

Pendragon



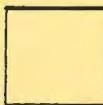
Pendragon

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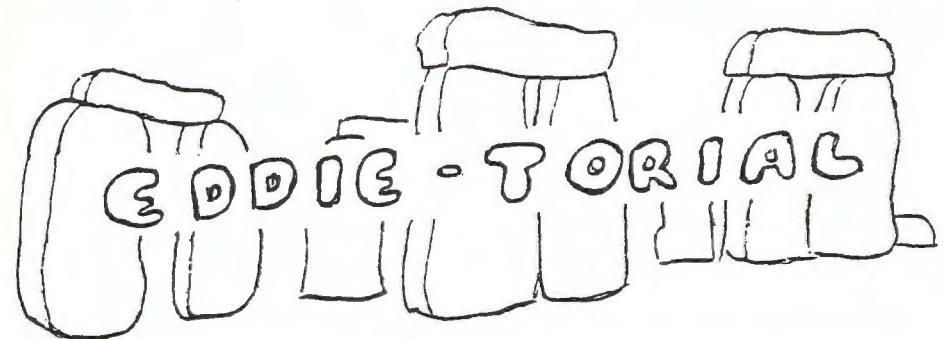
Pendragon investigates Arthurian history, archaeology
and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain.
All opinions stated are those of the writers concerned.

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CURRENT THEME: The 'Giant's Dance' & Other Antiquities.

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Why, you may ask, is Stonehenge the first theme for a revived Arthurian publication? Apart from the subject's general interest there are good reasons for it.

Firstly PENDRAGON'S terms of reference, as made clear in our 1979 Constitution and elsewhere, include other aspects of British mystical and mythical culture and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain. Secondly - on a more mundane level - when I took over custodianship Kate passed on to me a fair amount of Stonehenge 'copy' she had not had time to print. Until I get the first issue out I can obviously solicit no other material, even if I wanted to, on any particular theme.

Time is of the essence. If any more elapses then members with short memories are likely to say 'PENDRAGON? What's all this nonsense?' when the once-familiar A5 envelope finally drops through their letter-boxes. There is another reason for urgency. I am aiming for a regular 3-monthly issue. If this one goes out in late June or early July the next will be due around September (pause while members do the necessary maths to confirm this.)

Now I have never been officially appointed (or rejected!) as secretary; the Constitution states that this must be done at an AGM. Yet I want to start a PENDRAGON bank account in order to deposit the life-saving donations and advance subscriptions sent by

a few members and wellwishers. For this I need an official status.

So the sooner the AGM the better. Holding it in September gives members time to think about it: any earlier and summer holidays might clash with it. Apart from this, B. & B. should be more plentiful in this area at that time of year - which means that all those members from Reykjavik and Wogga Wogga won't have to go back the same evening. (What an organising genius the man is!')

On the subject of Stonehenge again, apart from the well-known folk tradition that Merlin transported the 'Giant's Dance' from Ireland by magical means, there is a tenuous connection with our own continuing Arthurian saga. The Hele Stone at Stonehenge is associated with Heliopolis, the City of the Sun, whither flies the young Phoenix having sprung from its parent's ashes. Let's hope THIS fledgling will attain maturity quickly ...

Now one problem when taking over from people like Chris Lovegrove and Kate Pollard is that I, as a new editor, have a hard act to follow. Their diverse knowledge covers fields unfamiliar to me. So (as I mentioned in an earlier PENDRAGON) I believe in taking a leaf from the book of Professor Sir Hermann Bondi who gave the 1962 Halley lecture at Oxford. He said: 'I was aware that there would be a very distinguished audience [membership] and whatever I know, there would almost certainly be somebody in the audience who would know more about it ... therefore I have decided to give you a very small selection from all the things I don't know.' My own comments, then, must always tend to be more speculative than informative. That way I may not be shot down in flames too often!

Well, I've said my piece. Whether it will be my only piece is up to you. This issue was produced on a shoestring. Even so we're a few pounds in the red. With all the good will in the world there can only be a second, third and fourth issue if subscriptions (and donations!) are received from all who care about PENDRAGON's survival. A statement of finances will be discussed at the AGM - as will general policy. Officers will be elected and the Constitution amended if necessary.

Meanwhile contributions on ALL aspects of Arthur and his times are needed, historical, archaeological, mythical and mystical. No single net has the right mesh to garner from the great deep all the spoils from the hidden Arthurian treasure-house, however superior each King Fisherman may consider his own net to be. (There's impartial for you, boyo! And what metaphor!)

In this connection it seems appropriate to close with a quotation from our founder, Jess Foster: 'The Quest for Arthur continues. It continues because it is much more than a search for a distinctive historical personage. It continues because it is a quest for enlightenment and spiritual freedom, unhampered by the restrictive shackles of an authoritarian dogmatism. It is really a seeking of the secrets and harmonies of natural magic, linked to the very human presence of a great and mysterious man.'

Thank you for your attention.

Eddie Jocke

An **AGM** is to be held at Twyning, Glos. on Saturday, 30th September 1989. There is much to be discussed so please come if you can. Ploughman's lunch, wine, coffee etc. will be provided at £3.00 per head (any surplus to Pendragon funds.) Map and details will be sent on receipt of your cheque. Please reply as soon as possible but in any case not later than the end of August.

THE RETURN OF ARTHUR by Sid Birchby

A curious fact emerged during recent discussions about the future of PENDRAGON. Not a new one, but very relevant. Put simply, interest in Arthuriana has never been constant, yet never died out: not so much a tree as a hardy perennial, with times of growth and times of dormancy. In the late 17th Century, Merlin became little more than a character advertising a prophetic almanac: who would have imagined 'Lohengrin' or 'The Idylls of the King'?

Such rises and falls can be traced back indefinitely: certainly to 1137, when Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'History of the Kings of Britain' appeared, and with less certainty to the Dark Ages of Nennius and Gildas. The pattern is never in doubt, despite the increasing sparsity of written sources in the earlier times. It merely becomes plainer after, say, Geoffrey's time, when more written sources survive.

Curious Fact No.2. Arthuriana has always had two aspects: a substratum of folk-belief and periodic literary attention to it. Despite occasional lapses on both sides, neither has ever died. For example, last week at the annual Didsbury Festival, I saw the Morris Men doing a dragon dance. By Arthurian rights, the dragon should have been red, yet it was green, and was mistaken for a crocodile! In such ways, legends alter. As Mircea Eliade wrote, myths are living things, and when they cease to grow, they die. So that's all right, but it does not help mythologists.

