expressed are not necessarily those of the Society. Annual subscrip-
tion, which includes this quarterly journal, £2.50. The Society's
aims are to stimulate interest in and investigate the archaeology
and history of the Arthurian period and the Matter of Britain, and
other aspects of British mystical and mythical culture.



BECAUSE of the lateness of the "midsummer" issue due to printing difficulties (for which, apologies) this rather motley Pendragon follows hard on its heels. I say motley because this is somewhat of a patchwork of letters, articles and reviews rather in the nature of a Fool's costume. Nevertheless there should be much to interest the reader despite the lack of theme, and there are several things on which to report.

It is intended to hold the Society's AGM later this year, followed by an evening of slides, films and/or music: look for the details elsewhere in this issue. We hope members will be able to come, especially as the evening will concentrate on being entertaining!

NO THROUGH-ROAD

The dig at Charterhouse-on-Mendip took place at the end of July and though rather disappointing was a welcome opportunity to meet several hitherto postal members. Readers wanting to know what Roman roads really are about (!) are recommended to peruse Richard W Bagshawe's Roman Roads (published this year by Shire Archaeology at £1.50) for a concise introduction to the subject.

CAERLEON

On August 6th we were invited by BBC tv's Nationwide to be interviewed at Caerleon-on-Usk which, as members know, has a traditional claim to be one of King Arthur's principal courts. Colin Walls and myself revealed the secrets of King Arthur's Round Table (see if you can spot the difference between a Roman amphitheatre's "royal box" and the gladiators' "green room"!) with Mike Pollard providing essential mute responses. Barring unforeseen mishaps, this should appear on your screens in a special series just before Christmas.

GOWER FLOUR POWER?

A carload of volunteers dug at Llanelen on the Gower over the late August Bank Holiday and moreorless survived the onslaught of weather, insects, horses and nightmares. Nevertheless a jolly time was had and, in more sober terms, progress was made. The new North-South trench across the site was deepened outside and to the south of the stone church down to the clay bank on which the stone foundations were laid. Below the medieval graves was stony infill which overlaid, at the south end of the trench, some

rough flooring. Just above this flooring was evidence of burning which included grain, for which it might be possible to obtain a radiocarbon date.

In the stony infill was also found the base of a rotary quern, the upper surface of which included a central spindle (?) hole and radial grooves. A very early Pendragon (Vol 2 No 3, Jan 1968) included a letter from a Mr G Holdstock in Essex who understood that quernstones with radial grooves were fourth century (as at Tythegston, Glamorgan). On the other hand a quern fragment from Dinas Powys with more complex radial grooving was dated by Leslie Alcock as post-Roman. Wait for the official report by Alex Schlesinger (coming soon?) and all will be revealed!

INDIAN SUMMER MADNESS

A few Bristol members and others indulged in an Indian evening round about the autumnal equinox, with slides of the sub-continent and curries to add extra flavour to the proceedings. Thanks specially to Julie and Pete Weeks, and Colin and Jenny Walls.

Finally, we were very sorry to hear that Vince Russett had decided to call a halt to producing Picwinnard. This was done for a variety of reasons, one of which was a lack of contributions (there is a moral here, dear Reader). However, Vince hopes to be involved in a special field project soon, and, as a Pendragon member, he may well appear occasionally as contributor to the pages of this journal.



THEMES

Next issue will be the special 20th anniversary magazine with Arthur, man, myth and symbol, as the theme. Articles are coming in gradually, but we would still like a lot more, from whatever angle you're interested in.

Following the Arthur issue will be one on a topic rather more diverse: stones, wells, graves, patterns etc, all generally put under the heading of Earth Mysteries, but related perhaps in one way or another with the Matter of Britain. I can't think of a title - Arth-mysteries maybe? - but something will no doubt suggest itself. C.L.

LOOK! £2.50 DOWN
THEN NOTHING MORE TO
PAY FOR 52 WEEKS!

Annual subscription to the Pendragon Society only £2.50 and includes this quarterly magazine.

BACK NUMBERS

Some back numbers of Pendragon are still available from the Secretary, 27 Roslyn Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 6NJ, all at 30p + postage.

Vol 10 No 4: Dragons
Vol 11 No 1: Merlin, No 2 Lance-
lot, No 3: The Round Table, No
4: St Brendan, Magic Squares.
Vol 12 No 1: Gawain, No 2:
Guinevere, No 3: Templars.

A for Arthur, the story of the Society by Jess Foster.

LETTERS: Runes, Cryptogram...

In an article in the magazine Sangreal Gef Stuart Dearn describes a set of eight runestones which employ symbols other than the old Nordic runes for divining. In a letter Sally and Gef write:

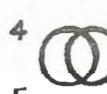
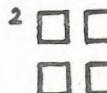
"The runestones were discovered by a certain Dorothy Oliver, a dealer in Victorian who trades in the Portobello Road in London. An American couple in this country for post-graduate studies confirmed that they knew about the stones and revealed their planetary significance.

I was puzzled at their name since the designs have no obvious connections with the runic futharc.

They were first mentioned in a Quest publication "Magic in Principal and Practice" by Marian Green, a slim volume for which I drew the illustrations.

This was reviewed in one of Gareth Knight's publications (Quadriga or New Dimensions, I forget which) in which he reproduced my illustrations of the designs and mentioned that Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki (the Director of Studies of the Servants of the Light) had also done some research on runestones. Dolores uses an additional stone, presumably an equivalent to the significator in Tarot divination, but otherwise it is understood that her system is substantially the same as the one described in Sangreal (Vol 2 No 3).

They are not our invention but whether they are any older than we are we cannot say for certain. The main thing is that, like the Chinese I Ching, as a divinatory device they seem to work."



