

# PENDRAGON

50p



NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS



# PENDRAGON JOURNAL PENDRAGON OF THE SOCIETY

Vol XV No 1, Winter 1981-2, News & Views.

ISSN 0143-8379

Annual subscription See note below. A cross in this box indicates subscription due.

Editor Chris Lovegrove Production Roger Davie Webster,  
Kate Pollard Correspondence The Secretary, 27 Roslyn Road,  
Redland, Bristol BS6 6NJ. Pendragon investigates Arthurian history and archaeology and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain. Opinions stated are those of the writers concerned.

© 1982 Pendragon Society / authors.

**EDITORIAL** This issue includes members' comments and items of information which have been flowing in regularly for some time and which are more than due for an airing. More news, views and reviews are on the way, plus articles on Badon and on Mazes & Labyrinths. Patience! Domestic matters have delayed the last few issues but we hope to keep up to publication schedules soon...

**Note** Subscription to Pendragon, £3.00/\$9.00, is for FOUR issues and INCLUDES membership of the Society until the fourth issue is received. It will NOT now be merely an annual subscription.

The Pendragon Society runs on a shoestring budget. Postage etc being what it is, if you particularly are interested in Pendragon events, lectures etc taking place in the BRISTOL area, then please notify the Secretary and you will be kept informed.

Please note new presentation, hopefully clearer than before thanks to Pendragon's Imperial 660 electric typewriter. Maybe some of the numerous errata of the Timeslip issue will also disappear in inverse proportion to increased readability.

BRISTOL MAZE WEEKEND (Feb 13-14 1982) organised by the Society, will include lectures by Adrian Fisher and Randoll Coate of Minotaur Designs (at the University's Wills Memorial Building) plus constructing a maze on Brandon Hill (all at £2.00 for members). This will be followed by a short AGM.

EXCHANGE MAGAZINES. Ancient Skills & Wisdom Review (£2 pa from 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS25 2AT) Sangreal (£3 pa: BM SANGREAL, London WC1V 6XX). The Ley Hunter (£3.80: PO Box 13, Welshpool, Powys, Cymru). Newsletter (Paraphysics: send stamp to: 40 Parrs Wood Ave, Didsbury, Manchester M20 0ND). Stonehenge Viewpoint (£3 for 12 issues, PO Box 152, London N10 1EP). The Atlantean (£3 pa from 51 Rodney Rd, Cheltenham, Glos). Wessex Research Group (widespread branches: Beech Cottage, 79 Acreman St, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 3PH). RILKO Newsletter (sae to 8 The Drive, New Southgate, London N11 2DY). Caerdroia (research and preservation of old turf mazes; 53 Thundersley Grove, Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 3EB. Send sae or donation...)

## NOTICEBOARD PENDRAGONRY

Contrast Tours of 25 Westbury Rd, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol 6, run special interest tours of Great Britain and Europe including Ancient Britain and Roman Britain from £35.00 for two days. From October 1982 they hope to include a weekend special excursion on King Arthur's Wessex. Send an A5 sae or ring (0272) 620458. Bristol University has a non-residential weekend course 17-18 April 1982 on Anglo-Saxon Archaeology & Architecture in the West, with lectures on Wells, Glastonbury, Gloucester, Exeter etc. Write to M Aston, Dept of Extra-Mural Studies, 32 Tyndall's Park Rd, Bristol BS8 1HR quoting B81 FO3 SC; the fee is £7.00.

The Road to Camlann (Bodley Head £4.50) is the final book in Rosemary Sutcliff's trilogy of Arthurian legends, rounding off The Sword and the Circle (£4.95) and The Light Beyond the Forest (£3.95) with her version of the Death of King Arthur. If you are feeling rich, two books of essays on Arthuriana are published by D S Brewer, Cambridge--The Alliterative Morte Arthur (ed Karl Heinz Göller, £17.50) and Aspects of Malory (ed Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer, £17.50)--each page worth nearly 10p. "The subject is one of today's few growth industries" writes D D R Owen in the TLS. Is it nostalgia? National pride? Why are Europeans, even Japanese, attracted? The AMA is derogatory to Arthur, Malory is not "the most subtle of craftsmen"; but perhaps these romances were "discussion pieces aimed at intelligent publics", then, as now. (Incidentally, the author of the original Morte in English is said to be a Thomas Malory of Papworth St Agnes.) If you are still feeling rich, you will need £60.00 to buy Lancelot do Lac, edited in 2 volumes by Elspeth Kennedy (OUP). This is the early 13th century French prose romance (later incorporated into the so-called Vulgate cycle) which made Lancelot, not Arthur, the main character and which introduced Galahad-Galehot as the newest Round Table star. D D R Owen says that it is "significant" that Guinevere implants "the first lingering kiss on Lancelot" according to the base manuscript (one of 44 texts considered in this edition).

Military Modelling recently published a 3-part series of articles by Geoff Mills for figure builders on "Arthur--Fact or Fiction" (May 1981 onwards). Pendragon Mike Warris and others from mock battle group The Arthurian Society had a long and rightly critical letter published in the September issue. Main points at issue were opinions dressed up as facts, and blunders like suggesting the Sutton Hoo burial was Arthur's. However, accompanying illustration by Richard Scollins were splendid and captured the feel of the period.

Palantiren is Stockholm's Tolkien Society magazine, edited by Hanna Bergstrand (Sundstabäcken 8, 104 60 Stockholm, Sweden). No 26 includes Arthurian reviews and an article by Martin Stugart, "Arthur, Avalon och lite lästtips". My Swedish is non-existent, but his booklist shows wide reading and introduces a few English and American titles I haven't come across before.