On the root-stock of popular tradition grow the flowers of artistry, expressing in epic poems, paintings and operas the glory hidden in legend. What William Sharp and Antonin Dvorak did by collecting folk-music, others have done with

the Arthurian tales. Each element feeds on the other: without external encouragement, popular myths might die, and if they did, what would be left for artists to gather?

So far, the 20th Century has been an age of growth for Arthuriana, and PENDRAGON has played a worthy part. Jess Foster started it in order, as it were, to take teenagers off the streets. The result was a group of young amateur archaeologists doing important work at the Cadbury dig. And the Society itself. Today, some 30 years later, the Society faces organisational problems, as its new editor reminds us, but with the good will and effort of its members, these can be overcome. After all, there must have been similar problems at Camelot ... 'Never mind collecting fewmets - who's going to do the next 'Grail on Sunday'!'

My feeling is that a century capable of producing the books of T.H.White, Rosemary Sutcliffe and Geoffrey Ashe has not yet finished with Arthur. Neither has PENDRAGON, as one would expect after the death of its founder and the honourable retirement of her successors. It refuses to wither away ... and that is the most curious fact of all.

All members will join me. I am sure, in a vote of thanks to Kate Pollard. Her sterling work over the years has contributed incalculably to the standards of the Journal and the virility of the Society. Ill-health and the pressure of domestic commitments finally forced her to relinquish her burden, but her continuing helpfulness to me is, and will be, a prime factor in ensuring the continuance of the Society that her mother, Jess Foster, founded.

The Editor

UNITY IN DIVERSITY by Eddie Tooke

Sid Birchby, in his current article, makes an interesting point: 'Each element feeds on the other'. Taken in a general sense, this justifies PENDRAGON's multifarious approach to the Matter of Britain.

The 'curious fact' that Arthur is perennial becomes less curious when viewed in the total light of the cultural spectrum. Separate rays illuminate too little of the colour patterns that would give us a meaningful overall picture. Changing the metaphor, the interplay of different ideas and disciplines, by a process of cross-fertilisation, stimulates healthy growth. Insularity is artificial. Nature, it has been said, is not divided into departments like universities.

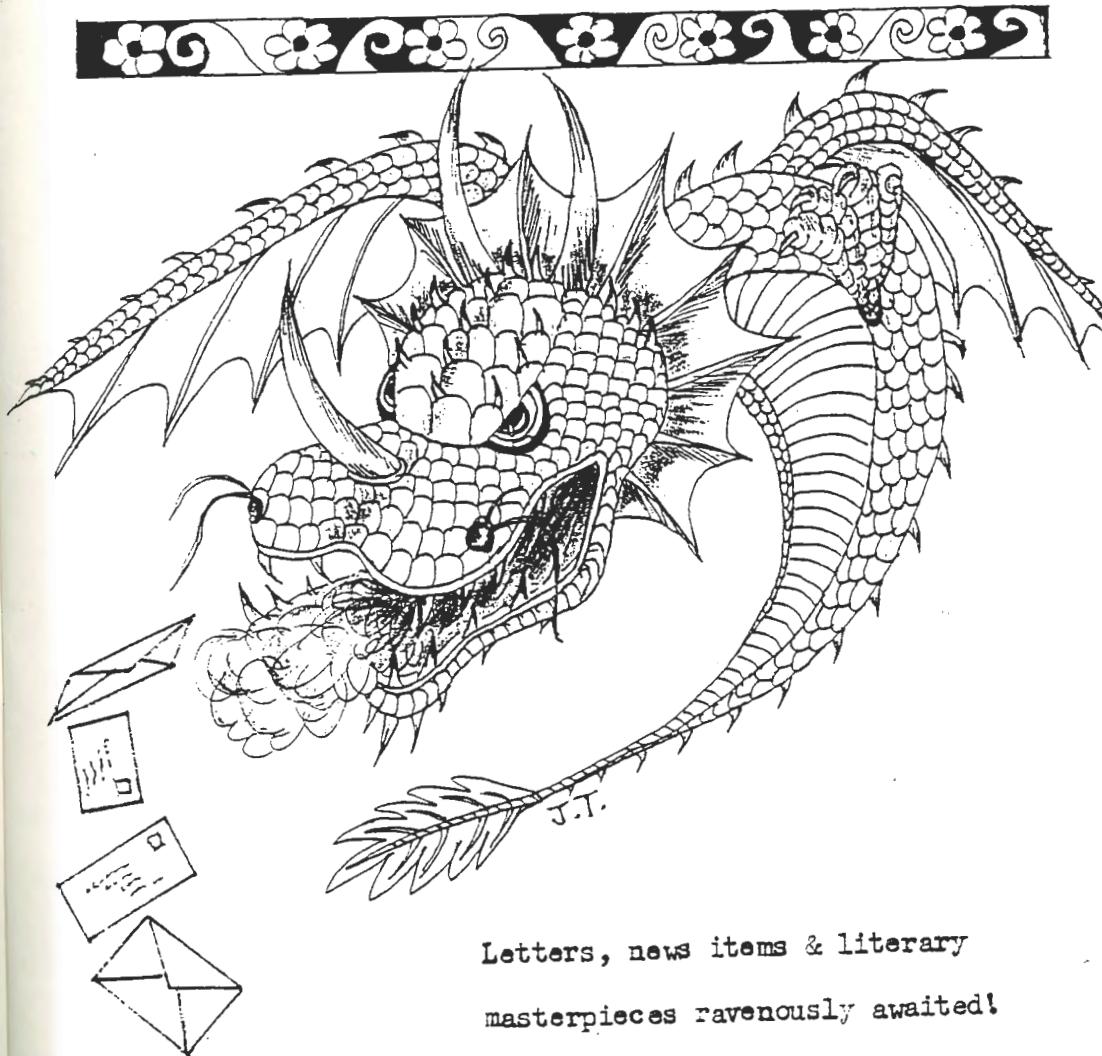
Myth, legend, folklore, history, archaeology and mysticism all have their part to play in an in-depth assessment of Arthur and his times - and in his relevance to our own times. Leaving aside any esoteric causes, Arthur survives precisely because he is DIVERSE. It is this diversity which excites the imagination - a hidden factor, I suspect, behind the most prosaic attitude.

New ideas are not infrequently sparked off by the influence of apparently dissociated events, which releases a flood tide of discovery. We all know of the link between orchards and orbits because of the apple which popular fable says fell on Newton's head (though I've never understood why it didn't go into orbit around it.)