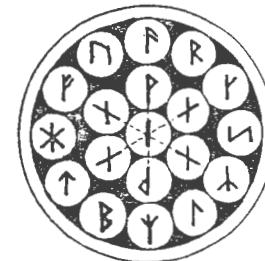
LOST KNOWLEDGE?

Peter Ratazzi of Hove, Sussex writes:

"On the subject of RUNES: note statue of Otto the Great in the Cathedral of Magdeburg (now behind the Iron Curtain)



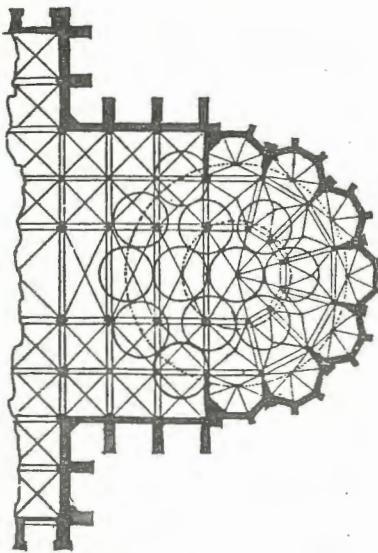
and his symbol of sovereignty, the runic shield



which is seen reproduced in architecture (shades of Le Mystre des Cathdrales) in, for example, the drawn-in completed corona of chapels (here in the ground-plan of Cologne Cathedral).

Otto I was the 10th century ruler of the ancient Reich encompassing also large areas of Italy."

Mr Ratazzi also draws our attention to a "rune game" using 25 stones (including a blank) mentioned in a Telegraph review of



PROPHETIC CRYPTOGRAM...

From Michael Benkert, London W3:

"The arrival of the Pendragon Magazine has reminded me to get a move on again, after some domestic delay, with my promised reappraisal of the cryptogram; also may I offer my apologies for absentmindedly drawing the sign for TAU instead of that for NU for the letter N in the centre word TENET of the square. The difference between the two signs is simply that there is a 'blip' on the top of the rod, held in a fist and forearm, for the letter NU, which then is the sign for a Lord or King, as the rod has thus become a sceptre."

* Mr Benkert's reappraisal of the Cryptogram will appear in a future issue. His letter refers to his article in Pendragon XII/2.



(Isolde Wigram writes from Uckfield in Sussex:)

The magazine certainly seems to be likely to continue as a forum of ideas. Indeed I always find something of interest in it, though much of it bewilders me, and there seems on the whole too many dogmatic statements, the grounds for which are not given.

Also there are always so many words in ancient languages which we are assured mean so-and-so, and about which I am afraid I maintain a rather sceptical attitude!

The reason I am writing is my puzzlement over Jess Foster's article "Easter Light" (Vol 12 No 2), which I am afraid leaves me in the dark!

There is the argument about the date of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion... St John states clearly "Because it was the eve of Passover, the Jews were anxious that the bodies should not remain on the cross for the coming Sabbath, since that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity..." (NEB, John 19, v.31).

No doubt Jess has good grounds for saying the Passover was always celebrated on the 14th Nisan, but the "Sabbath of great solemnity" must have been the main feast day, though the festival began presumably with the two preliminary Days of Unleavened Bread, the Passover meal was eaten on the first one.

At any rate, if for the Jews the Passover Sabbath was the high spot, it was logical for the Christians, and the Roman Church in particular, to celebrate Easter on the following day, which would have been an anniversary of the day it actually happened.

If the Celtic church celebrated it on any other day, they had no good grounds for doing so. It's sensible to have a solar calendar, but in dating Easter we have to follow the practice of the Jews - as Jesus did."

EASTER DATES

(Ms Wigram points out that there is a word missed out in the fourth paragraph. The sentence should read "According to the solar calendar Tuesday was the usual and accepted day for celebrating weddings".

Does anyone know the book by Millar Burrows Jess Foster quoted from, or who wrote The Rabbi Jesus? Jess died before I could obtain her sources.

Finally Ms Wigram rightly reminds me that I have confused the commercial Mother's Day with Lady Day; apologies to any readers I have misled over this.)

NEWS from GWENT

From Paddy Stone, Bassaleg, Gwent:

"Thought you may be interested to know that my bedroom and dining room views are that of a hill and fort known as Maes Arthur.

Have been trying to find Pencarn on the map - on the coastline, as illustrated, in Vincent's article ["The Sacrament of Battle" by Vincent Ryan last issue] - it could be St Bride's Wentlooge or Peterstone Wentlooge. A little further inland it could be the mount at Penylan. There is a very interesting church at Michaelston-y-Fedw, just past Penylan; there is a large oak tree nearby, also a standing stone called Druidstone.

I know there was a Benedictine monastery at Goldcliff, the ruins of which I do not think have been excavated. The land the monks held stretched as far as Bristol (Baldwin St now) in the mid 13th c, also the parishes of Puriton, Woolavington, Dodington, Nether Stowey, Preston Monksilver and Membury in Somerset. Tintern was Cistercian - although in one brief year, Feb 1332-Jan 1333, a monk of Tintern, William Martel, managed to interlope into Goldcliff. Sir John Inge of Somerset was the man who was behind the "set-up" job and who acquired quite a bit of the Som-

erset property (with the aid of this "bent" monk).

One day I went for a walk around the churchyard of St Basil's (just around the corner). I looked towards Twmparllwm (also a highish hill, with a hillfort and the remains of a castle). Just below the summit I could swear I saw an outline of a horse or dragon - probably the way the foliage is arranged. When I acquire some binoculars I can get a better view."



