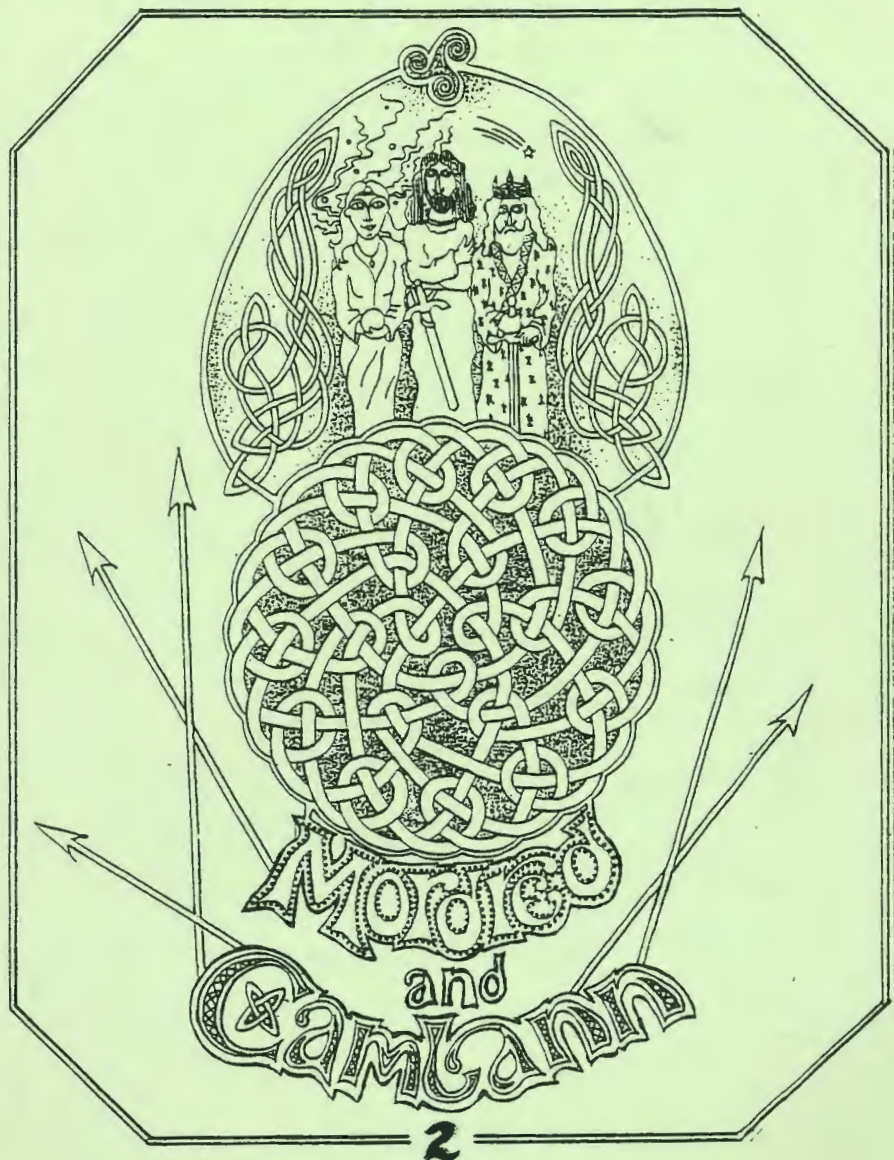


Pendragon



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Journal of the Pendragon Society

ISSN 0143-8379 Vol. XX/1 Winter 1989

*** Tel: 0684 292329 ***

Annual subscription £4.50 including this quarterly Journal*

X in the box means 'Subscriptions now due':

EDITOR & TREASURER: Eddie Tooke, Chinook, Paxhill Lane,
Twynning, Glos. GL20 6DU
SECRETARY: Anne Tooke, Chinook, Paxhill Lane,
Twynning, Glos. GL20 6DU
CHAIRMAN & PUBLICITY: Fred Stedman-Jones.

PRODUCTION TEAM: Simon Rouse, Anne Tooke,
Fred Stedman-Jones.
CHIEF ILLUSTRATORS: Simon Rouse, Fred Stedman-Jones.

PRINTING & STAPLING: Geoff Dando **

Pendragon investigates Arthurian history, archaeology
and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain.
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Main theme for this issue:- Mordred and Camlann

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EDITORIAL

What may seem erudite to some readers will appear banal to others - which complicates an editor's task. So the 90% of Pendragon members who know far more about Arthur than I do will have to be patient. What follows is mainly for the other 10% - some of them newcomers to the Society. (GREETINGS, NEW MEMBERS: WELCOME TO PENDRAGON!)

What do we really KNOW of Arthur? The romantic in most of us would like to believe implicitly in the Tennysonian saga, but as the great poet himself confessed in an immortal stanza scribbled on the fly-leaf of his paperback copy of 'Excalibur - The Book of the Film':

'Sadly my Idylls
Are fabulous fidylls;
False their beginnings, their ends and their midylls:
Founded in fantasy, mere taradidylls,
Shedding no light on Arthurian ridylls.'

It was Edmund Gosse, one of Tennyson's biographers, who observed: 'The localities of his subject-poems... were wholly imaginary.' This is certainly not true where PENDRAGON contributors are concerned. The locations they discuss are genuine; it is their identification in relation to Arthur which poses the problem.

Because little can be proved about Arthur, room is left for speculation, for an imaginative weaving of the known facts - such as they are - into a consistent and evocative pattern. The Pendragon himself remains an enigma.

But as Lewis Spence says in 'The Magic Arts in Celtic Britain': 'We find Arthur a spiritual influence, exalted and courageous... a literary and ethical tradition without parallel in the long chronicle of saga.' This is the secret of the fascination which all Arthurian addicts feel, a fascination sustained by the abiding mystery of the man and his times.

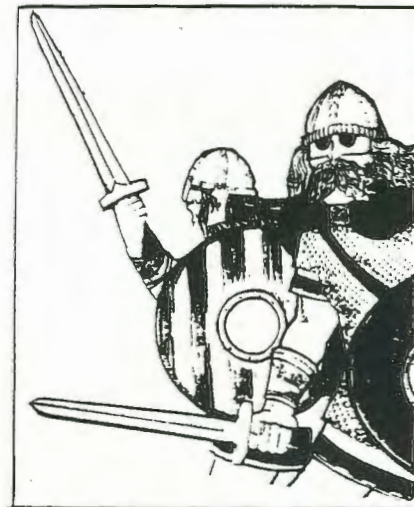
In this second Mordred/Camlann edition, we have another selection of articles by contributors whose scholarship cannot be challenged in the Arthurian field. Where, we ask, was Camlann (Camlam) fought? Their answers make thoughtful and entertaining reading. Nevertheless, they differ - so opaque is the period.

'A mystery to the world, the grave of Arthur', says The Song of the Graves. A mystery, too, are the dates and venues of Arthurian events. As Robert Louis Stevenson has it, however: 'To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive'; and this is true. It is the quest that makes Arthur so intriguing. The reward lies, perhaps, more in the effort than in any final discovery.

CAM-LANCASHIRE

Yes, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury. I know the Celtic 'du' means BLACK and 'lac' can mean a POOL, but take it from me, Lancelot du Lac's Joyous Gard wasn't Blackpool Tower. And I doubt if Camlann was fought there either, despite your theory that nearby Poulton-le-Fylde derives its name from 'Chicken-on-the-Field', whither faint-hearted knights fled from the carnage at Blackpool's Red Bank Road.

Think about it. How could you possibly have a 'dim, weird battle' among all those illuminations?



PENDRAGON SOCIETY: 1989 CONSTITUTION

A AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.

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

B MEMBERSHIP.

(1) Members shall be admitted at the discretion of the Hon. Secretary to whom application should be made.

(2) The Committee may expel any member from the Society, giving one month's notice of the same. The member so affected may appeal against such action to the Committee; or to the Society at the first General Meeting to take place after notice of his or her expulsion and at no subsequent time.