(Yes. Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, I know that in an episode of the popular American chat-show appearing on

British TV, hostess Oprah Winfrey mentioned her erstwhile weight problem, but The Fat Mum of the Oprah did not inspire Andrew Lloyd-Webber's smash-hit musical. Yes, you're quite right; it COULD have done. Thanks for your interest anyway.)

Let us all keep open minds, then; doing our own thing while acknowledging other people's right - and need - to do theirs. Here endeth the lesson.



Letters, news items & literary
masterpieces ravenously awaited!

In early June, 1985, the public, via the media, television and the press, were well informed of the activities around Stonehenge and Salisbury Plain. The hippy convoy and the confrontation with the forces of authority which occurred in the first week of June '85, culminated in the Druid non-ritual ceremony at the summer solstice sunrise on 21st June. A non-event in any case, as on the day the rains fell on the Plain and on most of Britain: a proved wash-out all over the place.

So why the significance of an arrangement of Stones on Salisbury Plain dating back about 4000 years? Gerald S. Hawkins, Professor of Astronomy at Boston University, Mass. U.S.A., and research associate at the Harvard College Observatory, wrote a book, 'Stonehenge Decoded'. He investigated the peculiar arrangement of the Stones and holes at Stonehenge, standing at each position and measuring their various alignments. The measurements of the relevant astronomical data (sun- and moon-rises, sets and eclipses) were fed into a computer and the scientific evidence indicated that Stonehenge is an elaborate sun-moon temple built by people possessing constructional and astronomical skills of an unexpectedly high order.

Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, is, however, not unique. Researchers at Armenia's Byurokan astrophysical laboratory have observed that stone rings near the village of Angekhot have a good deal in common with ancient observatories in Britain, Stonehenge among them. Analyses have proved the astronomical purpose of the Angekhot rings which were - like Stonehenge - built about 4000 years ago and similarly used to observe the sun and moon.

There have been other signs of the remarkable knowledge of astronomy achieved by the people who once lived there. It was confirmed by the excavation of an ancient observatory, not far from Yerevan, and also by very detailed and surprisingly accurate drawings of the Solar System, which were found recently in the Gegam mountains. (really Cosmic!')

So an area between the Black Sea and the Caspian sea, in the region of the Caucasus mountains, has something in common with Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain and ancient Wessex culture. English Druidism, however, according to one writer in a Sunday newspaper, 'seems to have faded into the woolly paganism of a Hippie peace convoy!'

Meanwhile, while most of the public attention had been focussed on Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain, and White (chalk) Horses, a very unusual occurrence was reported in the 'Western Mail' - the 'quality voice of Wales'. The focus of attention on 5th/7th June 1985 was the bleeding yew tree in Nevern churchyard, 2 miles away from Newport in West Wales, Dyfed, standing at the head of a wide horseshoe loop on the road from Newport to Cardigan. The old mystery of the bleeding yew tree at Nevern has baffled botanists for years. Now the mystery has deepened as two more have started to bleed in the same way. The bleeding is an outpouring of the blood sap resin. Dr John Heywood of the botany department at the University College, Swansea, said that normally, when a tree is damaged, it bleeds resin as a protective mechanism to heal up the wound, like a scab on a human being. An explanation was that it could be a genetic fault. An analogy with humans is haemophilia. The resin normally solidifies to heal up a wound but in this case it is not happening. There could be a direct connection in the roots underground.'

Very strange indeed! The legends of the bleeding yew at Nevern tell of a young woman who was hanged from the tree. Others tell that the hanged person was a wrongly accused man. Well, two more trees bleed in Nevern churchyard making the number now three.

The yew tree: Ioho, reseeds itself from within its branches growing down to the ground; an evergreen forming new shoots around the old centre. The yew is very long-lived (up to 2000 years) and is very widespread in Central Europe, extending to Norway, Western Scotland and Ireland. In England it grows characteristically in the chalk down in the South, or on limestone hills in the North and West. The Irish Yew, or golden forms, are often planted in churchyards where the oldest specimens may pre-date the foundations of the church, as the yew had very important pre-Christian significance. According to Gerald the Welshman (12th century AD) it was a tree sacred to the Silures of S. Wales who inhabited the area before the Roman invasion.

The ceremony of the Mid-winter Solstice, December 21st, Alban Arthan, heals all, with reference to the mistletoe and the great rebirth of Grainne: the Sun, after the shortest day and longest night of the year. The beginning is thus Year's ending -the New Year being reborn from the old, as the yew tree re-seeds itself from within. Six months after the Winter Solstice, there comes again the Summer Solstice, June 21st, the longest day and the shortest night of the year.

UPDATES:

In 1986, at the Summer Solstice, there was a further confrontation between the forces of authority and the hippy convoy around Stonehenge and Wiltshire.

In 1987 a limited number of the hippies were allowed to

watch the sunrise at Stonehenge on June 21st and the Druid ceremony.

The Summer Solstice, 1988, saw yet another clash between the hippies, other followers and the police. More people than the limited number allowed wanted to get nearer the stones but they were held back by the police. At dawn fighting broke out and hence, once again, there was a confrontation with the forces of authority.

In Feb/Mar 1989 it was announced by the police and English Heritage (as reported on HTV news - Wales and the West of England) that no persons would be allowed to celebrate the Summer Solstice at Stonehenge, 21st June, 1989. The Druidic order that holds the sunrise ceremony at the Stones announced that in all probability the case will be taken to the European Court of Human Rights, commenting that 'Westminster Abbey would not be closed to the public at Christmas.'!

References:-

- Stonehenge Decoded - Gerald S. Hawkins. Souvenir Press.
- South Wales - Red Guide. 15th edition. Ward Lock Ltd.
- Trees - Collins Gem Guides.
- Soviet Weekly, June 15th 1985. 'Stonehenge in Armenia'.
- Western Mail and South Wales News, June 5th/7th, 1985.
- Observer, 23rd June, 1985. 'Druids and Modern British Nonsense', by Neal Ascherson.

(Ed. note: Grainne was the wife of Irish hero Finn mac Coul whose exploits largely parallel those of Arthur - even to him killing his nephew. Finn too was taken to a mystical island at the end of his earth-life; or, alternatively, he sleeps magically under the earth, awaiting recall.

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Stonehenge Report

by R.M. Twist

As I pointed out to Mr. F.N. Golding of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England in February 1988, the Stonehenge monument draws both its architectural style and O.E. name from the senams or stonehinges of N. Africa seen in the neighbourhood of Leptis Magna. The concentric stone holes were based on lunar cycles. There is a remarkable similarity between the Hele Stone and the Stone of Elagabalus worshipped at the summer solstice, and the spotted dolerites answer the description of the stones which could 'wax and wane with the moon', used to check the dates of moveable feasts. Since such stones are first mentioned at a Synod of Carthage, we have, once more, a N. African connection.