Aquarian Changes is the journal of The Inner Guide Meditation Cen-

ter (PO Box 1159, Boulder, CO 80306, USA: \$10). Vol 4 No 1, April 1981, had comments on the film Excalibur and an article on "The Origins of the Grail Legends" by Gerald Gough. The Telegraph Sunday Magazine for October 11, 1981 featured its own sponsored "Splendours of the Gonzaga" exhibition (Nov 5-Jan 31) at the V&A. The Gonzaga family, Renaissance lords of Mantua, interested themselves in the Matter of Britain: "If completed the Pisanello Hall (in the Palazzo Te) would have been one of the wonders of Early Renaissance Italian painting". It featured the sino-pia or under-drawing of Antonio Pisanello's fresco the theme of which is the legendary deeds of Arthurian knights. The models were the Gonzaga family, court and Gonzaga horses. The kings of England were "particularly valued allies".

Arthur also gets a mention in the Observer Magazine series "The Ages of Britain". Part III, the Dark Ages (26 July 1981) was written by Peter Sawyer, Prof of Medieval History at Leeds University. He appears to know his Saxon History, but there are a fair few gaffs in a section entitled The Arthurian Legend: "His capital, which later acquired the name of Camelot, has been located in places as far apart as Tintagel in Cornwall and Glastonbury in Somerset... The conical hill of Glastonbury Tor, the site of an early British monastery reformed in 940 by St Dunstan, was the focus of another Dark Age legend... the Sangreal... The foundation of this legend was established in the "History of Great Britain" published by Geoffrey of Monmouth...according to which King Arthur... moved Stonehenge en bloc from Ireland to Salisbury Plain and founded Oxford University..." Should it be renamed the "Boobserver Magazine"? Even Pendragon finds this rate of gaffs to sentences pretty hard to match.

Radio Bristol devoted part of its Six O'Clock Rock Show on September 16 1981 to King Arthur to coincide with Excalibur being shown at some local cinemas. As well as your chairman and secretary, Geoffrey Ashe and Bob Baker took part, the former the author who brought Arthur back to serious public notice in the late 50s in a series of books, and the latter the scriptwriter and producer responsible for TV programmes like Arthur of the Britons (and more recently Shoestring and Into the Labyrinth).

The Marvels of Merlin, words and music by Tim Porter, performed by the Green Branch (Bristol Folk House, Friday August 14th 1981). This marvellous new offering from the pen of Tim Porter tells not just of Merlin but of Olwen, the daughter of a giant whose head must be severed (poor father!) before Culhwch can marry her, helped by two knights of Arthur. This follows the tale of the history of Merlin. His lifetime's exploits we watch vividly unfurl in a series of tableaux (the dragon of Vortigern, the coming of Arthur...) each taken in turn. The audience was assured of a jolly good time as The Marvels was billed as a SUMMER pantomime! Forget about Star Wars, Flash Gordon, The Muppets--this work was distinguished by comic rhyming couplets, great tunes, superb acting, fine singing, even dancing! The humour was spontaneous, the evening quite entrancing as we've come to expect from Green Branch and Tim Porter. I never miss their nights out, and you shouldn't oughta! Its ending might seem lame, but deliberate is its effect: Son of Marvels of Merlin follows soon I expect; and if you know folksong

and soh-fah-me-ray-doh, you can sing this whole crit to The Streets of Laredo.



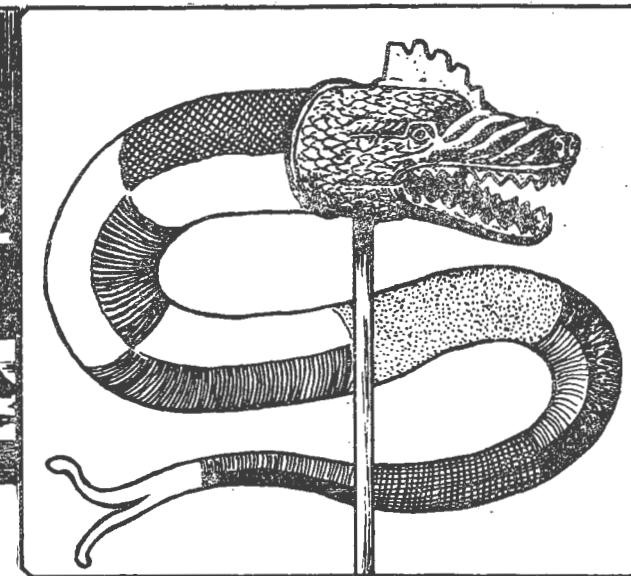
## Letters **DRAGON**

From CHARLES W EVANS-GUNTHER,  
2 Feathers Lea, Flint, Delyn,  
Clwyd, CH6 5BZ, N Wales:

The reason for starting this club, the DRAGON SOCIETY, was because of the response I had after an article in Military Modelling. I hope it will complement PENDRAGON and the ARTHURIAN SOCIETY. DRAGON will concentrate on the "Dark Ages" a little more than you do and it will include other cultures apart from Arthur's people...

DRAGON intends to look at this "barbaric" period and study the cultures of the people who lived or migrated to this country in that era..., will study not only Arthur but also the art, technology, literature and legends of the Dark Ages.

DRAGON hopes to seek out a less "emotive, restrictive and vague"



title for this period and then promote the new name. DRAGON wishes to bring together folk of a similar interest whether it be in Arthur or the "Dark Ages" in general; whether it be modelling, history, wargaming, art, literature or just for a good chat about their interests. The newsletter of DRAGON will contain members' theories, comments, stories, artwork, poems and whatever the members wish to see in their newsletter...