(3) All new members shall be issued with a copy of this Constitution.

(4) Members hereby undertake at all times to behave in an orderly manner, and on any excavation or historical site that may be visited shall act in such manner that no offence or damage may be caused.

(5) Members may bring guests on any such visit, having given due notice to the Hon. Secretary.

(6) Annual subscription to the Society shall be recommended by the Committee and ratified by the Society at a General Meeting.

(7) Membership subscriptions are due in June each year. New members joining from December may pay a half year's subscription.

(8) Members shall be entitled to all privileges and benefits of the Society and shall be bound by these rules.

C POWERS OF COMMITTEE.

(1) The management of the Society shall be vested in a Committee to be elected by and out of the members at an Annual General Meeting.

(2) The Committee shall consist of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Secretary, Treasurer; and any three ordinary members or more.

(3) The Committee shall only meet with a quorum of 4, consisting of no less than three officers.

(4) The Committee shall have the power to co-opt members as needed.

(5) The Committee shall call an AGM and any extraordinary meetings they think fit.

(6) Members will be notified of the AGM in the preceding issue of the Journal.

(7) Closure clause. The Committee shall have the right to call an Extraordinary General Meeting at which they will recommend closure of the Society. Members shall be given notice of the proposed closure and reasons for same at least one month before such a meeting. Those unable to attend may vote by post or by proxy. Such closure shall only be implemented if at least 75% of those voting agree to the closure.

(8) The Hon. Secretary shall keep a record of all formal meetings.

(9) The Committee shall make or modify or revoke such bye-laws as they from time to time think necessary for the efficient running of the Society, and such bye-laws shall be binding on all the members.

(10) The Committee shall be the sole authority for interpreting the rules and bye-laws of the Society and for settling disputes relating to the Society and the conduct of members in relation thereto.

D ADDENDUM.

(1) Grievances should in the first instance be notified to the Hon. Secretary, and if not settled should then be referred to a following General Meeting.

(2) These rules may be repealed or amended by the Society at an AGM or Extraordinary General Meeting.

30th September, 1989

Crimdon as Camlann

by Paul Screeton

Today Crimdon is best known for its annual August Bank Holiday beauty contest.

During the last war, munitions Minister and local Member of Parliament Emanuel Shinwell played truant from defence duties to judge the Miss Crimdon spectacle, leading to the newspaper headline 'Legs before Arms'.

After the war Crimdon, then in South-East Durham, was dubbed the 'Pitmen's Riviera'. Today, continental package holidays have made it a shadow of its former glory and Costa del Crimdon is distinctly tawdry.

It overlooks a scenic deep-sided valley; these gashes into the coastal limestone being known locally as 'denes'. The name Camlann is supposed to translate as 'the crooked glen' and this is exactly what Crimdon Dene is. In fact an old map of the district, dated 1801, has the name Kamlan where Crimdon now stands.

The story of King Arthur and his Knights has for centuries been associated with Castle Eden and Blackhall. It was to record this lore that Blackhall Rocks historian Reg Wright set to recording and having it set in print.

Much of what Wright records is anecdotal, and his style is repetitive and woolly, but it is good that someone has taken the trouble to record the lore before it is lost forever.

The Kamlan map name is certainly revealing. But can we substantiate it further to the site of Arthur's last battle? According to the Matter of Britain, Arthur's crown had been seized by his son Mordred, progeny of unwitting incest between Arthur and his half-sister Morgause. Arthur returning from France, the two armies met in the mighty battle of Camlann, where Mordred was killed but Arthur had been struck a fatal blow.

Wright claims to substantiate Crimdon as the scene of this carnage, for above the grand sweeps of the dene gorge lie massive burial sites surrounding Benridge farm. Skeletons of men and boys, huddled together as if originally having been pitched into a hasty grave were found, and Wright believes the site should be professionally examined (1).

Among collected reminiscences published by Wright is this one from 'an old farmer' regarding the bodies: '... in my young days when I first started farming hereabouts, many's the day I have ploughed up skeleton after skeleton, sometimes single and others in batches as if they'd been thrown in. I once found what looked like an old sword but I lost it again. The reason I never told anybody was because of the 'red tape'. The councils at the time would have held up my work. I couldn't afford that; I had to make some money. I was newly married. Of course I found bits and pieces of this that and the other. These I used to leave lying about the barn or stable window sills. Don't know whatever happened to them though.' (2).

As he lay dying, Arthur instructed Sir Bedivere to return his sword Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake. Could he have tossed it into the Black Pool at nearby Hart? Then Arthur was ferried on a

barge to Avalon as his final resting place.

Wright reckons that there are records maintaining the old town of Hartlepool to be Avalon and he associates the borough's stag emblem with Merlin. Another Arthurian battle was Cat Coit Celidon, and a Romano-British settlement was evacuated in the town's Catcote area.

Catcote has a Dead Man's Hollow and Blackhall Rocks a Dead Man's Bank: local lore also states that Arthur played games with the Devil on the sea banks at Blackhall Rocks, which has left named places there called Devil's Ditch, Devil's Dyke, Devil's Leap and Devil's Path.

One of the caves on the beach at Blackhall Rocks is called Arthur's Cave; according to folklore it led to an inland safety escape grotto used by Arthur and his entourage.

Two miles west of Castle Eden there is a large cavern called the Knight's Hall, rumoured to have been one of Arthur's meeting places, and which is the site of an Iron Age settlement.

In Castle Eden village, at the T-junction leading to the present day castle (a manorial hall), it is said that during the hours of daylight the spirits of Arthur's knights disguised as a clutch of chickens often frequent this spot.

Down the A19 near here, at Hutton Henry crossroads, is Arthur's Tor, a small rocky hill where in 1832 a cairn on its summit was excavated and the skeleton of a man with a breastplate was found. It is said to contain buried treasure, guarded by giants of soldiers from the Dark Ages. Also the valley which once swept down from here to Sheraton was known in the old days as the Valley of the Graves.

In answer to a request for information, Wright was informed by Hartlepool poet Elizabeth Davison that 'King Arthur once shaved his head before walking through Castle Eden Dene.' Also it is said that at Garmonsway, King Canute camped and shaved his head to walk barefoot to St Cuthbert's shrine at Durham Cathedral.

Coming to the present, Arthur's hillfort above Castle Eden Dene, once called Yohden, traditionally can be seen rising in the mist above the postwar new town of Peterlee every Midsummer's Eve. Evocative? If you ever saw Peterlee you would know why the past would want to escape the present.

References:

- (1) Wright, Reginald, 'A History of Castle Eden Lore in Search of King Arthur', 1985, published privately.
- (2) Wright, Reginald, 'Black Hall Rocks and Blackhall', 1985, published privately.

Reginald Wright can be contacted at Pilmore House, Coast Road, Blackhall Rocks, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS27 4AY.

Letters



A very small typing error completely altered the sense of a few lines in my **STONEHENGE REVISITED** in the Autumn issue of **PENDRAGON**. I wrote the piece hurriedly in a friend's house in Wiltshire immediately after my visit. Having made mention of Atkinson's Guide Book, I wrote: 'I could tell them a different story ... The only thing is it might not be true.' What I had intended to write was 'It would tell them a different story, etc.' - referring to the Guide Book. Unfortunately you received my non-revised version. (R.M. Twist, Truro.)

There was so much good stuff in **PENDRAGON**: the splendid poem by Fred Stedman-Jones (I could almost hear the chords from a harp thrumming behind it); and the article on place-names. I have an idea about the number of Celtic/Ancient British names that have survived, modified to suit the Anglo-Saxon tongue. I suspect that there was quite a lot of 'live-and-let-live' going on between small groups of Saxon settlers and neighbouring Celts; trading as well. Inevitably, too, boy-met-girl, and very soon there were respected grandparents in both villages.

Something like this might be the reason, for example, for the name of Kit's Coty in Kent. This has descended from the British 'ked coed', 'tomb in (or by) a wood'. This structure puzzles me because although it is said to have been a long barrow, it looks more like the normal cromlech: a huge capstone perched on three upright stones. I have heard that there is a solitary cromlech on Salisbury Plain, not far from Stonehenge, but have not seen this.