There is proof of a connection between the stone circles in Britain and the cult of the tutelary moon goddess of Carthage, named as Rabat-Tanit-Pene-Baal on thousands of inscriptions. This cult was a close forerunner of N. African Christianity and was favoured by the dynasty of Septimius Severus, the N. African emperor.

The method of proof is simple. The lunar goddess TANIT was originally worshipped, not in human form, but in secret symbols. An analysis of these symbols (based on an underground store found at Salammbô in 1921) shows that the most common were



To show that these symbols were widespread in Britain before Stonehenge was built. I need only mention, 1. the diamond stones at Avebury and in Cornwall. 2. the great number of heavy beach boulders found in the courtyard houses of Cornwall, identical with those found at Salammbô

and 3. the truncated obelisks found with them. A pectoral lozenge is to be seen on the Bush Barrow skeleton near Stonehenge. These are the secret symbols used in the cult of TANIT before she was worshipped in human form. This came late under Graeco-Roman influence. Re-named as CAELESTIS she wore a crown of stone towers. (as at Stonehenge, and as Brigantia-Caelestis at Birrens), or a bandeau like that of the 7ft granite statue from the hill-fort of CASTENNEC in Brittany. (SULIS in Theodosian Code.) The indecent practices of Castennec-Sulis were remarkably similar to those described by St. Augustine of Hippo in N. Africa.

It follows that while Avebury, Stanton Drew and the Hurlers in Cornwall may be somewhat more ancient than Stonehenge or Woodhenge, STONEHENGE is not to be seen as prehistoric, but as an archaising exercise. Such archaising is typical of the N. African, Severus, and of his Syrian wife, JULIA DOMNA; as seen, for example, in their Saecular Games. Severus was known for his interest in ancient religions: JULIA for her knowledge of astronomy and geometry. She took the title of CAELESTIS on her coins.

It is the fusion of these two interests that we see at STONEHENGE, almost certainly commemorating some grant of citizenship to the people of Britain. I deduce this interpretation from the fact that, according to CAMDEN, the people of Salisbury were called SEPTIMIANI, just as the people of Leptis Magna were called SEPTIMIANI, when their most famous citizen, Severus, gave them citizenship. (Of Rome).

Postscript.

The wedding of the Moon-Goddess, TANIT-CAELESTIS, worshipped by Severus, with the Sun God, ELAGABALUS, worshipped by Julia Domna and her relatives, was later to

(cont. on back cover.)

Stonehenge

VIEWS ON THE 'GIANT'S DANCE' by Eddie Tooke

There is an old fable about seven blind beggars in India who encountered an elephant for the first time. Using their only means of examining the beast - touching it - they came to very firm but very varied conclusions about its appearance.

'An elephant must look like a spear,' said one, feeling the animal's tusk. 'Not at all,' said another, his hand on its trunk: 'It's more like a snake.' 'Chup ho, tum behosh admi!' snapped a third, showing off the author's Hindustani while he tugged at the elephant's tail. 'Wuh janwar rassi ke muwafiq hai!' 'No, it's not a bit like a rope,' said a fourth, feeling its leg. 'It's more like a tree. And who are you calling stupid?'

The fifth blind beggar fell against the beast's side and was sure it looked like a wall, while the sixth held its ear and declared that it must be similar to a fan. As for the seventh, he was silent - not from choice, but because the elephant, cheesed off with being man-handled, sat on him. Lacking vision, then, each interpreted the animal according to his own limited viewpoint. So it may be with Stonehenge: not being able to see back to its origins, we voice our varying theories and so, perhaps, miss some eclectic reality. Who can tell?

Antiquarian Sir Flinders Petrie introduced the method we still use of cross-dating artefacts as a means of establishing the age of ancient sites. In 1949 the American chemist Willard Libby pioneered the radio-carbon technique. For some years 1600 BC and 2000 BC were the accepted dates for the construction of Stonehenge's later and earlier stages. Then, in 1967, errors were found in

the radio-carbon dating method. Prof. Hans Seuss cross-checked it against the long-lived Californian bristlecone pine and discovered discrepancies which grew larger with greater antiquity.

Consternation in academic circles! They were faced with a major recalibration of the archaeological clock. A few years later, in 1975, Prof. Colin Renfrew was able to say: 'Recalibration is here to stay and its magnitude is clear.' Stonehenge dates were revised to 1800-2000 BC and 2700 BC respectively. Firmly established chronological tables were upset. Unbelievably, the Newgrange passage grave in Ireland now predated the Pyramids by 500 years!

What was rather remarkable was that Tom Lethbridge, the archaeologist who discovered the giant Gog and Magog hill figures near Cambridge, had, in 1965, come up with these dates by a very different method. He used a dowsing pendulum. No one was more surprised than Lethbridge to find such discrepancies, as he says in his book 'The Legend of the Sons of God.' Dowsing is generally accepted now but is normally used for detecting, not dating. In either case, though, the form of energy involved has so far defied the best efforts of science to isolate it. It may certainly have electromagnetic features but this is not the sole answer. As someone who has personally had 42 shaves instead of his usual 5 from a razor blade kept under a pyramid, I don't comprehensively reject unknown energies. Neither am I confident that physicists will one day be able to isolate the principle involved. Prof. John Taylor tried and failed. It will remain a mystery - like the 'hidden variables' at the heart of the atom, concealed for ever from scientific eyes by Planck's Constant h .

What, though, of Stonehenge's purpose? A sophisticated astronomical computer, say some, including Prof. Sir Fred Hoyle. If so, why were some stones - the 'bluestones' -

transported laboriously over long distances? Plenty of local stone was available and surely any old rock would have done. Prescelly has been accepted as the source of the bluestones since Dr. H. Thomas's geological survey there in 1923: though Lethbridge makes out a rational case for Tipperary, based not only on map-dowsing but on etymology and commonsense navigational needs. American researchers Stover and Kraig, however, will have none of all this. In their book 'Stonehenge and the Origins of Western Culture' they assert that the bluestones (spotted dolerite) were to be found on the Plain itself: dumped there by glaciers. Engineer Edward Stone in 1924 argued that the sarsen circle was of local stones; hence - no transport difficulties where they at least were concerned.