Letters, articles and illustrations should be sent to the above address. For personal replies please enclose a stamp+ addressed envelope if possible.



## Comments on...

From DEREK C BANKS,  
St Leonard's, Sussex:

I was interested to read of your reference to the Nant Eos cup and the apparent implication that its whereabouts are now unknown, ie lost (Vol XIV No 3).

In 1974 I saw slides of this cup presented in a lecture at the British-Israel World Federation HQ, 6 Buckingham Gate SW1 (I cannot recall the name of the speaker). It was there represented as a probable candidate for the Holy Grail and it was certainly not lost but still in the possession of the Powell family. At that time it had been loaned to a group in America (Texas I think) who were placing it on public exhibition and touring it around the country.

The cup was said to be made of olive wood and had been carbon dated as about 2000 years old. At one time the cup had been provided with a gold rim to protect its edges in use; but this had been found to destroy its curative effects.

I would be most interested to know more of its recent fate and of studies that have been made of it.

### CATHARS AND TEMPLARS

On a completely different tack Mark Valentine puts forward the hypothesis that Galahad and the Grail cycle are the creation of the Cathars. I can't add any evidence for or against that hypothesis; but I can suggest that the kind of person who was likely to have become a "perfect" and the kind of person Galahad is, are very close indeed. This may be a result of Cathar propaganda but it could just as easily be because the Grail Cycle is pointing out the fallacy of those who follow the kind of people that the Cathars undoubtedly were, ie the pure spiritualist

with a paranoid reaction against matter.

As a belief system it is a very difficult one to destroy from the outside, although its effects upon those who follow it are in the long term destructive of all community life.

I agree with R A Gilbert that the Cathar belief is incompatible with being a Templar, although both groups share the tendency to destructive centralisation of authority and a lust for power. For the Templars, power was wealth and arms, for the Cathars, power was in spiritual pride and awesome ritual.

## ...Timeslip issue

From IVOR SNOOK, Exmouth, Devon:

THE NANTEOS CUP: It should be "bowl" not cup. One could hardly expect any reference to it at the dissolution of Glastonbury Abbey. Stealing any of the property would probably have been a hanging offence. It was smuggled out to Strata Florida. No-one was advertising their knowledge of that action.

And there very probably was such a vessel at Glastonbury for Forcatulus wrote "The Britons record that Joseph brought with him a pledge and witness of that sacred supper: to wit, a vessel appointed to the service of the most Holy Guests, for a very long time held in great reverence..." Now this can easily be read to mean that the vessel was simply one used by one of the disciples, and a simple wooden bowl would fit the bill. In fact the Nanteos cup was once described as a "simple wooden bowl, worn with age".

The Grail writers probably knew of this tradition, and

also of the cruets containing some of the blood and sweat of The Lord, added in a little of the cauldron elements of Welsh legends together possibly with something from the Druidic mystery traditions and invented the Holy Grail out of all that. (Can anyone believe that the poverty-stricken Disciples meeting in an inn could have had such a fabulous vessel at their disposal?)

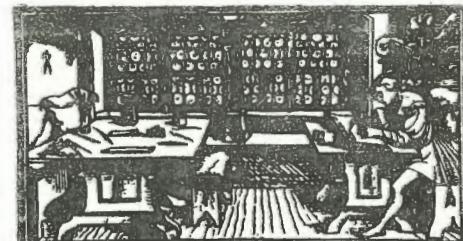
THE KING OF SOISSONS (page 6, XIV 3): I had previously looked at the possibility of a connection with Arthur's exploits in Europe. In the Vina-Ver edition of *Morte d'Arthur* there is an account of King Mark of Cornwall being invaded by an army of "Sessones", which in fact reads very much like a variation on the Badon affair. I thought "Could Sessones be a corruption of Soissons?" but gave this up because the dates did not fit. I do not know what authority Anthemius could have had, for by 460 the Western Roman Empire hardly existed and most of Europe was divided into independent kingdoms. Syagrius King of Soissons appeared to be endeavouring to set up a new empire on the Roman model, but entirely independent of Rome. However my history books say that it was overthrown by the Franks in 486, which does not agree with Geoffrey Ashe's timetable. In any case if we put Arthur in the period immediately after Vortigern what happens to Aurelius and Uther?

There is a missing item in the Arthur story. When Howell came from Brittany to assist Arthur at the commencement of his career, Arthur pledged that in return he would go to the assistance of Howell should he ever need it, but there is no record of the pledge being redeemed. It could be that Arthur did go to Brittany to assist

the Bretons, but Geoffrey of Monmouth got this expedition mixed up with all the tales of former British invasions of the Continent. On that basis the Soissons theory could look remarkably correct.

Syagrius' kingdom reached from the borders of Brittany (still independent) on the west to beyond the Seine in the east, beyond which the Franks were growing in power. Syagrius, seeing himself as emperor of a new Romanised empire, sent messengers to countries which had formerly been under Roman rule demanding that they acknowledge him and pay tribute. This was the demand which so incensed Arthur, and if the Bretons had had a similar demand no doubt they lost no time in joining forces to overthrow this usurper. The kingdom of Soissons included Paris, so even Arthur's capture of Paris and temporary reign there would not be impossible. Then what do we make of the ingots of pewter found in the Thames and stamped SYAGRI with the Chi-rho and SPES IN DEO? It certainly suggests Syagrius with his Christian kingdom, but what are they --tribute or loot perhaps.