ADVERTISEMENT

FLYING SAUCERS, meetings, sky-watches, newsletter, photos etc., details, s.a.e. British UFO Society, 47 Belsize Square, London NW1.

WARMINSTER, UFO and Ley Centre. Weekend and holiday accommodation available to UFO researchers, skywatchers, ley hunters and anyone interested in New Age and ancient mysteries. Detail, S.a.e. UFO Services, 47 Belsize Square, London NW3.

CULT OBJECTS

Stephen Banks, author of The Magpie's Companion (a guide to things found published by John Murray) would still like to hear of "cult objects" noted by readers, things in museums which appear to be religious but nobody there wants to say how and why. He writes that while travelling through Europe "I found two good 'cult objects'. An Etruscan bowl in Rome with cast figures dancing round a chained bear on the cover, and a Celtic pottery idol in Vienna of crescent moon shape

with a bull's head at one end and at the other a ram's". Any information will be forwarded gladly.

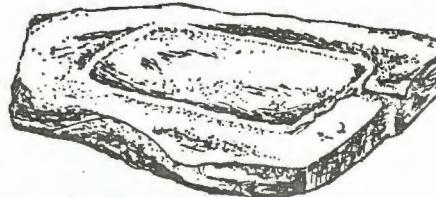
Mary Bonnington

MYSTERY HILL

Mystery Hill is a mystery, a site of approximately an acre covered with small stone buildings, wells and aligned walls. It has been attributed to Irish monks, to the eccentric Mr Puttee who built his house here in 1823, and most recently to Celts who sailed west from Spain along a line of longitude to set up a Stonehenge-type observatory complete with stones to mark the solstices, equinoxes, and true north. Radio-carbon tests give dates of 1000 BC and earlier. The New England Antiquities Research Association claims to have identified over 300 similar sites all over New England.

It is said that tons of stones were carted away from Mystery Hill to provide curbstones and severs for the nearby towns of Lowell and Lawrence. The structures which are left are small and rather roughly built of fairly small stones, but roofed with very large slabs. The marker stones which are set around a central point at the top of the rise are not immovably large, and I could get no information about how firmly they are set in the earth.

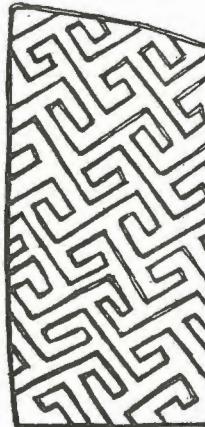
The area is wooded, with rides cleared to show the markers, which are at a fair distance from the centre of the site. A few rough carvings have been found, and some stones inscribed with "Ogham". The "Sacrificial Table" at the heart of the complex is a $4\frac{1}{2}$ ton slab with a groove carved round it, supported on low stone legs. Under it is a stone speaking tube, which leads to a recess a few yards away. It is surmised that this arrangement enabled a mysterious disembodied voice to make oracular utterances at suitable times.



SACRIFICIAL TABLE?

America compares Mystery Hill with Stonehenge, as a great astronomical observatory. Its purpose certainly may be the same, and if a group of voyagers landed on a strange shore and wished to set up an observatory, they would be likely to make something like this. But the site has been so drastically robbed and worked over that it is difficult to see what really is there. A great deal more work needs to be done, both on excavation and on the relationship of this site with the others which are said to abound in the area.

*Mystery Hill and other American sites were examined in The Ley Hunter No 83; America BC (Ancient Settlers in the New World) by Barry Fell, who deciphered the "Ogham" and "Iberian Punic" inscriptions at Mystery Hill, was critically reviewed by Bob Gilbert in Pendragon Vol 11 No 4 (Sept 1978).



REVIEWS

The Journal of Geomancy, edited by the prolific Nigel Pennick, is published by the Institute of Geomantic Research as a quarterly magazine. Containing articles on Zodiacs, Masonic symbolism, Templars, leys and earth mysteries, it is a diverse and undogmatic publication, though a greater degree of editorial discretion might make the material more accessible to the general reader. A5 format. Illustrated. 28pp, 60p + postage or £3 for membership of IGR from IGR, 142 Pheasant Rise, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8SD.

Initially from the IGR under Mr Pennick's editorship is Albion, a magazine of Folklore, Rituals, Stones and Monuments, providing some good reading; is now available quarterly in A5 format and illustrated for 40p + postage or £2 pa from PO Box 146, Finchfield, Braintree, Essex.

The Cauldron, in newsletter form of 8 pages foolscap, contains short articles and informed comment on paganism, witchcraft and related earth mysteries. 20p or multiples (blank P.O.) from The Cauldron, BCM 1633, London WCIV 6XX. In the same vein as The Cauldron and with a similar format is Wood & Water, though as the name may suggest the accent is on Groves and Holy Wells. The second issue out now is a great improvement on the first and the editors are endeavouring to encourage the care and maintainance of holy wells and to form contact with people interested in them. 16pp quarto, 30p + postage or £1 for 3 from Tony Padfield, 38 Exmouth St, Swindon SN1 3PU.

Round Merlin's Table sounds good, though this is the misleading title of a quarto magazine. There is no mention of Merlin and all articles are of the Dion Fortune, Aleister Crowley, Egyptien, Astrological, Psychic Healing type. The mixture of Qabalistic, Alchemical and Taoist interpretation is in parts interesting, though often confused and therefore confusing.

MAGAZINES

Publishers, the Servants of the Light, no doubt have good intentions, but to one not of their number their magazine is a little incoherent. Quarterly from PO Box 215, St Helier, Jersey CI for £1.50 pa.