What other functions has Stonehenge fulfilled? Well it has been variously seen as a cattle pen, a place of ceremonial worship, an eclipse predictor, a marker beacon for UFOs and a cosmic energy transformer connected with land fertilisation. To archaeologist John Foster Forbes, author of 'The Unchronicled Past' it was probably an Atlantean Bird Temple, while John Ivamy, in 'The Sphinx and the Megaliths', regarded it as an ancient Egyptian colony. It was also, according to 17th century authority Edmund Bolton, the burial place of Queen Boadicea. Let's hope she was not disturbed by lowing cattle, electric shocks and UFO jet-noise.

Nearly everyone has heard of the theories of Prof. Alexander Thom and John Michell regarding stone circle measurements using the 'megalithic yard' of 2.72 feet - a standard Thom found to prevail all over the British Isles and elsewhere. What puzzles me (and may puzzle others) is how the positions of uneven lumps of stone, some of which have fallen down, can be calculated to an accuracy of one eighth of an inch. I'm certainly not rejecting Thom's findings: I'm just curious.

It may, incidentally, intrigue some who have a vague idea that the discovery of sophisticated prehistoric geometry originated with Thom and Michell to know that in a book called 'Highways and Byways in Devon and Cornwall', the author, A.H. Norway, refers to a Mr. A.L. Lewis who discovered that certain Cornish circles and their distances from each other 'were planned with a measure of an Egyptian or Royal Persian cubit'. The megalithic yard and the Royal Cubit are related to each other by the square root of 2.5. Lewis also discussed the position of the cromlechs with regard to the midsummer sunrise. I have this book. It was published in 1897.

John Foster Forbes claims that all stone circles are associated with ritual dancing. Stonehenge, of course, was known as 'The Giant's Dance' and it is interesting that the Cornish phrase for a megalithic ring is DONS MEYN, or 'stone dance'.

In folklore, ritual dancing on the Sabbath is held responsible for the ubiquitous stories of men and maidens having been turned to stone, frozen in the middle of their revelries. (How fortunate for metrologists that they were dancing an exact number of megalithic yards apart when petrifaction occurred.) Obviously such stories are just anti-pagan propaganda put about by the newly-arrived Christians.

Lethbridge considers that the object of the dances was to recharge the stones with energy. The Beltane festivals at the beginning of summer would be an appropriate time. Such a festival, dating from the pagan era is the Furry Dance at Helston in Cornwall. According to Ward Rutherford in 'The Druids', Lethbridge derived Helston from 'hele-stone' the stone of the sun. This links it neatly with Stonehenge where the Hele Stone was said to be employed for sun

sightings. Nice one. Tom, but sadly not true. Helston (Henliston in Domesday) comes from the Cornish 'hen' (old) and 'lys' (a court or palace). Helston, then, is 'the old court town.'

Stover and Kraig clinically dissect most accepted theories about Stonehenge (though they do not mention Lethbridge). They claim that the detailed knowledge necessary to construct a sophisticated astronomical calculator could only have been acquired over many generations. The Metonic Cycle, for example, which links the relative positions of the sun and moon, occurs only every 19 years. However, they then qualify their remarks by adding 'if the knowledge were scientific as we understand it.' And there you have it. The knowledge may not be 'scientific.' The way is left clear for esoteric, intuitive methods of designing and aligning stone circles.

As researcher Tom Graves points out in 'Needles of Stone', 'feeling' may be responsible for the sitings rather than calculation. He quotes Prof. Thom who says: 'Ask any engineer with experience of field-work to locate a site with similar properties and he will want a large group of surveyors working for an indefinite time fully equipped with modern instruments ...' Science does not have all the answers then. 'The pendulum process,' says Lethbridge, 'is in the operator's mind.'

One could go on, but Eddie Tooke (editor) might fall out with Eddie Tooke (author) if he takes up any more space writing on yet another subject he knows nothing about... So that is it.

By the way, are you interested in synchronicity? Well, the picture on the wrapper of Stover and Kraig's book was supplied by Tony STONE Associates. Edward STONE wrote technically of the methods which could have been used to

cleave the sarsen stones. Sir Flinders Petrie's name suggests STONE. (as in 'petrify'). Our own Paddy STONE has an article on Stonehenge in this issue, while Beryl Mercer writes on the Helston Furry Dance. What's that? You don't get the connection? Shame on you! What is BERYL but a precious STONE?

STOP PRESS!

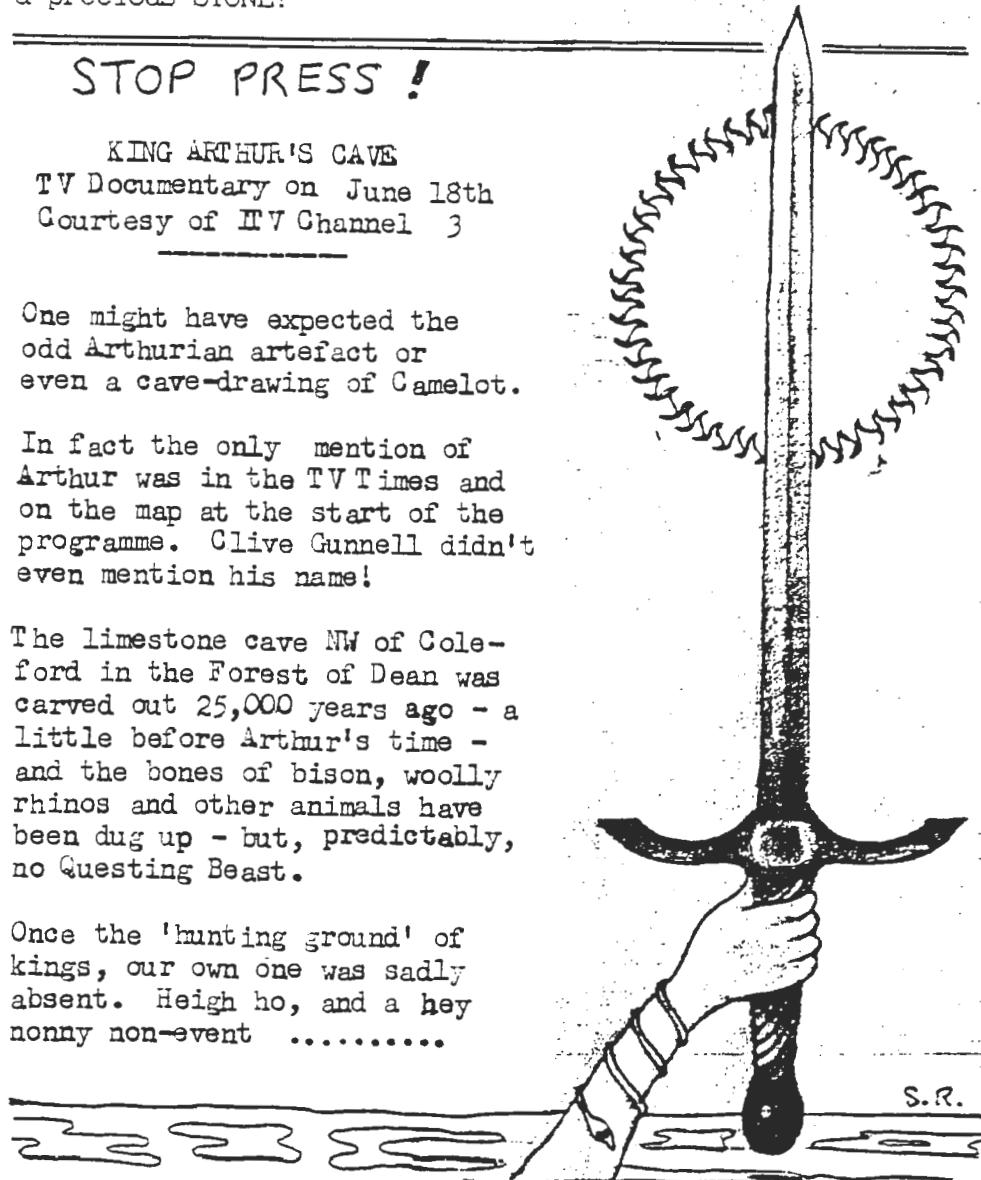
KING ARTHUR'S CAVE
TV Documentary on June 18th
Courtesy of ITv Channel 3