Regarding the name of Glastonbury, I was surprised to find that in Kent there is a place named Glassenbury. Its old English name was 'Glaestinga burh', meaning the stronghold of the Glaestingas, 'resplendent ones', and at the end of the 15th century the place-name had become 'Glastyngbury'.

I can only guess at the reason why the 'resplendent ones' were called this by their neighbours - perhaps they had really splendid finery to wear at feasts and festivals?

The coincidence of names is strong and I would very much like to track this tribe across country to or from Somerset. The line of the old Pilgrims' Way is a possibility. Believed to start at Winchester, I think this ancient trackway might be followed much further west than that city, on the ground, if not on O.S. maps which cannot give every local detail. (Mary Bonney, Windsor.)

In her book 'The Wicked Day' (see review on page 15), Mary Stewart sets the battle of Camlann beside the River Camel near South Cadbury in Somerset - for the obvious reason that South Cadbury now seems to have the strongest claim (so far) to having been the site of Camelot. Like contributors to **PENDRAGON** she lists other possible 'claimants' to the site - but neither she nor they consider the likelihood of another, Cornish site as mentioned in a booklet called 'The Realm of King Arthur' by Graham Ashton B.A. (Pub. 1974 by J. Arthur Dixon Ltd., Isle of Wight). Mr. Ashton quotes from Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur':

... bore him to a chapel
nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a
broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait
of barren land,
On one side lay the Ocean,
and on one
Lay a great water, and the
moon was full.

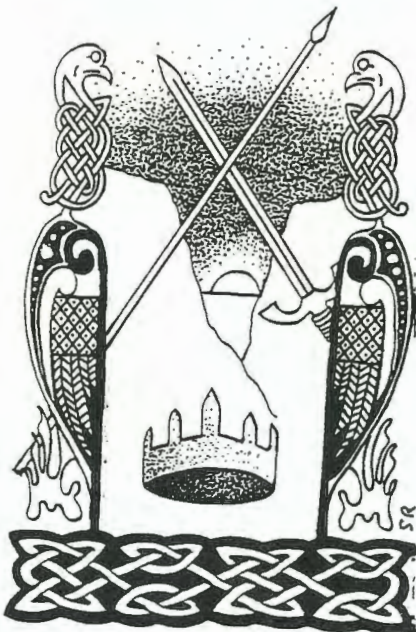
He then points out that Loe Pool, Cornwall's biggest lake lying one mile south of Helston, fits this description very well.

'Complete with its bar of gravel and flint' (between it and the sea), 'Loe Pool is unique in Cornwall, a miniature Chesil Beach.'

The main quibble here is that Tennyson states:

'So all day long the noise
of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the
winter sea.'

There are no mountains in Cornwall, certainly none near Loe Pool - unless one takes into



account the deeply impressive St. Michael's Mount, a few miles west of the Pool. And Mr. Ashton suggests that the Mount might even have been the Avalon to which Arthur was taken. Certainly the Mount has its own legends and mysteries - including the discovery during the last century of a male skeleton over 7 feet tall (some guide-books say 9 feet!) under the chancel of the Priory Church. As far as I know he has never been identified).

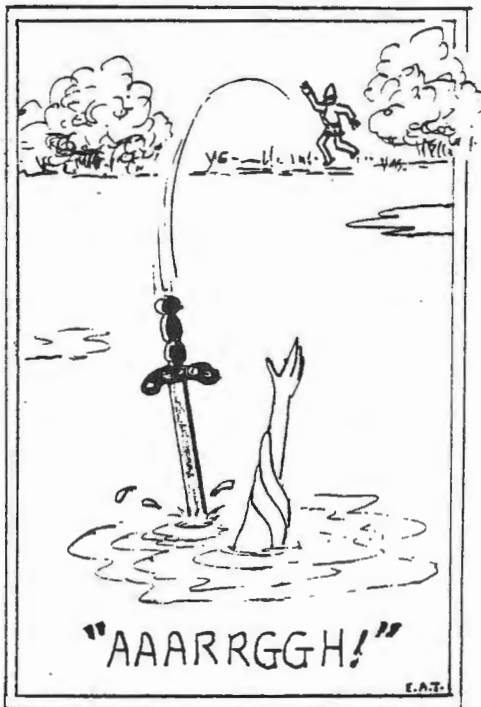
Loe Pool, too, seems a mysterious, almost ominous stretch of water, even on a bright summer day. One of its legends is that it claims at least one life per year: we heard of at least four during the six years we lived in Helston.

Finally, reverting to Tennyson once again:

'Until King Arthur's table,
man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonesse about
their Lord,
King Arthur ...'

The most popular site for 'Lyonesse' is the 26 miles of sea between Land's End and the Scilly Isles.

Food for thought?
(Beryl Mercer, Truro.)



[Ed. note: The 230-foot-high St. Michael's Mount is hardly in the British '2000 feet + mountain category, even adding the 200-300 feet lost due to the submergence of Lyonesse. (The humbler Cornish name for the Mount was Carrek Los y'n Cos - 'Grey ROCK in the Wood'.) In any case, Tennyson uses the plural 'mountains'. An imaginary locale perhaps. (see Editorial) or at least poetic licence. 'Hills' doesn't scan and is less evocative. Aside from this quibble, Loe Pool fits the idylls very well. The other Cornish candidate for Nimue's habitat is legend-laden Dozmare (Dozmery) Pool on Bodmin Moor, whose atmosphere is such that - in Daphne du Maurier's words - 'We forget that it is only five feet deep and look for the rising hand to break the surface.']

I must apologise for giving a wrong date in my Camlam article. At the foot of the first column on page 19 the date of 'Gueith Camlann' should be A.D. 539, not 937.

(Ivor Snook, Exmouth)
[I ought to have noticed the anachronism myself and queried it. Sorry folks - and Ivor! - Ed.]

I did enjoy the AGM, meeting so many names in print, and not least your indefatigable wife's splendid cooking. I'm only sorry that Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury wasn't there. I'm really sorry for that girl - all that flak she takes and still comes up with marvellous right-brain ideas. Long may she flourish!
(Mary Caine, Kingston)



Our next theme is: - which should give contributors lots of scope. We can't print what we don't have - so turn out those masterpieces! Deadline: Feb. 28th.



We can supply binders at £3.50 each to hold thirteen PENDRAGON journals. They are bound in strong waterproof material and hold the magazines by spring-loaded cords. It will only be economical for us to order these a dozen or so at a time. Please write if you are interested: send no money at this stage. Postage would be extra of course. Enquiries to F. Stedman-Jones, Smithy House, Newton-by-Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX.

MORDRED and The BATTLE of camlan :



by DAVID PYKITT

In order to identify the site of the fatal conflict between Arthur and Mordred at the Battle of Camlan, it is important first to establish Arthur's adversary in his correct dynastic setting.

The Cornish Mordred (or Modred) is Medraut (or Medrod) in Welsh and there were two British princes of this name who lived in the sixth century. They were Medraut ap (son of) Llew ap Cynfarch and Medraut ap Cawrdaf ap Caradog Freichfras (of the Strong Arm). At first I was seduced into believing that Arthur's adversary was Medraut, the son of Llew ap Cynfarch, but upon further investigation I discovered that he was the nephew of Urien of Rheged, who died in 580, and he lived too late to have fought Arthur at the battle of Camlan which, according to the Welsh Annals, was fought in 537. The more likely candidate for Arthur's adversary is therefore his contemporary Medraut, the son of Cawrdaf ap Caradog Freichfras. Medraut's father, Cawrdaf, is recorded in the Welsh Triads as one of the chief officers of the Island of Britain. He was in fact the prime minister and chief adviser to King Arthur. It is also recorded in the Welsh Triads that Cawrdaf's father, Caradog, was Arthur's Chief Elder at his court at Gelliwig in Cernyw, Gwent, and during Arthur's absence he ruled the two Gwents, above and below Wentwood, from Caerwent.