It looks like a timeslip here but before we jump to that conclusion we must be sure that the continental dating for the Kingdom of Soissons is 100% accurate. Why do we always think our records are less reliable than other peoples'?



## Confused?

From JON KISSOCK, Jesus College, Cambridge:

I tend to question the sanity of anyone digging in Gower in November. Nature is now taking a very wet revenge for giving us such a fine summer!

Course is going fine, but is very hard work. I have a good tutor, another Kate (Kate Pretty as in "Rescue"), but she does set somewhat demanding essays: "Archaeologists are divided between trying to make general laws about man and attempting to trace the development of individual cultures. How did this division arise and how may it affect the general view of the past?"

Yours, in academic confusion, but with my best wishes...

\* We offer a year's free subscription for the best answer to this question (or, perhaps, for the answer!)

## Anti-Romantic!

From CHARLES H NANKIVELL, Silchester, Berks:

I found "Taffy & The Morgan Index" by Rick Plewes (Vol XIII No 4) amusing and informative, but must join issue with Mr Plewes on one point. His theory that the South Welsh easily lost their language because it had been an imposed tongue from the North hardly stands up to close examination of the facts. The Celtic language, albeit with local variations, was the language of all tribes in these islands, with the exception of the Pictish tribes...the Cruithni.

Mr Plewes does not tell us what tongue the South Wales tribes spoke before the Cymru made them speak Celtic!...

### BISHOP MORGAN'S SILCHESTER

I have in front of me a copy of an historical note on the church of St Mary the Virgin, our local church which stands just inside the old Roman wall. The write-up is by Rushbrook-Williams, Quondam Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford. He quotes a legend, attributable to Geoffrey of Monmouth, to the effect that King Arthur was crowned at Silchester and later appointed a certain Maugannius Bishop of Silchester in AD 519. Frankly, Rushbrook-Williams doesn't think much of the story! I'm inclined to agree with him...

I spent some considerable time at our local dig on the basilica and amphitheatre at Calleva-Silchester where Mike Fulford hopes to continue digging until 1985 at least. His excavation of the amphitheatre looks particularly impressive. The site has never been dug, was completely overgrown with trees, and the arena had become a pond, a pond in fact which is shown in one of Stukely's sketches. Fulford has drained it, and is removing trees and cutting into the banks to uncover the original walls.

The original entrance from the direction of the walled city has been uncovered. I wonder if old age pensioners were able to go in half price! Further around the perimeter they have uncovered what at present is thought to have been a shrine, a stone-built concave structure. There seems to be some doubt about the shrine theory, and Fulford's students have advanced several theories, some decidedly irreverent, as to the actual use to which it

was put...

If anyone knows where I can get a copy of Beram Saklatvala's Arthur, Britain's Last Champion I should be delighted to hear from them. In this book he states that Constantine III was acclaimed Emperor at Calleva. I have not as yet been able to find substantiation for this, but have not had time to pursue the search on more than a desultory basis. Can any of our members help me in this as well?

Perhaps Saklatvala was doing a Geoffrey of Monmouth act, and where he is concerned I consider even a Hollywood film producer more reliable as regards historical accuracy. Malory did his best to turn Arthur into a medieval king, and as for Tennyson, for whom I reserve a special hatred, I have little doubt that given a bit more time, he would have anglicised Arthur so completely as to have sent him into his last battle waving a cricket bat. "A blinding light and a bumping pitch" sort of thing, though one cannot blame Tennyson for that of course...

One should never lose sight of the fact that, whatever romantic fancies are presented to us, Arthur was first and foremost a soldier, a man of action in a bloody and merciless age, with no time to waste on round tables or rescuing any damsels who couldn't help out with the local war-effort--or whatever! Soldiers have not changed so it was probably whatever! In short Arthur was a man of his time, certainly a Celt of the West of Britain, not the parody of a medieval king which has been so firmly implanted in people's minds today, and certainly not the moonlight-and-roses Barbara Cartland hero foisted on us by Tennyson...

### THE HOLY SHAVING-MUG

Judging from your magazine it would appear that your membership includes a fair number of starry-eyed mystics who probably have Burne-Jones prints all over their walls and are still keeping a weather-eye open for a glimpse of the Holy Grail. I think it was flogged to the American art dealers years ago and is now in Chicago labelled as Lord Tennyson's shaving mug. Having been brought up as a Roman Catholic by my dear old mother, a steady diet of holy relics has induced in me a state of spiritual indigestion which causes me to turn my face away with a groan from chunks of the True Cross, unhygienic bits of St Peter's toenails, miracle-working images and, of course Holy Grails, however well flood-lit by beams of heavenly light. I'm sure Arthur was much too busy to give a hoot about grails except as handy loot... I'm a Celt myself and can assure you that the Celts are at heart a very practical people. My crude Celtic mind can only appreciate a more practical utensil, such as a cauldron big enough to cook the mash for one's pigs or the family stew and, leaving out the possibility of poltergeist activity, I cannot visualise it floating around the room on psychedelic searchlights. Unless that is I had used it to brew Gaelic poteen and had thrown a real party...





Based on a photograph in Readers Digest Ancient Empires

From CHRIS TURNER, Llandewi Brefi, Dyfed:

Caption (to above): "Pagan caricature of a crucifixion from a wall of the Palatine Palace, probably dating from the third century AD. It shows a slave (?) praying to a crucified figure with an ass' head, and the inscription reads 'Alexemenos worships his god'." My comment: Alexamenos (sic) is Greek, as is the script.

