

C O N T E N T S

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N O T E

We are changing the format of our magazine and by the time our next issue is ready we hope to have a new and permanent cover that will improve its appearance.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As everyone knows, the aim of our Society has been "To stimulate interest in King Arthur and his contemporaries and to investigate the historical and archaeological background of The Matter of Britain."

At the A.G.M. it was proposed by the President, and carried by general consent, that we should now extend this by adding another Clause. "And to study the significance, past and present, of the Arthurian Legends."

The Bristol group meets frequently and informally and ranges widely in its discussions. Much interest has centred on John Michel's book, "The Flying Saucer Vision", published recently by Sidgwick & Jackson. This interest led to a re-examination of "Stonehenge De-Coded" by G. Hawkins. The group has recalled that Merlin's name has been associated with Stonehenge, as for instance in "Merlin's Dance". Merlin seems always to be associated with astronomy and magic. Members will remember that T.A. White's Merlin is a character composite of astronomy, magic, problems of Time and the Beasts of Mythology.

In this issue Roger Deeley has given his personal views on Merlin and he is currently writing a book about Arthur from which this is a small extract. On Oct. 27th last he came over from Weston-Super-Mare to give us a Talk on these lines.

This rising interest in Merlin is the reason for the addition of a new clause being added to our original aims. We invite views and ideas from our correspondents.

Y A R L I N G T O N

By Chris Turner.

During the recent dig at S. Cadbury a few Pendragon members found time to make a trip to Yarlington to investigate reports of a complex of strip-lynchets unmarked on the O.S. maps. Yarlington is a small Somerset village comprising a church, a pub and very little else. It is about five miles to the N.E. of S. Cadbury, nestling in the folds of the hills that flank the eastern boundaries of the Vale of Avalon. It also sits astride the pre-historic ridgeway known as the Harrow Way or, at its western end, the Hard Way. This ridgeway runs east-west from the Vale of Avalon to Old Sarum, via Andover and the great crossroads of Stonehenge, and seems to



have been used as the trade route for the westwards transportation of Cornish tin and lead.

Just outside the village we found a series of strip-lynchets marching boldly across four hillsides surrounding a ford. Some of the banks reached up twelve feet or more at very steep angles. As we climbed we discovered more and more features in the surrounding fields. One field to the east had six shallow ridges running parallel downhill, with a ridge at the top and bottom, while in the valley below us we saw an old spring protected by a dry-stone wall. The size of the complex seems to indicate that it was farmed by a community rather than by one farming family, although no evidence of a pre-historic village has yet come to light.

Casting further afield we came upon some more features of interest. To the north of the strip-lynchets we discovered a dry-stone wall of some age supporting, or perhaps now supported by, a bank. This was built in the unusual form, for Somerset, of large, flat flakes of stone laid in a horizontal herring-bone pattern. This has been variously dated as being anywhere between late Roman and Medieval period, but looks rather like the traditional type of dry-stone walling to be found even to-day in predominately Celtic Cornwall. All agree, however, that the age of the wall is "considerable".

Not far from this a circular crop-mark was tentatively identified. Time was too short to make a detailed study of the site. On raising our eyes to the skyline, however, we saw Glastonbury Tor silhouetted between the shoulders of two hills. This would appear to make an appealing site for a religious centre, but this is, of course, pure conjecture at the moment. It was noticed, nevertheless, that the area had been farmed by a community, that stone for building is in abundance, water is readily available and a principal trade route passes through or near.

The route of the Harrow Way is not clearly defined beyond Yarlington and may, in fact, not have existed in any permanent form. The land drops down to the Somerset Plain and cannot be guarded effectively against marauders until the land rises again towards Exmoor in the west. It has to cross difficult country with no natural defences or bolt-holes and it seems that Cornish traders had to make their own way across the Vale of Avalon to the relatively secure foothills of the southern Mendips in the region of Castle Cary to link up with the safe passage across the hills to Old Sarum.