According to the 'Lives of the British Saints', Cawrdaf, Medraut's father, was not only an influential politician but also a leading light in the Welsh Church. He had a religious house for three hundred saints at Cor Cawrdaf, above Miskin, a mile and a half south of Llantrisant in Mid-Glamorgan, and he is also patron of Abererch in the Lleyn Peninsula. About a quarter of a mile from his Church in Abererch is Cadair Cawrdaf, his seat. Also recorded are foundations in the Lleyn Peninsula by Cawrdaf's brothers, Cadfarch and Tangwn. It therefore becomes apparent from the evidence of the Welsh Triads and the Lives of the British Saints that Medraut was a member of a very powerful family who held sway in Gwent and the Lleyn Peninsula. This may be the principal reason why Arthur appointed him as his regent.

It would appear from the evidence of early Welsh tradition, contained in 'The Mabinogion' and the Welsh Triads, that Arthur's expansionist policies left a power vacuum which resulted in a dynastic revolution. The preliminary weaving of a plot is referred to in the story of 'Kilhwch and Olwen', contained in 'The Mabinogion', and the same story names Gwenhwyfach as the sister of Gwenhwyfar, Arthur's queen. This is of considerable interest for, according to the early Welsh genealogies, Gwenhwyfach was the wife of Medraut ap Cawrdaf, Arthur's adversary, and, according to the Welsh Triads, it was she who contributed to the causes of the Battle of Camlan by the blow she inflicted upon her sister, Gwenhwyfar.

The story of 'The Dream of Rhonabwy', also contained in 'The

Mabinogion', informs us that Iddawc Cordd Prydein (the Hammer or Agitator of Britain) betrayed Arthur by divulging his plans to Medraut. The meeting between Iddawc and Medraut took place at Nant Gwynant in Gwynedd before the Battle of Camlan, and it is spoken of in the Triads as one of the Three Traitorous Meetings of the Island of Britain. This is also of vital importance for, according to the Bonedd y Saint Pedigree no. 88, Iddawg Cordd Prydein was the son of Cawrdaf ap Caradog Freichfras, making him Medraut's brother.

According to the Welsh Triads, the first of the Three Unrestrained Ravagings of the Island of Britain was when Medraut came to Arthur's court at Gelliwig in Cernyw. Gwent, dragged Gwenhwyfar from her throne and struck her. The second occurred when Arthur made a retaliatory assault on Medraut's court. This was the prelude to the Battle of Camlan. The events preceding the battle are described in Triad 51, taken from the Red Book of Hergest, which names Medraut as the third and worst of the Three Dishonoured Men of the Island of Britain. Arthur left with Medraut the government of the island at a time when he himself went across the sea to oppose the Irish warlord Llwch Wyddel (Lucius Hibernus), also known as Llwch Llwinawg, Lord of the Lakes. Llwch had dispatched messengers to Arthur at Caerleon upon Usk to demand payment of tribute to him and the men of Ireland. Arthur's reply to Llwch's messengers was that the men of Ireland had no greater claim to tribute from Britain than the men of this island had from them. Then Arthur mustered the most select warriors of his kingdom and led them across the sea against Llwch and his army. The two armies met beyond the mountain of Mynneu, and an untold number was slain on each side that day. In the end Arthur encountered Llwch and slew him. Many of Arthur's best men were also slain there. When Medraut heard that Arthur's host was dispersed, he turned against him, and the Saxons, Picts and Scots united with him to hold this island against Arthur. When Arthur heard this, he turned back with all that had survived of his army, and succeeded in landing a force in opposition to Medraut. Then there took place the Battle of Camlan between the forces of Arthur and Medraut. Arthur slew Medraut in mortal combat but he himself was wounded.

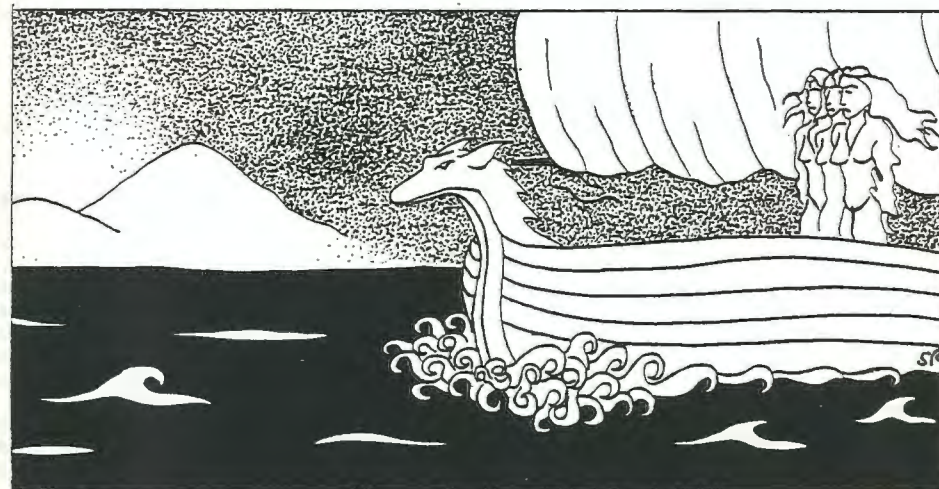
The site of the Battle of Camlan is not certain, but the author of 'Englynion y Beddau' (Stanzas of the Graves), when recording the grave of the son of Osfran after a mighty conflict, may have in mind the River Camlan in Eifionydd, a commote of the cantref of Dunoding, lying between Afon Erch and Afon Glaslyn, in the Lleyn Peninsula. The siting of the battle in the Lleyn Peninsula may well be correct when one considers that Arthur was returning from Ireland and also that the most likely location for Medraut's court was near to the seat of authority of his father, Cawrdaf, at Abererch.

Contrary to popular belief, Arthur survived the battle and lived to fight another day, but where was he taken to be cured of his wounds? James Bonwick, in 'Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions' (1894), makes a remarkable statement: 'The Welsh Avalon, or the Island of Apples, the everlasting source of the Elixir of Life, the home of Arthur and other mythological heroes, lay beyond Cardigan Bay, the Annwn of the old sun, in the direction of

Ireland'. This statement is substantiated by the Archdruid Owen 'Morien' Morgan, in 'The Royal Winged Son of Stonehenge and Avebury', when he describes the drama dealing with the descent of the sun into Annwn, the Celtic Elysium, as being annually performed between Borth on Cardigan Bay and Arklow in Ireland. When one looks at a map of the British Isles, it becomes apparent that there is only one possible location for the Celtic Elysium and that is Bardsey Island off the Lleyn Peninsula.

In Taliesin's 'Preiddiau Annwn' (The Spoils of Annwn), Annwn is depicted as a four cornered glass fortress standing on an island. Lewis Morris, in his 'Celtic Remains' (1878), localizes the Ty Gwydr (House of Glass) of Myrddin Wyllt (Merlin the Wild) on Ynys Enlli (Bardsey Island), and, according to the 16th-century Peniarth Manuscript No. 147, he went there, accompanied by his nine bards and taking with him the Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain. The Oxford Manuscript of 'La Folie Tristan' informs us that Morgan, the Queen of Avalon, lived in a chamber of glass on which all the rays of the sun converged. Annwn is frequently referred to as Caer Wydr (Glass Castle) and is clearly a solarium for the treatment of illness by therapeutic light. Arthur was taken here by Myrddin and Taliesin to be cured of his wounds by Morgan and her nine Druidesses.

Postscript: It is interesting to note that Bardsey Island is linked by the main seaways with Brittany and during Arthur's time had strong associations with the family of Emyr Llydaw (Emperor of Armorica). When Arthur had recovered from his wounds he set sail for Brittany. However, according to 'Le Paimpont Syndicat d'Initiative' (c.1978), he did make a final bid for power on mainland Britain, but after the Britons experienced a crushing defeat at the Battle of Salisbury in 552, he was forced to return to Brittany, where he is celebrated as St. Armel (Arthmael). He was regarded by the Bretons as their national messiah, after liberating them from the tyranny of the usurper Marcus Conomor in 555.