From The Book of Thoth (Crowley) re Trump XV, The Devil: "This card is attributed to the letter

'Ayin which means an Eye and it refers to Capricornus in the Zodiac. In the Dark Ages of Christianity, it was completely misunderstood. Eliphaz Levi studied it very deeply because of its connection with ceremonial magic, his favourite subject: and he re-drew it identifying it with Baphomet, the ass-headed idol of the Knights of the Temple. (The Early Christians also were accused of worshipping an Ass, or ass-headed god.)

"Idem re Trump 0, the Fool (A for Arthur chapter 3 is relevant): "...von Hammer-Purgstall was certainly right in supposing Baphomet to be a form of the Bull-god, or rath-

er, the Bull-slaying god, Mithras: for Baphomet should be spelt with an 'r' at the end" (ie Baphometr, hence Baphomita or even Bathymeter, He Who Measures the Depths. WILL we ever get to the BOTTOM of it I ask myself. Come to that, does the Bard's shaken spear have any connection with Lancelot's shivered spear?) "thus it is clearly a corruption meaning 'Father Mithras'. There is also here a connection with the ass, for it was as an ass-headed god that he became an object of veneration to the Templars."

"The Early Christians also were accused of worshipping an ass or ass-headed god, and this again is connected with the wild ass of the wilderness, the god Set, identified with Saturn and Satan."

## Grail bug

From IRENE CARRUTHERS, 2 Gerlan, Caergeiliog, Anglesey:

I have been studying the Matter of Britain and carrying out research for many years. Via Taliesin's writings I have formed some interesting conclusions regarding the Grail and "Arthur" in connection with ancient Anglesey--the Mona of the Romans. I have written about these theories for various magazines --including Quest, Country Quest and West Wales newspapers. My problem is being a lone researcher in the field and I would very much like to communicate with / meet others who have contacted this same "bug".

## Arthurian visitor

From RITA HORTON, 272 Uttoxeter New Road, Derby DE3 3LL:

I would like to meet somebody who would like to go on a trip round the West Country visiting sites connected with King Arthur... If you hear from anyone with a similar idea please tell me. I'm a bit stuck because I can't drive.

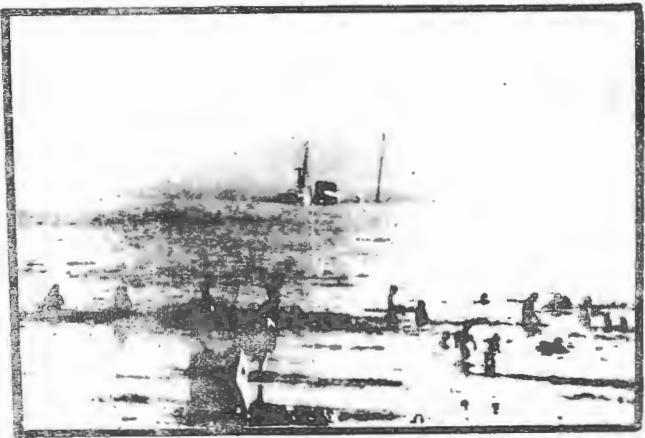
## Arthur of the UK

From STEVE BLACKBURN, Chelmsford, Essex:

I paused for a short thought about the royal wedding to which so much publicity has been devoted and my mind drifted back to the investiture of the Prince of Wales. During the ceremony his names were often repeated, so often that even I over ten years later can remember them: Charles Philip Edward Arthur George. Statistically this gives a 1 in 5 chance of the next King being Arthur the first of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Shadows returning, and idle dream, a hopeful hope or just a glimmer of a reality. Maybe if we all think hard together or even put in a petition for a referendum... Seriously, it has been expedient, politically, at various times to conjure with such a name. Could he choose it to assist in lifting Albion out of its new dark age (riots, discord etc) into a more prosperous one? I'm sure it would have more popular appeal than all other names apart perhaps from George...

# The Alternative Dig Report

KATE POLLARD



You might well be forgiven, gentle reader, for having forgotten who's doing this dig--and why (if you never knew, mark here:  Is it the call of the wild, the urge to boldly dig where no man has split trowels before or merely because Benidorm is overbooked these days--and where is Llanelen, anyway?

Our first visit was at Easter 1973, three of us, peering at a pile of stones on a hill overlooking the estuary to the NE of the Gower peninsula. Reputedly it was an ancient cell and we had long been interested in Celtic saints (particularly Welsh ones, as we only had one car per society then. 2½ now). It had also figured in the dream of its new owner as a holy place where some treasure was to be found.

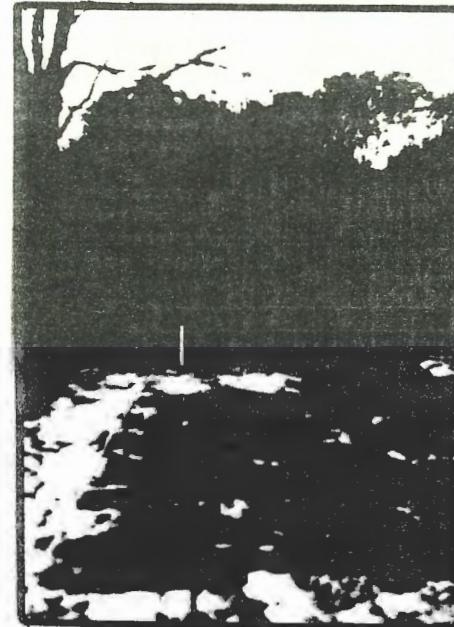
We spent most of the subsequent night in the car sheltering from a violent thunderstorm, and, intrigued, planned to return.

We did, as a team, in the summer. Several members found the place and after "the worst storms in living memory", two nights in a barn, and several ruined tents later, returned to Bristol, still intrigued.