The question arises --- what has all this to do with Arthur or Cadbury-Camelot? The answer is that it indicates not what S. Cadbury Castle was used for in later periods but what its original purpose may have been. Yarlington is conceivably the staging-post at the end of the Harrow Way. There would be tin and lead merchants as well as farmers: pack horses as well as cattle. The Cornish miners would take their ore as far as Yarlington, trade it and then go back for more. The traders would then transport it to their buyers in the east. This arrangement would make the town rich pickings for Irish plunderers or other roving freebooters and so needed a strong point to guard the eastern flank, the east being already guarded by a series of hill forts dotted along the ridgeway. Nowhere could there be found a more ideal spot than Cadbury which, with its established outposts on the hills over Whitcomb Valley, gave complete command of the western approaches for many miles. This vantage point would give ample warning of approaching danger and its high-impregnable defences would have been enough to discourage all but the most daring of raiders. In its original state, therefore, Cadbury Castle may well have been the gateway to the Harrow Way.

Investigations are still far from complete, and all Pendergast can help in research. For those with O.S. maps of the area the reference of strip-lynchets is Sheet 166 (Frome) 660295.



## M E R L I N

By Roger Deeley.

Merlin is at least as old as Arthur. Trace the legend of the Arthurian romance back from legend into history, and Merlin is still there. He is the mainstay of the first part of the cycle, the tutor, the helper, the friend of the young King, who magically brings the parents together, finds the King his famous sword, and shelters him until he is old enough in years and knowledge to stand on his own two feet.

This Merlin, or Myrddin, is too big a character to be an anonymous bard, or the representative of some pagan religion opposing Christianity, as different writers in fact and fiction have tried to make him. The facts of the legend must have some basis in the facts of history.

In the older legends, the mouth-to-mouth stories told of Arthur and his band, Myrddin is no doddering old figure in white beard and long Walt Disney cloak. He leads warbands, he fights in battle, he gives advice and wisdom from a lifetime of experience. The wizard bit was put in by Geoffrey of Monmouth to give the story a bit of pep for readers who revelled in that sort of thing.

So who was this Myrddin in fact? The name Myrddin comes from the town which in English is now called Carmarthen, or as it was then Caermyrddin, or as the Romans called it Moridunum, the Sea Fort. Ambrosius came from this part of the world, being generally known and referred to as Myrddin Emrys, and it was easy with the way of life and the actual grammar of those days for the second name to become dropped, leaving him to be referred to as just Myrddin. Moreover, one of the main stories told by Geoffrey, of a boy without a father who revealed prophecies to Vortigern and who was named Merlin, when traced back to its source in Nennius, is discovered to refer to Emrys-gulath, Emrys Gwledig or Prince Ambrosius.

A surprising number of references to Merlin refer to Ambrosius as well, a surprisingly large number of legends also refer to both (for example, they are both deeply connected with Stonehenge in various ways): a suspiciously large number.

Could the facts have been these: Ambrosius Aurelianus led the British armies against the Saxon until he was succeeded by Arthur (how this happened is not important here). He then became basically the Elder Statesman, a friend and adviser to the young Warlord (Dux Bellorum) whom he had trained and brought up to succeed him. By this time the Latin or Roman influence was a little less in evidence than the British, and he became known more and more by the British name, Myrddin Emrys, thence ultimately Myrddin. It does not need too much imagination to see how, in later times, particularly when the whole story turned into heroic bardic lays and then to straight legends, these two distinct facets of the man's character, the commander Ambrosius and the adviser Myrddin, should turn into two separate people..... It's a theory anyway.

### EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

From Miss T. Sonley, Hull.

Received September's "Pendragon" safely and found it full of interesting reading. The article by John Michell on the dragon lines really fascinated me and I immediately drew out the lines he mentioned on to an old map, thus discovering that you in Bristol are inside the triangle whilst we in Hull are on the outside. Now I must get his book and find out more.

We have had two finds here recently: one at Selby and one at Waxfleet where, about the 10th October, a Roman lead "pig" weighing more than 1 cwt. was unearthed on the River Humber's bank. The ingot is wedge-shaped and nearly two feet long. It was found about 500 yards from where our Museum staff are digging for the site of a settlement. The ingot is inscribed "Socior. Lut.