BookReviews

'THE BIRTH OF MERLIN' or The Childe Hath Found His Father: A Comedy attributed to William Shakespeare and William Rowley.
(Element Books 1989 £7.95)

In her article of Spring 1984 (XVII-2) Patricia Villiers-Stuart presents herself as an industrious mole whose burrowings in the recesses of the Bodleian and British Libraries unearthed the mouldering remains of this play in its 1662 edition. She opens it on our behalf and finds it: 'Shot through with the summer lightning of inspiration.' She argues that, 'in spite of its shortcomings, this play brings us the last rays of our English master's setting sun.' She adds: 'in some ways The Birth of Merlin seems like a pantomime image of many old favourites turning up to take a last bow: Hamlet, Polonius, Henry VI, Harry Hotspur, Audrey, spirits and sprites galore.' For her, Shakespeare's hand is apparent everywhere: 'It has to be read to be believed, or better still, seen on future TV.'

A printed edition of the play has suddenly appeared, with a colourful illustrated cover. It shows the infant prodigy, Merlin, in napkin and beard, standing between his proud mother (Joan Go-To-It) and his bewildered uncle (Clown) reading to them from a heavy tome. Shadowy figures lurk in a blue Celtic twilight, watching and listening: Prince Uther and the Devil himself. This is a true image of the play.

Joan and her brother wander through the action on a quest for a father for Joan's child. This brings them into contact with Aurelias, King of Britain, and his court, and with his brother Uther. Negotiations are beginning with Ostorius the Saxon king and his sister, the seductive Artesia. Anselme, a Christian hermit, is opposed by Proximus the Saxon magician, but piety defeats the infernal spells of the heathen. The Other-world appears in the mists of the Celtic forests: Lucina, Queen of Shades, with her spirits; and there Joan meets her lover, Merlin's father - the Devil himself. Her intuitions prove well-founded: 'I suppose no mortal creature worthy to enjoy me.'

Merlin is born wise and mature and his prophecies announce the battles between the red and white dragons and the coming age of Arthur. The Matter of Britain is portrayed both seriously and as comedy, and it is all true to the pseudo-history of Geoffrey of Monmouth. It is also the c.5th AD as seen through Jacobean eyes: it is a characteristic dramatic structure of its time, when there was a vogue for such plays. Patricia Villiers-Stuart's use of 'pantomime' is apt. In June this year the play was presented by Theatr Clwyd at Mold in their summer festival on Arthurian themes; Denise Coffey directed. The publicity material described the play as 'a spectacular extravaganza of pre-Arthurian legend, magic and music, re-discovered after 300 years ... with all the best elements of our pantomime tradition - wicked princesses, noble princes, fabulous animals, battles, magic, terror, suspense, warm

bawdy comedy and live music.'

The printed edition follows on from this production. It includes the 1620 text, a foreword by Professor Harold F. Brooks, chapters by Denise Coffey and Bob Stewart, and an interview with the comedian Roy Hudd who played the clown - William Rowley's own part. It is not true that the text has been long out of print. C.F. Tucker Brooke's 1908 volume of Shakespeare's Apocryphal plays includes the 1662 text. A facsimile was published by the Tudor text Society in 1910. Any mole with access to a university library might have found the play, and this is what Bob Stewart seems to have done in 1986 when he sent it to Denise Coffey.

I saw the play at Mold and found it to be enormously entertaining. There is a review of the production in 'Plays and Players', August 1989, by Ian Williams. He asks: 'Is it the rebirth of a lost play by Shakespeare?' and concludes, 'almost certainly not.' Professor Brooks's foreword suggests it is most probably the result of 'a bookseller on the make.' My own opinion was that the language, heard aloud, never aspired to the levels of Shakespeare's poetry - in its euphony or its metaphorical and thematic density, as found even in the earliest of his plays. Most significantly, Shakespeare was almost certainly dead when it was written.

The review continues: 'all that glitters is not Shakespeare: naturalism and magic, heroism and farce, history and domesticity intertwine to produce a composite dramatic structure with a strength of its own ... its weaknesses would be more apparent in a less skillful production.' The play is eminently a blueprint for the stage - it is meant to be acted at full throttle; as its director says, 'there are glints of gold glittering through the tinsel to indicate the influence of someone who knew how to spin words.'

There were many splendid things to be enjoyed: the specially composed 'Celtic' music of Bob Stewart and Stuart Gordon was atmospheric and haunting. At heightened moments an actor would break into Orphic song, an authentic ancient mode of speech. The design was bold yet subtle, numinous and emblematic: the inhuman Sutton Hoo mask motif conveyed the threat of the Saxon invasions, and the great crude Dragon-standards the conflict of primitive battle hosts. Above all, Roy Hudd's playing of the clown held the dramatic themes together. Never self-indulgent, it illustrated how the eternal fool may act as commentator to the strummings and frettings of the low and the mighty. The front page of the play records, 'as it has been acted several times with great applause': the play was greatly applauded at Mold.

Possibly:

'All future times shall still record this story
Of Merlin's learned worth and Arthur's glory.'

FRED STEDMAN-JONES

[Ed. Sorry, Deirdre of Chipping 'Sodbury, but I can't use your amusing drawing of Hitler laughing his head off. Fred's review is of the Birth of Merlin - not the Mirth of Berlin.

— Yes, and sauerkraut to you too.]

A book review for members interested in Sleeping Kings ...

'THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A DRUID PRINCE' by Anne Ross and Don Robins (Rider 1989. £14.95 [UK]). pp176 incl. Authors' note. prologue, two appendices. bibliography & index.

... this book was planned as a new look at the Druids, occasioned by our deduction that Lindow Man belonged to that order. Its other, secondary, purpose was to explore the ritual significance of his death against the background of the famous bog-burials' explain the co-authors at the book's opening.

Lindow Man, or Pete Marsh, as the media dubbed him, was, you may recall, the well-preserved human torso found on Ludlow Moss, near Manchester, in 1984. His preservation in the peat was what related him to his famous Danish counterparts. As research got under way, Lindow Man's last meal was the first discovery that led his researchers to believe that the comparison was not a superficial one. Anne Ross was drawn in at this point whilst Don Robins was engaged in analysing L.M.'s highly significant last meal. They became colleagues and ultimately co-authors of this book.

Dr. Ross needs no introduction to Celtic scholars. Dr. Robin's name is familiar to me, though I'm not sure why - readers may be better read than I am. Robins is described as a consultant scientist with a particular interest in archaeological investigations.*

The text which outlines their quest into Lindow Man's identity constitutes a book for the popular rather than the scholarly market. In the opinion of this reviewer, its arguments are circular - i.e. the conjecture of one chapter becomes the fact that the next chapter is based upon, which in turn leads to the next proposition. Having said that, who better to conjecture than Dr. Ross after a lifetime's research into this particular culture?

Much can be learned from the book about the beliefs and rituals of the Celts and their Druids. (The book's appendices enlarge on this theme.) Much also comes to light of the Roman occupation of Britain, its aims and strategies and the possible British response. I won't divulge any more. After all, this is a who-dunnit. But if Doctors Ross and Robins are even a shade right about who DID do it, to whom, and for what reason - then these events shed much light on folk-beliefs in sleeping kings and maybe even hollow hills - which is my reason for bringing this book to our readers' notice!

KATE POLLARD

*[Ed. note: Don Robins is the inorganic chemist who was associated with the Dragon Project at Rollright, investigating the subtle electro-magnetic changes in the stones which were apparently induced by cosmic energies. He is concerned with the postulated ability of objects to store information about local events. Dr. Robins was also involved in the discovery of mysterious Celtic(?) stone heads found in a back garden in Wrexham.]



'THE WICKED DAY' by Mary Stewart (Hodder & Stoughton, 1983. Also available in paperback.)

I was mildly surprised to discover that this book wasn't even mentioned, let alone reviewed, in PENDRAGON of Autumn 1989. ('Mordred and Camlann (1)' - It Says Here ...). I hasten to remedy the omission. [Ed. We hoped you would, Beryl! Why do you think we left it?]