One might have expected the odd Arthurian artefact or even a cave-drawing of Camelot.

In fact the only mention of Arthur was in the TV Times and on the map at the start of the programme. Clive Gunnell didn't even mention his name!

The limestone cave NW of Coleford in the Forest of Dean was carved out 25,000 years ago - a little before Arthur's time - and the bones of bison, woolly rhinos and other animals have been dug up - but, predictably, no Questing Beast.

Once the 'hunting ground' of kings, our own one was sadly absent. Heigh ho, and a heynonny non-event



Dancing in the Streets

by Beryl Mercer

Helston (population about 12,000) is the most southerly town on the British mainland: it just pips Penzance for that record by a 'whisker'. Every May 8th (or on occasions the 6th, if the 8th falls on a Sunday or a Monday, the latter being Helston's cattle market day) Helston folk rise at the crack of dawn and, together with thousands of visitors, they cram the streets to witness the ancient and magical welcome to Spring, known as:

THE FURRY DANCE.

Nobody knows how old the Dance is, except that it is certainly pre-Christian in origin. Why 'Furry' you may ask? I quote:

The transliteration of the name 'Furry' into 'Flora,' reminiscent of classical mythiology, is no more than a piece of 18th century special pleading, given colour, no doubt, by the fact that the Roman Floralia was held at a proximate date, the fourth of the May calends ... However this may be, May 8th in Helston is a day of flowers: everyone who is to dance, and almost everyone else besides, wears a button hole or spray of lilies-of-the-valley, while houses, shops and schools are garlanded with bluebells, furze and rhododendrons to compete for the best-decorated building.' (1)

The word 'Furry' derives either from the Latin *feria* (a fair), or the Cornish *fer*, a festival. At one time the Dance was a May-Day rite: even now there is a 'walking rehearsal' around the town on the evening of May 1st. The festival was 'moved' to May 8th when this date became listed as the anniversary of the appearance of the Archangel Michael to some fishermen off St. Michael's Mount in AD 495.

Michael is officially the patron saint of Cornwall in general and of Helston in particular. He is the primary figure in the town's coat-of-arms, and he 'appears' in the *Hal an Tow*, the folk-play which forms part of the Furry Day celebrations. (More about that later).

The actual tune played throughout the day by the Helston Town Band is, like the Dance, of unknown origin. Nor is there any written score: 'The parts are passed on by the bandmasters to their successors through the years, and they are jealous of its tradition and rendering.' (2)

And the reasons for this joyful day of dancing feet and hearty voices? There are several theories: basically, of course, it is a spring-cum-fertility festival, celebrating the triumph of life (spring) over death (winter). Then there is the legend of the mighty battle fought above the town between Michael and the Devil, during which one of them threw a huge boulder at the other. (Some say that it was the lid of Hell which Satan hurled at Michael). This stone - now believed to have been a meteorite was later broken up for building material, and a chunk of it incorporated in the wall of the Angel Hotel in Coinagehall Street, where it can be seen to this day.

Another legend tells how the people of the area were visited by a terrible plague which caused them to separate from each other and seek refuge in the neighbouring woods until the danger was past. Afterwards the survivors emerged and danced through the streets and houses, giving thanks for their deliverance.

(I'm personally not too happy about that one: how would those hiding in the woods *KNOW* when it was safe to return to the town? And wouldn't they have been mourning their lost relatives and friends, rather than singing and dancing?!

My husband Archie and I are not Cornish-born, but we have lived in the county for over 18 years: we love Cornwall, feel very much at home here, and wouldn't wish to live anywhere else. I make this point because on May 8th 1985 I was privileged to record a commentary on the Furry Dance for BBC Television (Regional SW). This was included in a programme called 'Fire, Dance and Song', screened on Feb 14th 1986, and the only criticism I heard (of my part in it) was 'It should have been done by a Cornish person.' Of course it should, and I told the TV producer so - but the opening words of my 'spiel', explaining this apparent anomaly, were edited

out... (More about that later, too).

Having provided some background and set the scene, as it were, come with me now to Helston (where we lived from 1971 to 1977), and I will try to convey the marvellous and magical atmosphere of a typical Furry Day.

You will have to rise early, because we have to be in position for the first dance of the day by no later than 5.45 a.m. It will probably be a bit chilly, though unlikely to be wet (I have never yet witnessed a rainy Furry Day), and although there are plenty of people about, there are nothing like the numbers that will be here by midday.

We are in the optimum position, close to the Guildhall in the centre of the town: the streets are sealed off to motor traffic. The bandsmen in their royal blue uniforms (each with his mandatory spray of lilies-of-the-valley - all the patrolling policemen and women are wearing them, too) are assembling, and overhead, flags and bunting flutter in the chilly breeze.