Wark, reviewed in Pendragon Vol 12 No 2, is to become an annual, reviewing only fantasy magazines, but Ro Pardoe, its editor, has promised an Earth Mysteries magazine from the North West of England, which we await.

Lastly, a lament; Picwinnard has ceased to publish. Editor Vince Russett started the magazine with the hope of initiating new work and research on folklore and earth mysteries, but though the magazine sold well no new work came forth. It seems a lot of people are happy to sit and read but not to produce anything; now who could be guilty of that?

NIK WRIGHT

The Atlanteans are a society offering a "sensitive and compassionate approach to life", and their quarterly magazine The Atlantean aims to capture this spirit. No 178 has articles concerned with this philosophy plus letters, poetry, reviews and a lively miscellany entitled "Signs of the Times" compiled by Betty Wood which includes this snippet: "A thief has stolen a 2ft 6ins steel sword welded into a 2 cwt anvil mounted on a block of concrete. It was taken only some hours after it had been put on display and one of the partners there [they were wrought iron manufacturers] said he could not think how it had been taken out of the anvil..."

The Atlantean is edited by Cynthia Kenyon and is available from 42 St George Street, Cheltenham, GL50 4AF for an annual subscription of £3 including postage. C.L.

More reviews in a future issue.

"Albion's noblest monument..."

Michael Balfour Stonehenge and its Mysteries (Macdonald & Jane's) £6.95 Hardcover.

*
With this book, Michael Balfour can be commended for bringing together under one cover a comprehensive and highly readable collection of just about everything connected with the general "experience" of Stonehenge.

Its appeal does not lie in the voicing of anything new, but in a well-ordered and systematic appraisal of the monument, dealing with the historical and social aspects, the orthodox scientific standpoint, and the New Age theories which have been applied in recent years.

The book is divided into six sections, each dealing with a different aspect of Stonehenge. The first is a loose chronological history of people and events associated with it from its earliest references in literature, through the attentions of Aubrey and Stukeley up to 20th century interest, starting with Sir Norman Lockyer, and the theories of Thom and Michell.

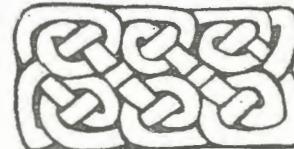
The other sections deal respectively with: Art, and the inspiration which the monument has invoked in various artists; the stones themselves - their nature and transportation etc.; the actual construction of the monument detailing the different phases thereof; twelve other prehistoric sites in the immediate locale (Avebury etc.); and lastly Stonehenge and the public, which relates the sad necessity for the erection of the barbed-wire fence in 1978.

Throughout the book I not only came across diagrams and interpretations which one comes to associate with the orthodoxy of 'Ministry of Public Buildings and Works' guides, but also with astronomic-al, ley line and dowsing criteria in which so much store has been placed in the last decade. To

quote from Chapter Three (p.88), "Harmony with nature and the celestial bodies was once, and is now again being, recognised as the 'natural state of being', which depends on knowledge of geophysical rhythms. Perhaps the stones of Stonehenge will yet lead us to some astonishing new discoveries of ancient capabilities..."

It is this openmindedness and fair handling of all the theories apertaining to Stonehenge which makes this a balanced and scholarly book. I can recommend it both to the newcomer to the monument, wishing to gain a basic appreciation of it, and also as a standard work of reference.

PETE WEEKS



the Story of the Rood

Words and music by Tim Porter. An appreciation from a member of the audience at the Folk House, Bristol on August 28th 1979.

It was with great interest that my son Christopher, aged 13, and myself went to see Tim's latest production. We had been to see one or two productions of The Green Opera Group before and they had never failed to please - and were intrigued to see how on earth the whole of the Bible story could be portrayed in just two hours!

Though based on the Cornish medieval miracle plays it proved once again what a fertile brain was at work in this interpretation. The formula was one of simple costume and setting - more verbal than musical, but used with maximum professional effect. In fact if you like Monty Python this was for you!

The actors did a lot of doubling up on the character parts but each one had a fresh approach. I can still laugh at the puzzled omnipotent God, and O what a lovely devil, always enjoying poking her victims off to Hell!

Sentimentality was skillfully avoided in the portrayal of Christ. By being passive and saying little great dignity came through, in contrast to the bawdy rabblerousings of the surrounding characters. The morals were clear to see with methods that I'm sure could enliven any church sermon!

Two hours passed with ease, and, as my son said afterwards, "I wasn't bored at all!" We are now looking forward to the next production at Christmas time.



NEW FICTION

A couple of recent books of Arthurian fiction:

The first is Guinever's Gift (£4.95, Heinemann 1979) by an American, Nicole St John. This is a romantic novel about the dangerous passions of the Arthur-Guinever-Lancelot-Mordred relationships revived in Somerset and Cornwall in the early 20th century. There are some interesting explorations of the evolution of the archetypes, with enough twists to make you want to read through to the conclusion, but Glastonbury and Tintagel have more than an unreal feel about them.

The second is Rosemary Sutcliff's The Light Beyond the Forest (£3.50, The Bodley Head 1979) which is essentially aimed for younger readers, but which is thoroughly recommended as an introduction to its subject for all ages. Subtitled "The Quest for the Holy Grail", it contains the main elements of the 13th century

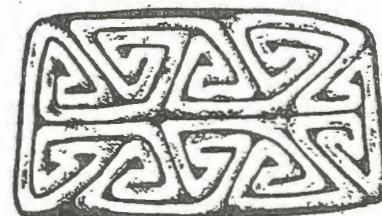
Queste del Saint Graal, retold simply and in a readable form. As with many of her re-tellings, this version is well paced and yet captures perfectly the essential otherworldliness of the original. One senses, sadly, a deliberate rounding-off of the Dark Age inspiration of many of her books for young people. I hope not for she has captured, as Roger Lancelyn Green described it, the sense of an "otherness" which vitalizes and accentuates the difference and distance of a past age". This is so reminiscent of the phrase "The Sense of Something Else" popularised by Geoffrey Ashe (though he did not coin it) that it must surely sum up the fascination that the Matter of Britain still has for many writers.