The book is a 'postscript' to Mrs. Stewart's well-known 'Merlin' trilogy (The Crystal Cave, The Hollow Hills, The Last Enchantment). Unlike the previous books, it is written in the third person, and Merlin himself does not actually appear in it at all.

In my opinion, Mrs. Stewart presents an entirely acceptable picture of Mordred, neither white-washing nor denigrating him. As she states in her 'Author's Note' at the end of the book:

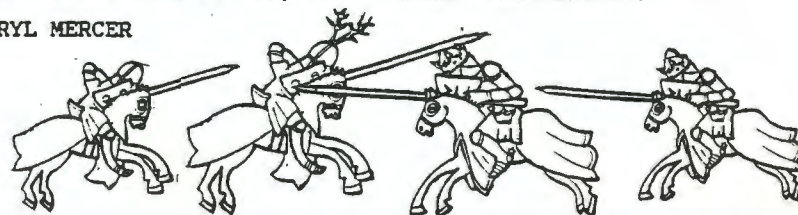
'The wicked day of destiny', as Malory calls it, is the day when Arthur's final battle was fought at Camlann. In this battle, we are told, 'Arthur and Medraut fell.' This reference, from the ANNALES CAMBRIAE, which were compiled three or four centuries after Camlann, is all we know of Mordred. When he reappears some centuries later, in the romances of Malory and the French poets, he has taken on the role of villain necessary to the conventions of romance ... In the fragments of those stories that have been used in this book, the absurdities speak for themselves ... If Arthur had had any reason to distrust Mordred ... he would hardly have left him as 'ruler of all England' and guardian of the Queen, while he himself went on an expedition from which it was possible he might never return. Even granted that he did appoint Mordred his regent, it is hard to see why Mordred, with every hope of becoming his father's heir, should have forged a letter purporting to tell of Arthur's death, and on the strength of that seized both kingdom and Queen. Knowing that Arthur was still alive, and with a vast army at his back, Mordred could be sure that the King would come straight home to punish his son and repossess kingdom and Queen. More, the final battle between King and 'traitor' was brought about by accident, in the very moment when the King was about to seal a truce with Mordred, and grant him lands to rule. (It is another absurdity that the lands are Cornwall and Kent, at opposite ends of the country, the one already held by the Saxons, the other by Arthur's declared heir, Constantine).

'For none of the 'Mordred story', then, is there any evidence at all. It is to be noticed that the ANNALES CAMBRIAE do not even state that he and Arthur fought on opposite sides ...

'Until I came to study in detail the fragments that make up Mordred's story, I had accepted him without question as the villain of the piece ... I tried to iron out the absurdities in the old story, and add some saving greys to the portrait of a black villain. I have not made a 'hero' out of Mordred, but in my tale he is at least a man who is consistent in his faults and virtues, and has some kind of reason for the actions with which legend has credited him.'

And she has done it very well indeed. Recommended.

BERYL MERCER



MEDRAWD'S TESTIMONY

Prosecutor: Lord Medrawd, before your birth a star with two rays appeared in the sky; what was its portent?

Medrawd: Myrddin the Seer told how a princess would give birth to two mighty conquerors.

P: Who were they?

M: My brother Gwalchmai and myself.

P: Who were your parents, Lord Medrawd?

M: Gorlois, Lord of Cornwall, and his wife Igraine had three daughters. My mother Gwyar was the second, sister to Morgan and Elaine.

P: Your mother was half sister to Arthur; then King Arthur was your uncle?

M: Yes, through my mother's blood. King Uther seduced Igraine and Arthur was born.

P: Who was your father?

M: My father was Llew, also known as Loth, Duke of Lothian.

P: When were you born?

M: In the month of the hawk god, Beltaine, the time of brightness.

P: And where were you raised?

M: At Tapran Law on the Lammermuir Hills.

P: You have been described of all men the boldest and ever the swiftest.

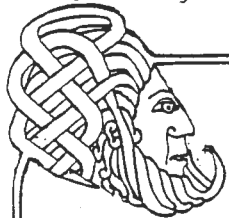
M: At five I could cast a spear and ride a horse.

P: You were a Hawk of Summer, indeed. Myrddin the Seer prophesied that you would kill the king.

M: I lived all my life under this gessa. I did all I could to avoid it.

P: Arthur was Pendragon, did you attend him at Caerleon-on-Usk?

M: I did, and took my place on the bank of the Round Table in the city of the legions.



'We think of Arthur as a model of chivalry through the influence of later English and French writers, but this was never the view of the Welsh themselves.'

(Richard Barber)

I have taken off from this point of view, trying to reconcile the glimpses of the 6th war lords found in the obscure Welsh traditions in the Triads, the Mabinogion, Lives of the Saints, Gildas, etc. My Arthur lives in a legendary Celtic world of heroic exploits, treachery and free morality, where planes of magic and faery co-exist with everyday reality. To be fair, Mordred is remembered as a 'Kingly Warrior, mild and pure' in the triads. Something extraordinary must have turned him into the unmitigated villain of later Arthurian writers. I hope you will go along with my theory - he deserves a hearing after such a bad press, surely?

Fred Stedman-Jones.

Biblio: 'The High Kings,' Joy Gant (1983)

'The Island of the Mighty,' John Arden & Margaretta

'D'Arcy (1974)

'Trioedd Ynys Prydein,' Rachel Brownish (1961)

P: Where was your place in the meetings of the war-lords?

M: I sat at Arthur's right hand. I was his sister's son, his nearest kinsman.

P: The trioedd tell of three kingly warriors who were so mild and pure it was difficult for anyone to refuse their wishes. You were one?

M: So it is written in the annals of our people.

P: The king trusted you and raised you above all others?

M: My task was to guard the Blessed Isles when the king was absent from the land.

P: When was that?

M: When he led the expedition into Ireland to hunt the fearsome boar Trwch Trwyth.

P: You ruled over Prydein and protected the queen?

M: I did, for he would give the care of the land to no other.

P: What thought you of Queen Gwenwyvar?

M: There are no words to tell of her beauty and her gentleness.

P: You loved her?

M: From the first, but I kept my love secret from her and from all others.

P: Your wife Gwenyvach was her younger sister? Who was their father?

M: They were the daughters of Ogran Gawr the giant.

P: And had the attributes of such parenthood, no doubt: beauty, courage and great resourcefulness.

After the king's return the queen was abducted by Melwas, Prince of the Summer Country?

M: And Lord of Annwn, he who leads the Wild Hunt along the Dragon Lines.

P: Where was she taken?

M: To the Tor of Ynys Witrin, the Isle of Glass, where she was led by the Sacred Spiral into the Hollow Hill.

P: Why was this?

M: So that she might be instructed by Morgan and her nine priestesses of the Cauldron of Inspiration.

P: What did she learn from them?

M: That she was a daughter of Branwen; that there is always one woman who is heiress to the Throne and Crown of Branwen.

P: Explain this mystery. Was not Arthur the true king?

M: He had betrayed her Sovereignty; the health of the land was in jeopardy; she must become the Bright Mother.

P: How had Arthur betrayed the land?

M: When he dug up the Illustrious Head of Bran the Blessed from the White Mound in Llundain. Bran was our protector from foreign invaders.

P: Why did Arthur do this?

M: He shunned a sharer in his glory. He boasted his valour alone should guard the land.

P: Was not that his duty?

M: The Dragon Banner must be carried by one chosen by the Daughter of Branwen. She awaits the rightful king, who will guard the land in the name of Bran. Then will she bear the successor.

P: Had the queen children then?

M: No. Myrddin warned Arthur not to marry the giant's daughter, and told him he would never be loved by any woman.

P: Did Arthur keep tryst with other women?

M: He had many concubines: Garwen, Gwyll and Indeg among them.

P: Did he have children by them?

M: Yes: Anir, Llacheu, Cydfan, Archfedd. Celtic lords and ladies might take lovers, but it was the king's duty to sire his successor.