The Guildhall clock begins to strike the hour of seven: on the first stroke, the bass drummer pounds out two sonorous beats to provide the tempo, sending shivers down our spines. (Well, mine, anyway - invariably!) With leisurely tread the band advances up Meneage Street - and out from the Guildhall, two by two, come the early morning dancers.

There are usually not less than 100 couples, often more, the girls wearing pretty summer dresses and light gloves, the lads in grey flannels, white shirts and green ties. They perform a simple slip-step for the first phrase of the tune, followed by a sort of cross-over, swing-your-partner polka for the second phrase.

A few statistics ... each of the three dances performed by adults is over four miles long, and the children's dance is about three miles. In addition to the actual route, every so often the band stand and play while the couples dance into a shop or house by one entrance and out through another. This is supposed to bring a year's luck to the occupants of the

building. So the band covers about sixteen miles during the day, and the

early morning dancers turn out again at 5.00 p.m. for the evening dance, thus covering about eight miles. Anyone who likes can tack on to the back of the evening dance: I've never done it myself because by that time my feet are killing me anyway, just from walking about the town and standing around to watch ... However, back to 7 a.m. on May 8th:

Pom .. pom .. pa-rom-pom-pom ... up Meneage Street, past the hospital, turn, come back; dance into the hospital grounds, nurses and up-patients hanging out of every window. Round the grounds, out again, back down Meneage Street, turn right into Wendron Street, down Penrose Road, down Church Street, down Cross Street ... down, down the narrow streets and winding lanes to Penhellaz - 'bottom of Helston' - over the little bridge that spans the river Cober (which is Cornish for 'copper' - it may have been streamed here in times long past). Along the main Penzance road, past the cattle market, and finally up the wide steepness of Coinagehall Street, back to the Guildhall and a roar of well-earned applause. (In earlier years they used to adjourn to Trelawney's, a large bakery in Coinagehall Street, for breakfast, but alas, Trelawney's is no more - I forget what has taken its place.)

The Hal an Tow, beginning at 8.30 a.m., is something quite different from the Dance, and may possibly pre-date it, although the traditional song accompanying it is probably Elizabethan, i.e. 16th century:

Early in the morning, youths' (girls, too, nowadays) 'go out into the neighbouring woods and gather branches of sycamore. They return at 8.30 and, waving the branches above their heads, perambulate the town, stopping at places of vantage to sing the Hal an Tow song. Some of



the young people dress in costume to represent the characters in the song,' (2)

(In response to comments from our new editor: no, I don't know what 'Hal an Tow' means either, though I agree with him that it does not mean 'heel and toe'. As he says, the Cornish word 'an' means 'the', not 'and' (which is 'ha' or 'hag' in Cornish, as in the motto of Cornwall, 'Onen haq oll' = 'One and all'.) 'Hal an', a mutated form of 'calan', means 'Calends', 1st of the month', which would seem to be more appropriate, but May is 'Me', and month is 'mys', so where does 'tow' come into it? No other Cornish month-name is anything like 'tow', either. Personally I think it's a nonsense-phrase, like 'fai-la-la' or 'toora-li-addy'!)

So let's now make our way down to the district near the river known as St John's, where the first performance takes place. Here we have Robin Hood and his Merry Men; the Spring Queen and her attendants; 'St George' wielding his lance against a really magnificent red dragon; and 'St Michael' tackling a fearsome black and purple Devil. A man dressed in the costume of a mediaeval Town Crier rings a hand-bell and announces that 'The Hal an Tow is about to begin.'

Sometimes this announcement, and some of the song, is rendered in Unified Cornish, the revival of the language which lapsed into disuse in, I think, the 18th century. This revival began in the 1920s and has been gathering strength ever since. Unfortunately the scholars are now embroiled in argument, some of them wishing to alter spellings, usages etc. - I don't know why, but I hope they won't do it, otherwise the 18 months I spent at evening classes when we lived in Helston will have been wasted...

'Robin Hood and Little John, they both are gone to Fair, 0.
And we will to the merry green wood to see what they do there, 0'
And for to chase, 0, to chase the buck and doe.'

Chorus:

'Hal an Tow, jolly rumble-0,
For we are up as soon as any day, 0,
And for to fetch the summer home, the summer and the May, 0,

For summer is a-come, 0, and Winter is a-gone, 0.'

The second verse casts scorn upon the Spanish would-be invaders who landed at Penzance in the 16th century and were soundly trounced. ('For they shall eat the grey goose-feather' [arrows] 'and we shall eat the roast, 0'). The third is in praise of St George, the fourth of St Michael:

'But to a greater than St George, our Helston has a right, 0.
St Michael with his wings outspread, the Archangel so bright, 0.
Who fought the fiend, 0, of all mankind the foe.'

The final verse poses something of a mystery, and is not always included:

'God bless Aunt Mary Moses and all her power and might, 0,
And send us peace in merry England, both day and night, 0,
And send us peace in merry England both now and evermore, 0.'

Aunt Mary Moses? Some scholars have suggested 'that this name has at some time been substituted for that of the monarch of the realm, probably during the Commonwealth period, but left unaltered at the Restoration' (2) Possible, I suppose ... personally I think this might be a veiled reference to the Mother Goddess, worshipped by the Celts for centuries until the coming of the Saxons and, later still, Christianity. The song which accompanies the rites of the Padstow 'Obby 'Oss on May 1st includes mention of 'Aunt Ursula Birdhood' (or 'Birdwood'), and some of the old Mummers' Plays presented at Yuletide include an 'Aunt Molly'.

Having completed their initial performance at St John's, the group moves off to the next 'plein an gwary' (= playing place), waving their branches, blowing whistles, and chanting 'Oggie, oggie, oggie! Oy, oy, oy!' We, too, move away - probably to seek our own breakfast in the Methodist Church Hall, where great stacks of goodies, all home-made, are available for a very modest outlay. After 'stoking-up' we wander back up Coinagehall Street, inspecting the trader's stalls which line one side of the street, watching the various buskers (one year there was a person, gender unknown, acting as a dancing bear. That May 8th was a fairly hot one and, in the words of the Goons, 'It must have been hell in there!')

We finally take up positions in Cross Street, so named for the ancient granite cross sited on one corner, to await the Children's Dance which begins at around 10.30.

This is a comparatively recent innovation, and is the longest procession of all, since children from every school in the Helston area take part. (Over 1000 participants in 1989 ...) A different school is chosen each year to lead the Dance - and here I should state that in every dance of the day, the first two couples must, by strong tradition, be Helston-born. All the children are dressed in white and wear the inevitable lily-of-the-valley. Each school is distinguished by the colour of the flower-chaplets worn by the girls.