Others may experience a sense of cosmic fulfillment in such circumstances. The Pendragon Society however just hates being cold and wet and having soggy muesli. So we only returned to the lure of a watertight farmhouse for the next few years.

However, its demolition and our obstinacy forced us back to the hillside, transported in a series of vans, ranging from "Hilti" to "Chipperfields", like some frenetic roadshow. Diggers have joined (and left). What used to be called the "Task Force" still staggers there ribaldly, year by year, to dig, dry sleeping bags, shelter, walk crookedly back from the

Fig 1:  
Port Eynon,  
Gower



pub along the marsh road at dead of night, and to play the word association game--"Llanelen"--"Heat"--"Flies"--"Caruthers"--"Cheese".... (Cheese?)

More important questions than dating and identification remain unanswered. What is the species of the Nickelodeon bird who sings:



Who is it living in the east wall of the chancel (Fig 3)? What makes the coloured sparks fly up from the marsh banks at night when you rub your feet on the grass? Who is nesting in the garbage bag? Why does my stomach ache with laughter all week? (This is a serious dig, you know, Madam, not just a holiday for you and your children.)

Every year has been the last year. This year was the last year too (twice). Greetings and thanks to our visitors but chiefly to our new-found friends who came to dig: the Nevins, Jon, Hazel, Graham II, Richard and Steven and specially to Farmer Love who lent his lovely swimming pool to a derelict group of dirty and heat-stricken diggers. Next year will probably be the last dig too, and the next.

Followers of the "Timeslip" issue may be interested in this letter extract:

Fig 2: Sunset on St Helen's Day, August 25th, Llanelen

Fig 3: Whatsit living in wall of chancel, Llanelen; one of a pair...

ne fuit malade qu'il y a long temps et que son pere l'apporta de la Chine.

## Letter. The stone men of Gower

From PATRICIA VILLIERS-STUART, London:

"I happened to be told such a strange story about the Gower Peninsula the other day that I'll relate it just in case it has anything to do with your area.

It seemed to start with a boy miner who had a dream about finding treasure under a yew tree. Eventually he left the mines and became relatively well off as some kind of trader. He decided to buy the place of his dream. He went there and found it was for sale but the yew tree was partially burnt, the owner explained that he thought it was getting in the way and he had tried to burn it down but it wouldn't burn properly. The man bought the field or area, I'm not sure of size, and digging around the yew tree he came across a group of little stone men sitting in little stone chairs!

Of course it may be all a fantasy of the woman who told the story, it was supposed to have happened quite recently."

\* This is an example of oral folklore in action! Some readers may recognise in distorted form the background to our Pendragon dig at Llanelen. The landowner for example certainly has links with coal and acquired the land much as the story says. The yew tree is still there but burnt and dead, a fungus Sulphur Polporus growing in overlapping shelves in the hollow trunk. In its heyday it was a notable landmark--yews were grown close to churches in Ireland from at least the 8th century and in England and Wales after the Conquest (a 600-year-old yew grows by St Illtyd's Church in Ilston, Gower). There is only one damaged stone in the shape of a chair under the Llanelen yew, but no stone men unfortunately.



At nearby Llanrhidian there is a traditional story told which may have supplied some elements of the Llanelen tale:

The Iron Door of Llanrhidian--Somewhere around Llanrhidian "is a cellar full of money, blocked by a iron door... Once upon a time a learned priest discovered in an old book (some versions say in a dream) where the cellar was and how to open it... He sent into the woods and found the great door in a cleft in the limestone. The door opened to a certain tune on the harp... Two terrifying gnomes guarded two large heaps of gold. The harp music was lulling them to sleep..." But although the priest's

manservant extracted two handfuls of gold, the greedy priest allowed the iron door to slam shut and the rest of the treasure was lost (Roger Jones Gower Fact & Fable p19).

Mr J P Tucker tells us that he lives only three or four hundred yards west of the caravan site (see Fig 4) so he can see what's going on! "The old farmers living at Gwernhauolog below the caravan site used to stack the hay on the flat south of the yew tree and never fenced off the yew tree, but they always picked any branches from the ground. They used to say that it was the partly dried leaves that did the damage and I never heard of them losing any stock..."



Fig 4:  
Llanelen,  
looking SW  
with chancel  
in foreground  
and yew tree  
behind nave



Fig 5:  
When the nave  
fills up with  
water we dive  
in...

1 Various dedications	Eldudd	Eltutt	Iltut	-
2 Isle St Helens, Scilly	Elidius	Elidii	Illid	Lide
3 Lundy	-	Endelien	-	-
4 Anglesey	-	Eilian	-	-
5 -	Eliud	-	-	-
6 Various dedications	-	Elen	Ellen	Hellen

From NIK WRIGHT, Bristol:

Regarding the letters on Madron Chapel and St Elen/Helen/etc church dedications (Timeslip edition), it is useful to look for comparable sites and dedications, but accurate definition is important. The appraisal of name changes is unavoidably inconclusive--any suggested contraction is equalled by its extension--but relationships may be inferred. In the list above the series may be read top to bottom, or bottom to top, but only left to right as this is the chronologically correct order for 1, 2 and 6.

Each of these six is taken to refer to six separate people, but a case could be argued for all these names referring to one person; or two people with any mixture of names to each; or three people etc. It is tempting to reduce them to one, but without further evidence, does Llanelen now have six possible founders?