P: Was there not a tale told of Anir?
M: It was the greatest sin of the king's life. He slew his son by his own hand.
P: This is a dark tale. Do you not lie about Arthur?
M: The Saints told of his spite and petty tyranny. Gildas says he could brook no opposition.
P: But surely these are lies?
M: Saxon and Gallic writers have told lying fables of Arthur, the Cymry remember the truth.
P: Perhaps so. What did he do to find his queen?
M: The king came to the Isle of Glass to besiege it with his host.
P: Was there battle given?
M: No. She was escorted to him safely by the Abbot of Avalon.
P: It is told that when they met your wife Gwenyvach struck her sister a blow on the lips and this was reckoned one of the Fatal Slaps of the Island of the Blessed.
M: By her woman's instinct she knew the queen had chosen me as her champion; she saw it in her sister's eyes.
P: You and Gwenwyvar became secret lovers from that time?
M: She told me of her mission: from her flowed all good for the land: in her lay the true Sovereignty.
P: Her name means 'White Shadow': she was a shape-shifter who lured you into the marshes of self-deceit?
M: I hold your question in contempt.
P: Let us move on then. You and the queen sought how best you might ensure a true succession?
M: Yes.
P: Why did the queen choose you. Lord Medrawd? Were you not a man of flawless honour, a great champion and King Arthur's friend?
M: Among our people kings are chosen from the Royal Family by descent from the womb. Arthur had no legitimate son to succeed him; I was his sister's son, his true heir.
P: I think you sought the Dragon Banner for your own ends. Lord Medrawd. I repeat: what right did you have to seek to usurp the throne?
M: I tell you, for the last time: I was chosen as Fortune's instrument to replace the impotent king whose queen was charged to restore the Lordship of Bran the Blessed. No more of this!
P: As you wish. Eventually, word came that the rule of Rome had fallen to an unworthy man: to one Lucius?
M: Yes.
P: What happened then?
M: The king resolved to deliver Rome and rule there for himself. He raised the hosts in preparation.
P: And what of you? Did you join Arthur in this venture?
M: I was appointed Regent, as before. He declared me ruler of the Islands and put the queen under my protection.
P: How fortunate for you both! In other words, he set the fox to watch the geese?
M: ———
P: Arthur was away for a long time. He fought many successful battles in Gaul and further afield?
M: Yes.
P: Was your rule peaceful, Lord Medrawd, or was there strife and discord?
M: The trioedd tell of that time, as well you know.
P: Perhaps you would remind us - unless, of course, your modesty prevents you. I have a copy here; would you read it to the court?
M: With Arthur was war and strife; all was peace with Medrawd; with Medrawd was great joy.
P: It seems you won the hearts of the people. I wonder how?
M: ———
P: Have you played the gaming board gwydd bwl, Lord Medrawd?
M: Yes, why do you ask?
P: Of all the pieces on the board, the queen is the only one who can move in any direction. Were you the pawn of the queen's will.
M: I wonder?
M: ———

P: Did you have any children by the queen?
M: Yes.
P: So the succession was assured! Then word came to Arthur: 'You are a cuckold!' Could it have been your forsaken wife Gwenyvach who sent messengers secretly, do you think?
M: It might have been her doing.
P: But before the king returned, Gwenwyvar devised a plan to make herself seem an unwilling accomplice of your union. After she had rejoined the king you were to raid his court at Celliwig?
M: Yes. To make it seem she came to me without blame I went to Celliwig and dragged her from the throne, struck her a blow and carried her away.
P: You caused great ruin in Arthur's court?
M: It was one of the Costly Ravagings of the Island.
P: Did Arthur retaliate?
M: He destroyed my hall at Tremodret in Roche, and killed every living thing, both man and beast.
P: How did the queen weaken Arthur's power when she came to you?
M: She brought me an old sword in a pigskin sheath. It was Caledfwich.
P: The invincible weapon of King Arthur?
M: She said it was mine by right, as High King of the Blessed Isle.
P: Then began a time of civil war. You raised a host against the king?
M: The princes and chieftains were divided in their loyalties.
P: Briton killed Briton: law was forgotten: Arthur's son Liacheu was slain when your host was driven to the west.
M: To the crooked valley of Camlan.
P: How did the final battle come about?
M: There were nine who plotted at Nanywynan. They bribed fickle subjects and Saxon mercenaries.
P: Who was involved in this .. plot?
M: Among them were Gwynn the Irascible, Alan Fyrgan, Gwrgli Garlwydd, Eiddilic the Dwarf and Iddawc, son of Cordav.
P: They conspired against Arthur?
M: And against me! We were reluctant enemies.
P: Why then did the battle start?
M: Iddawc the Agitator conveyed my words as lies to Arthur, and gentle words of peace were turned to harshness and defiance.
P: And so began the most grievous and futile battle of these Islands: when Celt fought Celt. You killed your brother Gwalchmai?
M: He became a madman: he poured abuse upon me.
P: How did the battle end?
M: Arthur pierced me with his spear Rhongomiant, and I gashed open his head with Caledfwich.
P: What of the queen and your children?
M: I told her to escape with them to Ireland. She disobeyed me. The children were slain by Arthur's orders; it was his last command. The queen fled to Caerleon and took the veil.
P: How were your bodies taken from the field?
M: The Lady Morgan, Queen of Shadows, took us to our rest across the waters. Barinthus was the steersman, he had knowledge of the seas and stars of heaven.
P: What do you mean?
M: Our bodies were buried in the Isle of Avalon: our spirits were taken through the spirals of time to the Silver Wheel of Arianrhod.
P: But you were buried with Arthur in Avalon?
M: I was buried with the queen. It was my right as defender of the Blessed Isles.
P: There were three bodies in the grave? This is not what we were told by Gerald the Welshman.
M: The story was changed, false tales of treachery were sung of me. The White Monks of Margam in their chronicles told the truth.
P: Then Arthur and Gwenwyvar were reburied in the Abbey choir?
M: Yes. His head, like Bran's, was taken from its place: so was Arthur's guardianship broken too.
P: Were your bones not moved as well?
M: Concealed until Domesday is the grave of Medrawd.
P: Where dwell your spirits now?
M: We three are held in the iron hand of time in Caer Sidi. There the Lords of Summer and Winter renew their combat each year at the Calends of May until the day of Judgement. The winner on that day shall reign forever with his Queen.
P: But, if Arthur Pendragon is to return as Once and Future King ...?
M: Let Britain watch for me!

CAMLAM AND THE ZODIAC

By MARY CAINE

I was delighted by Ivor Snook's carefully-reasoned article. 'Camlam - Where Was it Fought?': delighted because although his Arthurian stance seems to be historical and mine mythological, our opinions on the Camlam site coincide. As a Glastonbury Zodiac buff myself it was satisfying to read that Arthur's last battle was fought between the Brue and Alham rivers, for these are on Scorpio - the Zodiac's sign of death and new beginnings. It is also the effigy assigned to Mordred by Mrs. Maltwood in her Round Table correspondence between the signs and Arthur's knights. Is it coincidence merely that the road crossing the Alham near Ditchat is marked 'Arthur's Bridge'? Or does this enshrine a local memory of the event?

The little Alham river is a tributary of the Brue. Put like this it reminds one irresistibly of 'Tribruit' - one of Arthur's 12 battles in Nennius' list. True it was not his last battle, which was Badon; but if Tribruit is a portmanteau-word for this site it would be in series with many such names in Arthurian literature. (Of course, Zodiac cranks like me do not regard these 12 battles as primarily historical - more as the 12 Zodiacal sides of himself which Arthur, as an archetypal initiate in the Mysteries, has to confront and overcome. But that is another story.)

The Brue-and-tributary site also makes good sense of Cadbury Castle as Arthur's stronghold nearby: a thought that must make all good Pendragons glow.