C.L.



STOP PRESS

Arthur Rex by Thomas Berger is, by all accounts, a bawdy version of Malory and others in the vein of Robert Nye's Falstaff and Merlin. It is available in Methuen paperbacks at £1.50.



CHARTERHOUSE

SUMMARY

An opportunity was provided by Mr T Elkin of the Charterhouse Outdoor Activities Centre for the Pendragon Society to investigate part of the site of the Roman and later lead mines near Charterhouse-on-Mendip.

Because Blackmoor itself was worked extensively into modern times Roman remains are scanty within the boundary of the Centre.

It was decided to take a trial section in an area which appeared to promise evidence of a Roman road. This took place in late July 1979. In the event, no trace of any road was found, which in itself raises several questions.

PREVIOUS REFERENCES

Gough (pp 40-7) summarises early discussion on the Roman road from Old Sarum to Veb... (the Roman abbreviation of the mining area)¹. Excavations by McMurtie east of the Castle of Comfort show this road to have well-marked layers of road-metal, ballast and clay². The Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1903 shows this road continuing to the southern edge of a round barrow 200 or so feet to the SE of the site in question; this was partly based on the theories of Sir R Colt Hoare in the early 19th century but is still accepted by recent archaeological opinion (see Branigan & Fowler fig 46, p 185)³.

THE SITE

If the existence of this road up to this point is accepted, then, should it continue, there are several directions it could reasonably be expected to take:

- (1) It can continue in a straight line, which would take it to a square enclosure generally regarded as medieval;
- (2) It could continue on its "present" course briefly either before veering west to the Roman fort or before taking a more north-westerly direction to the Roman town settlement.

1979

C. LOVEGROVE

A trench prohibiting motor traffic had been dug mechanically across the track between Blackmoor and Nordrach. This was approximately 5ft deep and 25ft long, and showed no evidence of either artificial structures or material remains.

It was decided to take a section a few feet south of this trench to pick up any evidence of a road surface or of its agger or embankment.

DESCRIPTION OF EXCAVATIONS

The section was 4ft wide and 48ft long running approximately SSW. Below topsoil was found a clay layer, between 9" in depth increasing to 2ft down the slope to the south. It contained a few particles of burnt clay. Although with a clay-based soil greater soil depth might have been expected, lead workings could have caused the denudement of vegetation and subsequent erosion on this slope. Below the clay were flaggy and massive rocks of Black Rock limestone.

Finds were few and included a few worked flints, minute quantities of slag, some lime, and a fragment of glazed pipe.

CONCLUSIONS

No traces of metalling, ballast or agger were found. It is possible that the bedrock was used either as the surface itself, or for a foundation.

It is more likely, in view of the real lack of finds, that the road did not pass through this site. Its direction, as suggested by the 1903 OS map, is suspect at least from near Ubley Warren Farm as not only does it take a new direction but also takes the line of least resistance between field workings to stop inconclusively by the barrow.

It is here suggested that the most likely direction would be to continue the line of road straight on from near Ubley Warren Farm to the Roman town, the

natural focus of any road, and the easiest course in its topography; and current field research by V Russett is aimed at establishing whether or not a road did actually extend to Ubley Warren from the Castle of Comfort.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

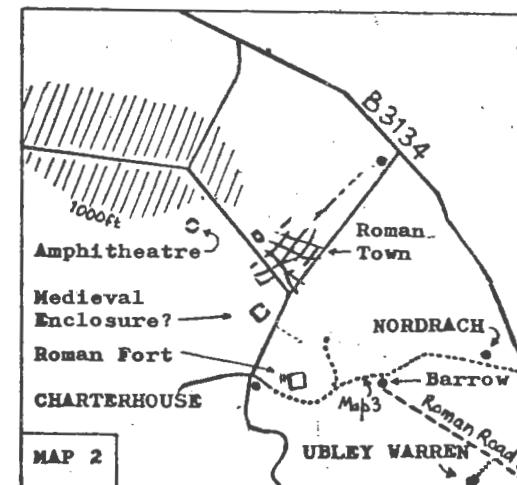
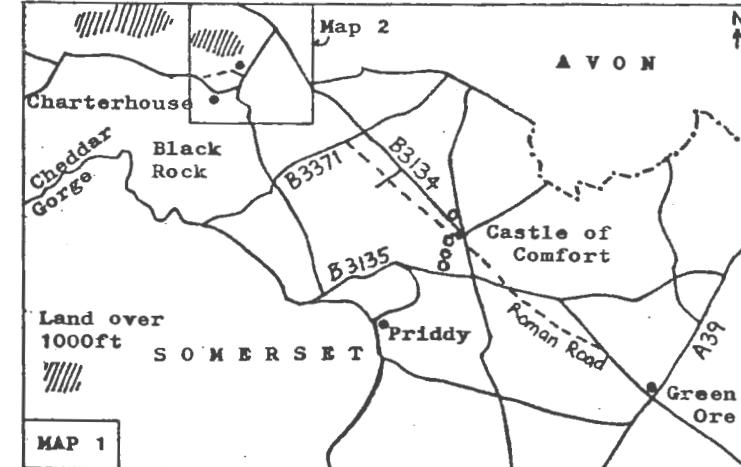
- 1 J W Gough The Mines of Mendip (David & Charles 2nd ed 1967)
- 2 J McMurtie in Proc Bristol Glos Arch Soc (1906) XXIX