Br. Ex. Arg." so appears to have come up from Derbyshire. According to records, several other ingots with this inscription have been found in this area over the years.

At Skirlough, new deep drains are being laid and I managed to look over one trench there, but my employer is not handling that job and the men who were there were not too friendly ! I find most workmen are very cagey if you want to look over any ground. Their usual plaint is: "If you find anything, we shall have to stop working." Does everyone hit this snag ?.....

I was very surprised to receive a reply to my request for a pen-friend: I had expected a letter from someone in this country, but it came from New York of all places !

From Mr. R.D.Hoskins, Farnham, Surrey.

There is an inscribed stone at a crossroads on the outskirts of a small village named Trefreock. Trefreock lies about a mile from St. Endellion which, in turn, is three miles from Port Isaac on the road from Wadebridge in north Cornwall. The stone is one of a pair of pillars marking an old grave and there is a small stone "chair" with them. The inscription starts off with a square cross followed by what appears to be a name. It is presumably a memorial stone carrying the name of the person buried there. The name, unfortunately, is very hard to decipher. The stone appears to be of a type related to the period 500-800 A.D.

Local enquiries ascertained that the person buried there is supposed to be the father of the local saint, St. Endelliarta. A pamphlet in the local church at St. Endellion, however, states that St. Endelliarta was one of the twenty-four saintly sons and daughters of Brychan, a king of South Wales, who was head of the Three Holy Families of Britain.

Does anyone know, please, if there is a translation of the inscription ? Any information on this burial would be appreciated.

Editor's Note: We, in Bristol, have seen a photograph of this stone (taken by Mr. Hoskins) and to us the lettering looks very much like M..D..AUT. Naturally we are very curious about this stone.

From Mr. G. Bass, London.

I have found all the information about the Maze and the Chinese Dragon Lines very interesting indeed, but I still think that these things, even if they are true, will not really help in the search for Arthur. I imagine that all this became entangled with the Christian sequel of the coming of St. Joseph to Glastonbury with his ward, Jesus, the building of the wattle church by Our Lord Himself, and the hiding of the Cup of the Last Supper, brought back by St. Joseph after the Crucifixion, in the Chalice Well. This was the legend that inspired Arthur and his Knights in their splendid defence of Britain against the heathen Saxons and retained the Christian Faith in our land....I have seen a picture from an early manuscript which shows the Round Table as a hollow circle which would have allowed all the knights to have been seated in equality. What do you think of this ?

Editor's Note: We know that the Honourable Knights of the Round Table have seats that can be slotted together to form a "Round Table" according to the number of members who come to dinner.

From Mr. C. Killick, London.

I have found that Caesar's Camp on Wimbledon Common is classified as an Iron Age hill fort. No one bothers about it round here, although a boy once asked me where it was...Now I can have a closer look at it and perhaps, one day, there may be a dig there. With the aid of Ordnance Survey I am going to do research on geographical connection between the hill forts, and also see if I



can find any evidence of anything else like it on Wimbledon Common, which is, in a way, like a giant hill fort itself.

Editor: Thanks also to Mr. Killick for excellent maps and MSS.

From Mr. G. Holdstock, Essex.

During my summer vacation I worked on an archaeological site at Tythegston, Glamorgan. Among the finds was a wall which was found to contain late fourth century Roman quernstones. The quernstones were found embedded in the wall and were not complete, but just segments. I believe I am correct in saying that the distinguishing feature about the stones was the fact that they had radial grooves. It was this fact that definitely identified them with the fourth century.

This suggests that the wall was built and the site occupied during the immediate post-Roman period. As this includes the possibility of the site being Arthurian, I wondered if mention may have been made of the names Candleston or Tythegston in the legends.

Editor: Has anyone any information or suggestions ?

#### THE BATTLE OF BADON

By John Brooke.

The site and explanation of the battle of Badon has always proved a thorny problem to all historians. Each one has given cogent reasons as to why his site must be the correct one. However, no site appears to comply exactly with all the known facts. After reading all the available data it would appear that there is only one site, and that under special conditions, which fills the bill.