'Many people like this dance on account of its spontaneous gaiety; and any fine day if you watch a school playground during 'break', you will see how easily Helston children slip into a dancing step.' (1)

And so to the Midday Dance, and the streets are by now so choked with spectators that at times it is difficult to keep one's balance.

The first dance is youthful beauty and simplicity; the second is a combination of childish gaiety and gravity; the Midday Dance is mature dignity and colourful formality. All the gentlemen wear grey toppers and morning suits; the ladies wear long gowns and elbow-length gloves, and picture hats. And what hats some of them are! I've never been to Royal Ascot on Ladies' Day, but I'm sure the display there could never out-rival this!

These are the 'gentry' of Helston; the affluent folk, the business tycoons, the Mayor and other Council dignitaries, representatives of the professions - look, there goes our doctor and his wife! And, nearly always, the Captain of H.M.S. Seahawk - otherwise the Royal Naval Air Station at Culdrose, just outside the town. (And the biggest helicopter base in Europe).

The competition to take part in this Dance - let alone to lead it - is fierce, but one has to be invited to do so by the Committee of the Flora

Day Association, which masterminds the whole thing. You can write to them, explaining why you feel you ought to be included - but if they don't agree with your reasons, or if you fall victim to the whittling-down process that keeps the numbers manageable - then you just have to stand and watch with the rest of us!.

We now watch this Dance in the beautiful gardens of Lismore House. Lismore House used to belong to a retired doctor, appropriately named Dr. Michael: unfortunately he passed away last year, and this year we wondered if the gardens would still be thrown open to the public for this one day, as usual. Since the house is still occupied by a female relative of Dr. Michael - either his widow or his sister, not sure which - we were glad to find that she has chosen to carry on the tradition.

The grounds provide a most beautiful setting for the highlight of the Midday Dance. The procession enters by a side-gate, dances down the side-path beneath the trees (including some gorgeous copper beeches) ... enters the grounds proper at the bottom, and advances to the lush green circle known as the Lower Lawn. The bandsman break away and line up around the Lawn, facing inwards.

And the couples, in their stately fashion, dance on to the outside edge of the Lawn ... round and round, forming a great spiral of colour and movement ... round and round, tighter and tighter, until all are packed on to the grass.

The band comes to the end of the tune and stops. So do the Dancers. I have been told that this spiral movement was introduced only in the 1920s. I can only think that the person responsible must have been inspired by something deep down in his racial subconscious. For there is such a tremendous generation of psychic energy, such a build-up of a great invisible cone of power, that the air fairly fizzes with it. Personally I always stand there shivering, goose-pimples all over me, and as the music and movement stop, I mutter Shakespeare's words:

'Peace! the charm's wound up ...'



NOTICE BOARD

Some people scoff at the mere mention of the power built up by that spiral. One lady who had in her younger days taken part in the midday Dance was also interviewed for the BBC TV programme mentioned earlier - and she averred that it was 'absolute rubbish' and 'totally wrong'. All I can suggest is, she simply isn't sensitive to this type of emanation. A great many people aren't. But I feel that nobody should pour scorn upon the type of dance which was performed, for the very purpose of raising occult power, at places like Glastonbury Tor and Avebury Stone Circle - and even Stonehenge, for all I know. The spiral, or Snake Dance, is millennia old - but the power can still be raised, even if those raising it are unaware of what they are doing, or why.

This is a strictly pagan rite; even Michael was around ages before the Christians clapped a halo on him and made him a saint. If some folk don't like the pagan power engendered by the Dance, they can stay away; nobody twists their arm to be in Helston on May 8th.

But equally, nobody can deny that for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years, Helston has maintained the continuity of a rite of Spring as old as Man himself. And I defy anyone not to be moved by its symbolism, gaiety and beauty.

SOURCES:

1. THE LIVING STONES, by Ithell Colquhoun. Published by Peter Owen Ltd., London, 1957.
2. THE HELSTON FURRY DANCE, by Edward M. Cunnack. Published by the Flora Day Association and The Stewards of the Helston Furry Dance, Helston, 1971.

WORD SQUARE

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1. With Ogier in Avalon.
2. Cure for a blunt sword.
3. Jousting victory depends on these, even if it's over at the start!
4. Circular Old English bird?
5. Plate armour was this in Arthur's day.
6. Dispatched again? That's the way to keep the wound green!

(Answers in next issue - if you need them!)

Fooled you! You thought the new PENDRAGON was going to be a newsletter, didn't you? ... So did I! Like Topsy, however, the whole thing just 'grow'd'. At the outset I had no intention of acting as editor OR secretary. Blame Sid Birchby for helping me change my mind. (Now you're stuck with me until the AGM at least.)

Then member Geoff Dando of Gloucester (advert. on back cover) offered to print it as a journal and assemble it, centrally stapled, at very reasonable rates. So that was that. I had already typed out some material on A5 paper so I didn't take advantage of his ability to do reduction printing too; that may come next time.

Now I don't want to keep harping on it - so I will. Your subscriptions are really needed NOW in order to get our finances straight: (see box on Page 2.) Thanks to Geoff we're only a few pounds in the red. Generous donations from Sid Birchby, Chauncey Catto, Simon Rouse and Fred Hadley, and a few early subscriptions helped. (As a matter of interest, Anne and I - and Kate - are paying subs. like everyone else!) Please treat the matter as urgent.

THEMES etc. Any suggestions for future themes will be welcome. The next issue (perhaps the next two issues, if we have enough material) will feature Mordred & Camlann (plus 'Stonehenge Revisited' by R.M. Twist - left over from this issue) We already have some 'copy' to hand. More will be welcome however. Also book reviews. Deadline Aug. 31st. If you want to send contributions on other topics, though, don't be put off. When we've enough material on similar subjects we may have a theme...

PS Just a reminder. Please send SAE with letters needing an answer (not for subs. receipts, of course!)

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(Cont.)

be accomplished by the Phoenician Boy Emperor, Elagabalus: hence the legend that the circles of STANTON DREW represented a wedding. (cf. BRAUT and BRAUTIGAM in Germany and elsewhere).

Gods represented by symbols go back to ancient MESOPOTAMIA. The long Punic genealogies suggest that the symbols were handed down by aristocratic families. The TANIT symbols continued in Christian art, especially the LOZENGE. Lozenge- and egg-shaped shields were those of widows and spinsters in medieval heraldry.