3 Branigan & Fowler (Eds) The Roman West Country (David & Charles 1976) H D H Elkington The Mendip Lead Industry

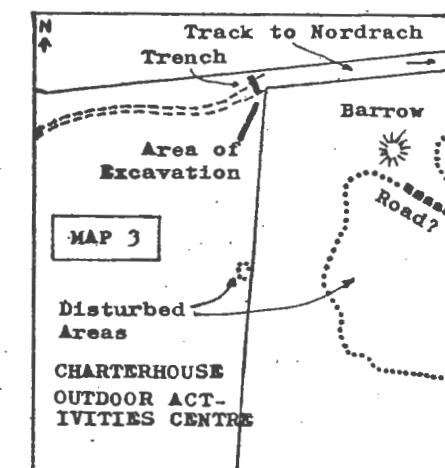
These all contain full references.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to T Elkin, D Gorringe for initial liaison, C Walls and A Schlesinger for assistance, V Russett and N Wright for information, and many enthusiastic volunteers and supporters.



CHARTERHOUSE MINING SITE
(After R.J.Fowler et al)



Snakes, serpents, dragons and Arthur, 2 DAVID STRINGER



We now come to the apparently strange conflict between KING ARTHUR (Artos, priest of the Sungod) with the fire-dragon emblem (fire tying in with the Sun), and MORGANNA-LE-FAY with the water-serpent (the Islands in the Ocean, the Moon); made stranger by the fact that they are close (brother and sister, and also lovers) and that she mourns his death after she has ensured it at the hands of their own child!

Whatever the historicity of this gruesome tale (which cannot be judged impossible however much it might jar on our modern sense of values), that is best left as we are here concerned to take the story as we might interpret a dream, where the different characters play out often various conflicting aspects of our own particular or general natures.

There is a "civil war" which brings death and chaos to Logres, where the DRAGON fights the SERPENT (which in Eden were one). This is perhaps

1 A developing schizophrenia in human consciousness between the Ego/Yang and the intuitive Id/Yin, one seeking to tap the Energy to gain Power, the other seeking to be a simple channel for the Power to do its work.* OR

2 The corruption of the originally shamanistic pure knowledge of the nature of Life into a powerstruggle for supreme control, using this knowledge as a weapon (in this case between Matriarchs and Patriarchs).

Shall we take Excalibur as the Energy-as-weapon and the Grail as the Energy-as-healer? We notice how the priestesses of the Grail do their level best to keep its whereabouts secret, permitting only those who seek it in humility and love to ultimately benefit from it (i.e. Percival), while all kinds of misfortunes prevent those who see its finding as a means to gain status (hence Power) from achieving it. We also notice how Percival is taken away, after seven years, by his mother so that she may see to his upbringing amongst the wild nature of the forest and that he may be suited to this purpose. The Mother Goddess-Serpent is very anxious to keep him from the dragon lust for power incipient in Artos' court!

This schizophrenia and corruption of knowledge are both still with us today; we see the consequences in the injustice, suffering and natural catastrophe all around us.

The Goddess herself (we may take the ladies of the legend who don't actually have a sexual involvement as aspects of the Goddess - or as priestesses of these aspects if they do!), she also seems to be divided in nature: LADY NIMUE is gentle and healing, while MORGANNA-LE-FAY seems to have become, because of the power-conflict, rather destructive and ruthless; and the LADY OF THE LAKE gives and takes away the power as if she were the Mother herself. This could be taken as either the alternative reactions of the old female-controlled society to a masculine take-over, or a complex metaphor for the way the more "feminine" intuitive aspect of our psychic make-up is affected by a world controlled by a more grasping and aggressive intellect.

The Story itself as told from manuscripts is a series of folk legends in the oral tradition transcribed by troubadours looking for a good story; they were obviously more concerned with having concrete characters for the reader than with any ancient insights preserved in Bardic form. One presumes they took them as they found them and dressed the

characters in the clothes of the day. Hence the muddle that comes in with the "chivalry". The weirder the story, the more fascinating it became to them!

This brings us back to dragonlines. Along these are supposed to be Power points where one of the stranger theories is that here the "Gods" came to earth and gave us super-knowledge as from divine or flying-saucer shaped sources above. Such a belief could be the result of the dragon separating from the serpent as the subliminal notion of knowledge. In fact such power points are where there is a meeting of terrestrial and extraterrestrial forces, the effect being so ecstatic that a person with the inherited notion of power from above might ignore the realization that the ecstatic sense is from energy surging within (the snake) and below (the serpent), drawn up, shall we say, by extraterrestrial magnetism. One of its manifestations is a radiance of white light all around, as the Grail possesses, and its effects are stronger by night and in full moon-light, as when the Grail procession appears in a moonbeam. This experience comes not to those who lustfully seek but to those who approach it with humility.**

Our "exploration of patterns" continues with the Arthurian Story: the Arthurian Knights and Kings (Warriors and Chieftains) see the achievement or possession of the Magic - the search for the Holy Grail - as conferring status, power or virtue on themselves, and hence a ruling position perhaps following Artos the Priest-King's death. (The knights are perhaps the lesser chieftains of clans in a tribal confederation of twelve, their names sometimes inclusive of the tribal deity (Ballyn and Ballan, Belvedere from the sungod Bel, Baal) while kings are chiefs of allied tribes.) This achievement has been the egoistic hero path of all would-be elites since that legendary time, though that knowledge may change its name to theology, or science.