The recorded facts are, briefly, that (a) it took place 44 years after the Adventus Saxonum; that is, after the Saxon Mutiny of 455 A.D. (b) That it took the form of a siege. (No details are given as to what force was besieged.) (c) That Arthur and his comitatus alone were actually engaged. (d) That it was ALMOST the last battle. (e) That a very long period of peace followed.

In 500 A.D. affairs in Britain were such that the Saxons had only a tenuous hold on the country. In fact, it must have been obvious to Aelle, the Bretwalda, that unless a great effort was made it was highly probable that they would be thrown out altogether. He must have decided, in consultation with the other Saxon chiefs, that a major thrust must be made and it must be an all-out effort. The greatest problem that faced Aelle was how to overcome the invincible Arthurian cavalry. It had been shown, time after time, that one cavalryman was worth at least five Saxons. It was necessary, therefore, to assemble an overwhelming force to counter the advantage of the enemy.

Unquestionably, Aelle was a very skilled soldier. Like all Germans he was not one to leave things to chance. In addition to a massive force he decided to arrange for a diversion. To make doubly sure, however, he had to take one big risk. This was to operate after the campaigning season was over and both sides had retired to winter quarters. An advance at this time would catch the Britons completely off balance. The Federal troops would be dispersed among their depots and the militia would be disbanded. Arthur himself would be well out of the way and by the time he was in a position to take action Aelle would be well on his way to the West Coast, thereby preventing the various British units from assembling.

As is recognised, the dates in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are thoroughly unreliable, being sometimes five years out on either side. That being so it becomes easy to see where Cerdic comes into the picture. If he were the son of Vortigern he naturally considered himself the rightful heir to the British throne. The scheme that Aelle proposed was that Cerdic should land off Southampton Water and thrust towards Winchester. This, if nothing else, would bring Arthur hurrying to the defence of the city. In fact it was the ideal diversion.



In due course the great host assembled somewhere near the present Dunstable. It consisted of Aelle's own South Saxons; Oisc's men from Kent and a massive force from the Anglian settlements. How near the Saxon frontiers Arthur had his outposts we do not know but it can be assumed that they existed. Such a massive force could not long remain undetected. Signal beacons were duly fired carrying the warning that trouble was on the way to far off Camelot.

Aelle's first objective would be the <sup>h</sup>Tames crossings. The one north of Goring was the usual one to use as this is where the Icknield Way runs. However, the northern one south of Dorchester led to the main garrison H.Q. at Wittenham. Once Wittenham <sup>h</sup>fall and, preferably Dorchester as well, the fortress covering the southern crossing was bound to fall soon after as it received all its reinforcements from Wittenham. Blowburton would drop like a ripe plum in due course. Aelle therefore left the Icknield Way and proceeded towards Dorchester, crossing by the Roman road. (See I.D. Margary 1967) To travel from Dunstable to Wittenham, allowing for some minor engagements, would take three days.

The garrison commander of Wittenham would have dispatched a mounted messenger to Camelot as soon as he had obtained details of the Saxon move. Messengers would also have been sent to Silchester and Winchester requesting reinforcements. Arthur would not have awaited a messenger but had his Comitatus mustered or at least his Bucellarii of Heavy Cavalry. Within a couple of hours or so of the signal being received Arthur would be on his way to Old Sarum. Fifteen miles north-east of Old Sarum he would probably <sup>have</sup> met the messenger and been more fully informed.

<sup>h</sup> On the afternoon of the third day the whole cavalry division would have ridden up on to the heights to the South overlooking the narrow plain connecting Wittenham and the crossing. Detachments from Silchester and Winchester would also be arriving. By this time about half Aelle's forces would have crossed the river and begun to encircle Wittenham. They must have been quite care-free. There appeared to be not the slightest possibility that they were likely to encounter trouble at this spot. They must have received a shock when they heard Arthur's trumpets and <sup>Saw</sup> ~~saw~~ the heights above them crowned by a mass of gleaming, armoured horsemen!