Sid Birchby rightly suggests Irish influence for the Gower and I think this extends to Llanelen church. Two basic styles of nave show up in pre-Conquest western British churches, the Saxon eastern style in plan, dimensions of close to 1:2 ratio and the Irish style 2:3 width to breadth. In this context Madron and Llanelen are well separated; Madron on internal measurements is very close to 1:2, Llanelen 2:2.7. The

other churches on Gower have a squareness about them and the most ancient part of the church on Caldey Isle is an exact square. I believe that the Llanelen church belongs to a specific type of Irish-influenced structure, others of which may exist on the north coasts of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset and on the South Wales coast. Remains of ancient naves could now exist in present churches as naves, or chancels, aisles or even porches.

To define those that may relate to Gower we need two points, a ratio of dimensions width to length of 2:3 or less ie square --and size. Although I know of very large churches of square plan eg Grossmont (Mons), I doubt that such relate to the Gower churches directly; the upper limit is probably less than 35ft length, the lower limit is perhaps 17ft for the length. Any readers who know of ancient church buildings within these criteria, please write. (NB Llanelen internal measurements 14ft x 19ft.)



CL

## REVIEW Vinland, Newfoundland

Paul H Chapman The Norse Discovery of America (Pp 120, One Candle Press, Atlanta, Georgia 1981)

This is Paul Chapman's second attempt at unpicking pre-Columbian peregrinations around the North Atlantic. His first book focussed on the shadowy Irish seaman, Brendan the Navigator. Using the same technique of re-examining texts in the light of his navigational expertise, he now deals with the five journeys to Vinland undertaken by Eric the Red's family c 1000 AD, and recorded 200 years later in the Greenland Sagas.

Most of what he claims is inherently probable and, indeed, much is already part of received wisdom. But by putting himself in the place of any decent navigator in an open boat off the North American coast with an acute consciousness of what wind, tide, current, ice, rocks and the unknown can do, it becomes not only possible, but obvious what course such a boat would take and with what consequences. By a series of utterly pragmatic steps Chapman traces the voyages of the sagas onto today's charts (not maps) resolving such few ambiguities as remain by references to outside inferences (eg the supposed rise in ground level since 1000 AD). It is, in some ways, all too simple.

Basically he is arguing that

- 1 Vinland of the Sagas is the Island of Newfoundland,
- 2 He can pinpoint all the locations mentioned in the sagas, both in Newfoundland and along the coast of Labrador,
- 3 The Norsemen of the Sagas were simply one group among many, and certainly not the first, who had been exploring, trading and settling in North America for some centuries before 1000 AD. Indeed he goes on to argue that at least some of the "savages" they met, including the Beothuk "Indians", were in fact descendants of Scandinavian settlers ("gone native").

The existence of the Sagas, and more particularly the discoveries of complete Norse ships, such as the beautiful Gokstad ship, have made it clear that the Norse seamen were more than capable of ranging all over the North Atlantic. Certainly that they preceded Columbus reached even the school text books many years ago. Chapman's first argument has also been generally accepted for at least ten years, especially after the long and thorough investigation of L'Anse aux Meadows in northern Newfoundland by Helge and Inge Ingstad. It is still useful to have it supported by navigational evidence. The second argument, comprising the core of the book, is interesting, and, by and large, convincing. It is unfortunate that Chapman can't balance his navigational pragmatism against other, equally valid, areas of expertise. It results in him skating rather lightly over the issue of the reference to grapes in the Sagas (the first lot there picked them all) and in simply failing to take adequate account of the sizeable settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows.

The third suggestion is obviously the most speculative. Chapman supports it lightly with a bit of ethnological chat and some rap-

id conjecture about the Newport Tower, but I still find the idea quite plausible. Anyway, I am drawn to the idea that the Beothuks only looked red because they used a particularly effective insect repellent. The suggestion raises the more important point (which Chapman doesn't develop) that seamen are not, on the whole, writers. The Norsemen in particular were not into the gentler arts. Given that we are heavily dependent on such information as is handed down and is available either as texts, or as durable artifacts, the fact that Columbus had such a good press (literally) could well have obscured much more previous exploration than we at present give credit for. We know that the voyage was well within Norse capabilities, and they were a wild and independent lot--especially when outlawed. There is no reason why small expeditions should not have been going west in search of new homes for centuries. And once there, why write home about it? Only the taxman and the debt collector would really care.

The Norse Discovery of America is a good read, and certainly not nonsense. Yet very few people will read it partly because it is published by a small US press and partly because it is outside mainstream academic research. One can see why. It is amateur in the extreme. The evidence, including texts, is second and often third hand; the argument is often loose and circular; footnotes, bibliography and other scaffolding of "scholarly" work is insecure; it is punctuated with jejune moralising (about the need to learn from history, and good race relations); the photographs are inconclusive and the maps are so crude that even I could draw them.

But does it matter? Well, yes, I think it does. Firstly, such adjuncts do not ensure scholarship (and too much preoccupation can sometimes prevent it) but they are useful working tools and they do enable onlookers to get a better idea of what is going on and to evaluate it. Secondly, and much more important, Chapman's book illustrates his isolation. By chance he has met a medical couple in St Anthony who had spotted European features among the Eskimos; by persistence he made contact with various experts, but one is painfully aware that he has traversed much ground that he could have sidestepped if only he had known what others in the field had done and were doing. He never quite knows whether he is stating the obvious or going out on an impossible limb.

Pendragons know only too well the difficulties and frustrations of operating on the frosty margins of an academic community bent on defending its territorial rights. But by the same token (and through such means as this magazine) it is incumbent on anyone engaged in "alternative learning" to build up a thoroughly competent network by which ideas and skills such as Chapman's can be used and developed by the rest of us, and not just left to dwindle into mere eccentricity.