Logres, whether or not under the Lugonian sungod Lugh) has its own ideology, the belief that without the rule of the sacred priest-king and his round-table Britain must fall back into primitive "chaos", a doctrine with vague echoes of Mussolini or Hitler's Third Reich or the Conservative law-and-order lobby. From this chaos it shall be saved when Artos is "resurrected" (i.e. the reincarnation of the spirit of the priest-king in some future ruler).

However, the success of the search for the Holy Grail is the end of Logres, as those who discover the power of the serpent magic find their masculine egoism melted away; just as Percival understands its true nature and finds peace and happiness with Whiteflower, priestess of the shrine, in the Welsh forests while the other would-be successors resort to the old barbarian method of the sword to sort out their rivalries, cancelling each other out and leaving Britain to the priestesses.

The legend of the Grail persists throughout history however amongst those who cannot, because of their aggressive desire for it, find it. The split between the subliminal fire-dragon and the intuitive water-serpent ever tends to create a society where the ruling logic and isms and systems are quite at odds with the intuitive and sensual needs of the basic sensitive human Self (as opposed to the Persona which is our hero-image).

Logres was a state of definite boundaries, with a few blurred edges as it ran westwards and northwards where its power ceased at Cumbria, the Welsh border, and Devon. But it was not so much a country or province in the Roman sense so much as a federation under a dominant tribe such as Aztec Mexico (whose ruler, along with Artos, the Pharaoh and the Inca, claimed to represent the sungod).

What are the realms of Morganna-le-Fay, the serpent priestess-queen?

Though she is apparently supreme in Cornwall, Wales, Ireland and Cumbria, there seems to be no defined political boundary - it is where her following is, as in many a forest Artos' warriors frequently encounter her priestesses, dwarfs and warriors. Her seat of power lies in no fortress but in various neolithic sacred lakes, islands and shrines and earthworks, protected by the potency of respect for the Mother Goddess serpent cult: she controls hearts and minds.

For a moment we may here apply the method of interpretation suited to the Old Testament Hebrew genealogies, where each noted generation is not so much an individual as a symbolic development or evolution of human ideas. Artos, in claiming sunpriest-kingship, is obviously after more than his father Uther Pendragon, whose name indicates a tribal animal totem plus an attachment to the dragon (the mysteries) as the consort of a White Queen, Ygrayne: Artos begins to do the same as his father in marrying a White priestess (Gwenafra) whereupon he falls foul of Morganna-le-Fay when seeking to perpetuate a masculine warrior coup against the White Queen royalty (already inextricably mixed up with his own new warrior royal line. Uther kills a chieftain of Cornwall to get Ygrayne who already has three daughters by this chieftain, of whom Morganna seems selected to be the White Queen of the West, while others are married by other chieftains likewise after a White Queen connection. Hence the birth of those most likely to succeed him (his nephews, Gawain etc) and at every generation a White Queen marriage seems essential to reinforce the claim. Morganna, seeing what Artos has in mind, retaliates by trying to go back from the matrilinear to the matriarchal succession, which one presumes existed prior to the invasion of Britain by the tribes Artos represents.

Thus Morganna and Mordred are later vilified and made to be "wicked" for doing what in the circumstances one might expect them to do!

At the time when the legends were being transcribed in Breton monasteries about 1000 AD, the relevance of this propaganda to that time is obvious. A centralized orthodox Catholic monarchy in Gaul was attempting to establish its supremacy in a Europe where the "White Queens" in the more humble, but still potent, form of witches were still influential amongst a half-pagan populace. Morganna makes an ideal archetypal wicked witch when taken out of her original context, and the "mysteries" of the Grail had to be removed from the domain of ancient seeresses into the Christian context, turning priestesses into vestal virgins or nuns (i.e. Dindrane).

Perhaps so much else got through as the transcribers did not quite see what was going on and just fell in love with the tale, having found their wicked faerie!

* This is the basic difference between an Aleister Crowley or Hitler and a spiritual healer.

** The Joseph of Arimathea bit and the spear being the one that pierced Christ is - to my mind - an attempt to christianize a phenomenon which has nothing to do with Christianity whatsoever, though one cannot discount that Christ, as a being, might not have been in touch with such powers elsewhere! D.S. *

+ This interpretation of the Arthurian legends in a mythological context by DAVID STRINGER will be concluded in a future issue.



The Secret of Ornament

PETER RATAZZI

The famous artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) was acquainted with Magic Squares, and the element of the mystic and mysterious entering into this genius of the Renaissance may be discerned particularly in the engraving known as MELENCOLIA (Fig 1):



16	3	2	13
5	10	11	8
9	6	7	12
4	15	14	1

By tracing lines to and from numbers adding to the sum of 34 within his magic square (top right) we find a diamond:

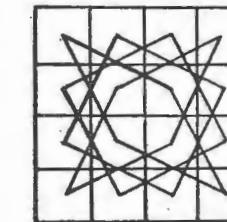


fig 2

Shapes of jewels in magic squares were a speciality of the Swiss mathematician Leonard Euler (1707-1783) who spent most of his life in St Petersburg - see the "X-ray" of an Euler Square producing a polished diamond in a setting (Fig 3):

1	2	4	3	5	6
2	4	6	1	3	5
3	6	2	5	1	4
4	1	5	2	6	3
5	3	1	6	4	2
6	5	3	4	2	1

The plotting of this line is connected with designing interlacing knots and ornaments (Fig 6):

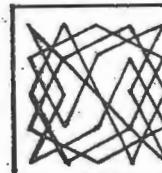


fig 5



fig 6

Dürer and da Vinci practised this art (Celtic in origin?) which is

not limited to squares, but embraces polygons of all descriptions.

Magic squares and cubes, in which individual cells are seen in different colours according to a basic spectrum, show, when arithmetically re-arranged, sur-

prising and fascinating patterns. It should interest the artist to know that here is a richness in decorative possibilities.