The cavalry, gaining momentum rapidly, must have crashed down into them: the whole body, including Aelle would be destroyed. The infantry, in the meantime, would have made for the ford to prevent reinforcements from crossing. In due course Arthur caught up with Oisc and destroyed him and his men at the hill of Agned near the Isle of Sheppey.

To follow this explanation it is desirable to have sheets S.U. 58 and 59 of the O.S. 2½ inch maps.

#### MASADA SHALL NOT FALL AGAIN !

By Julie Weaver.

The Pendragon Society met on Dec.1st to hear a very interesting Talk by Miss Rees of Bath High School. Miss Rees was one of the 2,000 volunteers who took part in the excavations at Masada in Israel. This was the site of the famous resistance, by Jewish "Zealots", to the Roman forces in the first century of our era.

As Masada is so close to the frontier with Jordan, the dig was protected by the Israeli Army, and volunteers were strictly disciplined. In addition to enduring the rigours of camp life they also faced dangers from "veterans of the desert" who turned out to be scorpions and snakes!

These tough conditions ensured an atmosphere of efficiency and dedication. The day began at 5.a.m., and by 6.a.m. the diggers were on their way. Through darkness and icy desert air they



to climb the narrow and dangerous "Snake Path" to the site; a precipitous, rocky plateau 1,350 feet above the desert. Work went on in increasing heat until mid-afternoon. Later in the day there were opportunities to inspect the "finds" and tour the site so that each digger could follow the progress of the excavation as a whole.

Masada is a natural fortress, but does not appear to have been used as such until the 2nd century B.C. when a small wall was built round the top. In the following century Herod the Great, unpopular with his subjects, developed Masada as an enormous fortified dwelling and bureaucratic centre. Diggers uncovered his Villa with its three terraces, mosaic floors, painted walls and baths, huge storehouses, offices and vast cisterns hewn out of the solid rock.

In 70 A.D. the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple, symbol of the Jewish Faith. A band of Zealots, however, who had previously captured Masada from the Roman garrison, continued to hold out there, under siege, until 70 A.D. When the Roman soldiers finally burst into the fortress one morning, they found it all a silent, smoking ruin. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, the Zealots, preferring death to submission, had formed a suicide pact. Fathers had first to kill their wives and children, and then each other. The discovery of a potsherd bearing their Leader's name, Eleazar-ben-Yair, and a dead woman with her black plaits still intact brings the tragedy very close to us. Dried fruits were left in the cellars to show that, in the words of Josephus, "...they will be a testimonial when we are dead that we were not subdued for want of necessities; but that, according to our original resolution, we have preferred death before slavery."

The defiance of the Zealots has always stirred the imagination of the Jewish people. To-day, Army recruits climb the "Snake Path" by torchlight to swear that "Masada shall not fall again." The excavators were allowed to witness one such occasion, and Miss Rees told us that it was a very inspiring and emotion-charged initiation.

One may ask how an account of an Eastern excavation is relevant to the Pendragon's interest in a Celtic leader of the Dark Age. No one who heard Miss Rees's exciting and beautifully illustrated lecture could fail to see the connection -- the burning patriotism that drives people to die rather than submit to a hated foreign foe. In the same way, Arthur, fighting a rear-guard action against the Saxons, inspired what is best and noblest in our heritage. It is this spirit that draws visitors to Cadbury in thousands. Those who are interested in knowing more about Masada are recommended to read "Masada" by Yigael Yadin, Director of Excavations, published by Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966, 62/.

The evening finished with coffee and discussion, followed by slides of the Cadbury excavations. Slides of the 1966 dig were kindly loaned by Mrs. Racy and those of 1967 by Miss Mary Whitmarsh-Everiss.

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We hope that all our members saw the Illustrated Supplement of The Observer on Nov. 26th last with its excellent photographs of Cadbury and its full report of the dig. If anyone was unlucky enough to miss this we would advise them that it is worth while writing to the Observer office to get one. 1/- for Supplement and postage.

There was also an extract from Daphne du Maurier's book on Cornwall in Woman's Own on Nov. 18th which was of interest to those interested in Arthur.

In our little local Raffle the first prize was won by A. Schlesinger, the second by C.F. Barrington, and the third by Michael Darling.