MARILYN PORTER



## Webster's Glossary of Archaeological Terminology

ed.RDW

ARTHURIAN, Early Post-Roman

ANOMALY, Strange one this! Anomaly is the term used by scientific surveyors (resistivity etc) to describe the thing they are looking for. What has never been explained to the satisfaction of archaeologists is why the thing you are looking for and confidently expect to find at a given site should be described as anomalous!

BURNT LAYER, Burnt layer.

CAVE, There is no cave under South Cadbury Castle (official).

DIG, Affectionate term for the "excavation". Never used to refer to any form of physical activity which the experienced archaeologist avoids at all costs.

DESECRATION, Term used to describe the activities of other archaeologists.

DIRECTOR, The one looking over your shoulder when you have failed to notice a particularly important find. May be recognised by the fact that he has no trowel in the back pocket and carries a clipboard.

EXCAVATION, see Dig

ENTRANCE, Used to describe any doorway, break in the wall, dip in the rampart etc.

EXIT, There are no exits recorded anywhere on any archaeological site in the UK.

FIND, The process of recovering items of historical interest. Be careful what you say! On sites rich in Romano-British pottery comments like, "I say I've found a bit of Romano-British pottery" or "My Goodness! Here's another bit of Roman-British pottery" are borne with an air of resigned bitterness.

GET OFF MY LAND! Always be sure to obtain the owner's permission before commencing work.

IN SITU, Couldn't budge it!

JUST IN CASE, Real meaning of the term "Exploratory".

MORTIMER, Deity said to have been seen on Cadbury amongst other places.

NO SIGNIFICANCE, Term applied to material of another period discovered on site, as in "This Romano-Celtic village is of no significance; what we're looking for is an Iron Age Hill Fort--get that bulldozer over here!"

OCCUPATION LEVEL, Floor.

POST HOLE, Hole for a post.

QUITE USEFUL, Term used by the director to describe surveys (resistivity etc) the workings of which he doesn't understand (see Very Useful).

ROBBER TRENCH, Trench where a wall used to be. These turn up with miraculous regularity when there isn't a wall where the director thinks there ought to be one.

SMALL FIND, Anything small enough to fit into a finds tray. When you have collected enough small stone cubes of various colours to fill several trays, take them to the director and he will say, "My Goodness, you have discovered a Greco-Roman mosaic and you have dug it all up before we had a chance to see it!" or words to that effect!

**SPOIL HEAPS**, The spoil heap is the place where all the earth from the site is dumped. Spoil heaps make directors nervous and diggers should avoid them at all times when the director is present. Comments like "I say, what's this Greco-Roman vase full of dinarii doing on the spoil heap" are not generally welcome!

**STRATIFIED**, Applied to anything discovered in the right occupation level (see wormage).

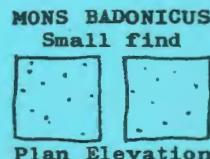
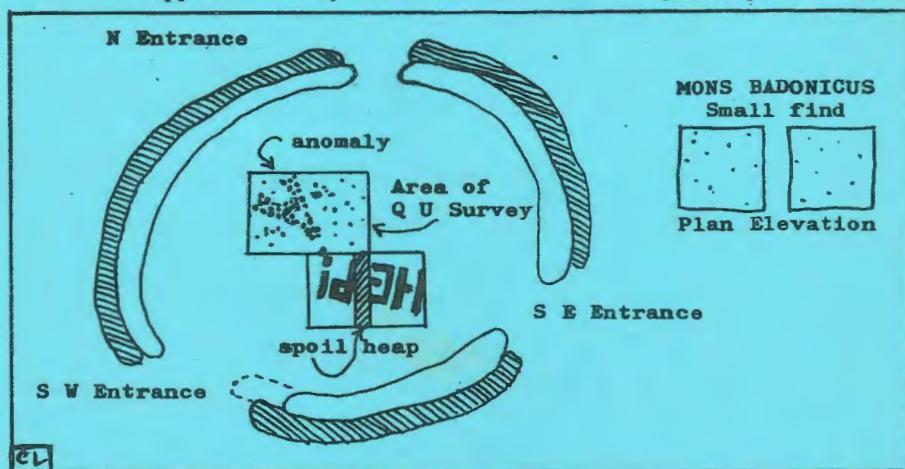
**TAUNTON MUSEUM**, Home of the mythical CADBURY/CAMELOT exhibition.

**TROWEL**, Trowels are worn at all times in the back pocket; on no account should they be used for digging..

**UNSTRATIFIED**, Found in the spoil heap.

**VERY USEFUL**, Term used by director to describe expensive surveys (aerial etc) the workings of which he doesn't understand.

**WORMAGE**, Worms carry a heavy responsibility--if it weren't for worms, all history books would need to be rewritten. Wormage is the term applied to any item found in the wrong occupation level.



A recent edition of a book first published in French in 1975 presents a radical new view of the Dark Age discovery of the New World. Before Columbus, before even Madoc, the Vikings and Saint Brendan (but after the Phoenicians) we are asked to consider that the area around what is now Long Island, NY was explored in the middle of the 1st century BC. Backed by vivid reconstruction drawings the narrative (presumably based on a lost saga though no sources are given) proceeds with great energy and delightful wit. Despite some rather glaring anachronisms the argument is persuasive and mostly plausible: if it isn't true, then it ought to be. The heroes of this lost epic are two indomitable Gauls... Decide for yourself--Asterix and the Great Crossing by Goscinny and Uderzo is published in various formats by Hodder and Stoughton.

C L