Did the ancient fraternity of adepts possess the secret of ornament from occult numerical arrangements?

NOTICEBOARD

Steven Godlewski, P.O. Box 1917, Chicago, Ill. 60690, USA writes:

"I am interested in establishing contact with individuals and organisations in both UK and Europe who are involved in a serious and authentic practice of the Hermetic Arts. I have been a serious student for nine years now."

*

Further to the notes on various Templar structures by various authors in the last issue is a section entitled "Fiery Haunts" in a Bristol booklet by Margaret Royal & Ian Girran, Local Ghosts - True stories of odd happenings (Abson Books 1976). By October 1975 a ghost had been seen at least nine times in Avon fire brigade's new £1.2m headquarters in Temple Back, Bristol.

"The apparition, which walks through doors, lowers the temperature in centrally-heated rooms and vanishes into thin air, appears only at night. A cook has seen it three times... 'I thought someone was playing a joke on me, but he had vanished,' she said. 'A person could not have got through the locked doors at the bottom of the stairs.'"

The ghost looked a healthy 30 to 36-year-old and wore a large mackintosh, though some firemen say he was wearing medieval dress, a theory being that it could be the ghost of a Knight Templar; the Order owned the area from 1140 to 1308.

*

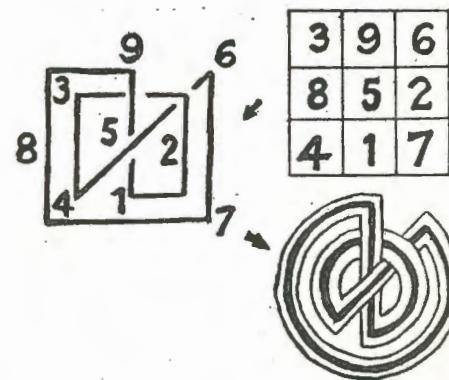
Here's a puzzle for interested readers to get their teeth into: Following up Peter Ratazzi's article on The Secret of Ornament, I

wondered how many traditional magic squares could be transformed into Celtic-style interlacements. According to Dr Nash-Williams (The Early Christian Monuments of Wales, 1950) "this favourite Celtic motif was derived from late-classical art, being introduced into the Celtic world in the seventh century". George Bain's Celtic Art, the Methods of Construction (reprint 1972) shows the complexities these could achieve.

Given that all interlacements are not necessarily of mystic or occult significance (as we understand those terms) it would still be interesting to know of any examples of interlacements derived from magic squares or similar. The Welsh monuments are not particularly promising, but how about Scottish, Pictish, Manx, Irish, Cornish, Breton or even Viking patterns?

To show that the transformations may not necessarily be obvious, here is an example using the Saturn magic square.

C.L.



PENDRAGON A.G.M. 1979

Following the notice of this year's A.G.M. and 'Get Together' in the Editorial on page one we can now tell members and friends that these events will be held in the Music Room at the Folk House, 40 Park Street, Bristol. I. between 2 and 7 pm (bar available at 5.30pm) on Saturday Dec 1st, and afterwards at 27 Roslyn Rd.

Knowing that members come from far afield it is not always possible to anticipate numbers so we would be very grateful to hear in advance from anyone who is definitely coming, particularly if they need overnight accommodation to be arranged.

The Secretary

27 Roslyn Rd.

Redland

BRISTOL 6. Tel. 0272/45483.

PENDRAGON 1979 Constitution

A Aims and Objects

The aims and objects of the Society are to stimulate interest in and investigate the archaeological and historical background of the Arthurian period and the Matter of Britain and other aspects of British mystical and mythical culture.

B Membership

- 1 Members shall be admitted at the discretion of the General Secretary to whom application should be made.
- 2 The Committee may expel any member from the Society giving one month's notice of the same. The member so affected may appeal against such action to the Committee; or to the Society at the first General Meeting to take place after notice of his or her expulsion and at no subsequent time.
- 3 All new members shall be issued with a copy of this constitution.
- 4 The minimum age for membership shall be 14 years.

C Members' Obligations

- 1 A member shall be entitled to all privileges and benefits of the Society and shall be bound by these rules.
- 2 Annual subscription to the Society shall be recommended by the Committee and ratified by the Society at a General Meeting.
- 3 Members hereby undertake at all times to behave in an orderly manner, and on any excavation or historical site that may be visited shall act in such manner that no offence or damage may be caused.
- 4 Members may bring guests on any such visit, having given due notice to the General Secretary.

D Powers of Committee

- 1 The management of the Society shall be vested in a Committee to be elected by and out of the members at an Annual General Meeting.
- 2 The Committee shall consist of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, Treasurer; and any three ordinary members or more. In the case of an officer's absence that officer may appoint a deputy or proxy to present his or her views.
- 3 The Committee shall have the power to co-opt members as needed.
- 4 The General Secretary shall keep a record of all formal meetings.
- 5 The Committee may make, modify or revoke such by-laws as they from time to time think necessary for the efficient running of the Society and such by-laws shall be binding on all the members.
- 6 The Committee shall have the right to call a General Meeting at which they will recommend closure of the Society. If the General Meeting ratifies this recommendation, then the Committee shall close the Society giving fourteen days' notice to members.
- 7 The Committee shall be the sole authority for interpreting the rules and by-laws of the Society and for settling disputes relating to the Society and the conduct of members in relation thereto.
- 8 These rules may be repealed or amended by the Society at an AGM or Extraordinary General Meeting.
- 9 Grievances should in the first instance be notified to the General Secretary, and if not settled should then be referred to a following General Meeting.