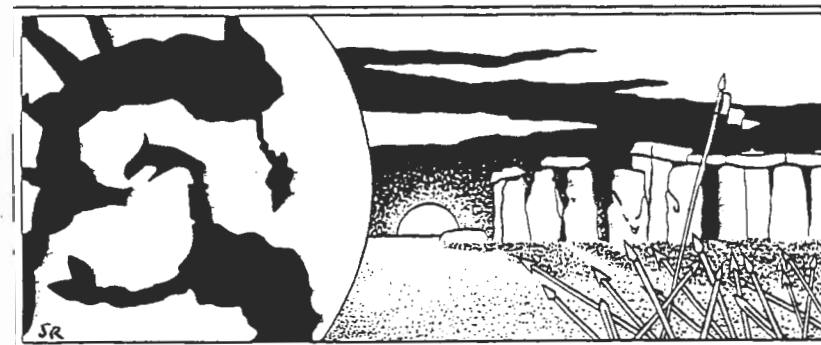
But even if the Battle of Camlam took place on Salisbury Plain, as Malory and others imply, the river Brue which rises and flows west from that plateau would be the natural way to ferry the dying Arthur into Avalon. Which brings a poetic image before one's eyes: for if, as I believe, the original Arthur was Sagittarius, the dying sun of December, he is sending a last shaft of sunlight from Stonehenge (that great sun-clock) westward down the nave of Glastonbury Abbey to alight on his very grave. The two ancient sun-clocks, Stonehenge and the Glastonbury Zodiac, are thus connected at sunset, and Arthur is connected in ancient tradition with both.

Mordred is the Arabic word for November, Scorpio's death-month. Mrs. Maltwood tells us: Mordred (almost the same word, with death connotations) was ostensibly the son of King Lot of the Lothians - so it is intriguing to find the place-name Lottisham (Lot's Ham) on Scorpio. Lot means Light, like Lludd and Lugh and Leo, so Mordred, whether he is Arthur's son by incest or the unsuspecting Lot's, represents the new sun who, before he can succeed his father, must kill him. Only this way: it seems to me, can we account for Arthur granting this villain the whole kingdom after his death.

Mordred, like Arthur, is thus an archetypal figure of sun-myth.

where the sun-king is always killed by a near-relative, nephew, son or brother, and mourned by the triple goddess. (See the myth of Osiris, whose tale parallels Arthur's in so many respects.)

The whole drama is displayed in the Glastonbury Zodiac, which also accounts for the recurring theme of incest (as in the Oedipus legend), also sun-myth (before Freud obscured the fact for us). For in the Zodiac there is only one female figure, Virgo, who has to play all feminine parts in the human drama and is at once wife, sister, lover and mother to the doomed sun-king.



newsflash

KNIGHTS OF THE BATH

In the last edition it was reported that Burke's Peerage expert Mr. Harold Brooks-Baker claims that King Arthur's Round Table is buried beneath slag waste on the banks of the Carron River near Stirling. He refers to 'stone sections' buried on land owned by Shires, the household bath manufacturers.

The 'Daily Mail' threw further light on this matter in August, 1989, quoting a Mr. McKerracher, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland, who has just completed five years' research into the subject. His findings appear in the venerable 'Scots Magazine' and refer to:

- i. Arthur's son Smervie Mhor, who founded the Clan MacArthur.
- ii. A mistranslation of 'la reonde table' which really means 'tabled rotunda'. This would have been a domed structure known as 'Arthur's O'on' - twenty feet high and twenty feet in diameter, built from sandstone. It would have had a circular top opening and an arched doorway on the east side.
- iii. This meeting place for the Celtic chieftain and his twelve foremost warriors was demolished in 1743. The site has now been covered by slag waste and reinforced concrete.
- iv. Archaeologists are seeking permission to excavate the site, which is situated beneath the garden of Mr. Scott of 40 Adam Street, Stenhousemuir.

The bemused Mr. Scott is quoted as saying, 'Perhaps the council will mend our fence now.'

[Fred Stedman-Jones, with thanks to Mark Cooper for the cutting.]

THE BATTLE OF CAMLAM: ARTHUR'S LAST JOURNEY

— BY IVOR SNOOK —

When the battle ended King Arthur lay grievously wounded on the battlefield. The romantic accounts say that he was attended by his knights Sir Bedivere and Sir Lucan, and that a barge or boat appeared containing many ladies, including three queens in which he was borne away to Avalon.

Geoffrey of Monmouth in his 'History of the Kings of Britain' (1136) says only that Arthur himself was mortally wounded; and being carried thence to the Isle of Avallon to be cured of his wounds, he gave up the Crown of Britain to his kinsman Constantine ... Wace in his 'Roman de Brut' (1155) has 'Arthur himself was wounded ... to the death. He caused him to be borne to Avalon for the searching of his hurts'. Layamon in 'Brut' (c1190) records that of the Britons there remained only Arthur and two of his knights, that Arthur lay upon the ground and from thence gave over his kingdom to Constantine, telling him 'And I will fare to Avalun ... to Argante the queen ... and she shall make my wounds all sound ... Even with the words there approached from the sea that was a short boat, floating with the waves, and two women therein ... and they took Arthur anon ... and forth they gan depart'.

It was the continental authors of the 'Matter of Britain' romances who embellished Layamon's account still further. The two knights become Bedivere and Lucan, the story of Bedivere casting away Excalibur is introduced, Argante is replaced by Morgain, the boat contains not two ladies but three queens - Morgan le Fay, the Queen of Northgales, and the Queen of the Wastelands. We are given no information about how these queens gathered together, or obtained the barge, or how they knew that their services would be required, or how they managed to be at the appropriate place at the right time.

The romances generally consider the battle to have been fought on the Camel in Cornwall, and we must suppose that the barge, therefore came into the estuary of the Camel. But the romances speak of Mordred bringing his army from Southampton to the Camel in a large fleet of ships, and then sending for reinforcements from Ireland, Scotland and Saxland. One would imagine therefore that there would be many ships in that estuary and at that time preparing for a hurried departure, and with thousands of fleeing soldiers struggling to get on board. The simple account of 'a short boat approaching from the sea, floating with the waves, and two women therein ... and they took Arthur away ...' seems somewhat lacking in detail. We do not know exactly what 'a short boat' might be, but there is no mention of oar or sails, nor of sailors to row or sail it. But whatever the boat was it is now supposed to make a journey of some 100 miles up the Bristol Channel, surely too long and uncomfortable a journey for a dying man?

There is one of the 'Vulgate cycle' of the romances which merits attention. In this Camlam takes place on a down near Salisbury, and a barge waits on the sea (presumably in the Southampton area). It is a knight called Giflet who carries Arthur from the battlefield to the barge, where he does not arrive until next morning, by which time Arthur is apparently dead. The barge takes Arthur's body to an unknown location called the 'Noire Chapelle' where he was buried. It would appear that the author had more than one account of the events which he tried to combine into one. He must have had a reference to the 'down near Salisbury' which he believed to be correct, and he also had some reference to Giflet as the knight who attended to the wounded Arthur and carried him to the barge. This is very interesting because Sir Bedivere, who is said in practically every other account to have been the one to attend the wounded Arthur, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth was killed on the continent long before Arthur returned to Britain, and therefore he could not have been at Camlam. Could it be that the 'down near Salisbury' and 'Giflet' were found in a true account of Camlam and its aftermath? If so the 'Noire Chapelle' may also be a true location, but I would conjecture that having got Arthur on a barge in the English Channel the writer realised that it was not possible to get him from thence to Glastonbury, and made use of, or invented, the Noire Chapelle location.

I now turn to Sir Thomas Malory's 'Le Morte d'Arthur', written about 1469, nearly 300 years later than the continental romances. Here we have the story of the wounded king lying swooning upon the ground, attended by his two knights Sir Bedivere and Sir Lucan. After the death of the latter who is seriously wounded and overstrains himself helping Bedivere to lift up the king, Arthur instructs Bedivere to cast his sword into the mere. Next Bedivere 'took Arthur upon his back and so went with him to that waterside. And when they were at the waterside, even fast by the bank, hove a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen ... 'now put me in the barge' said the king, and so he did softly; and there received him three queens ... and then that queen said 'Ah my dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas this wound on your head hath caught overmuch cold'.

We cannot be certain what was meant by the word 'barge', but Malory calls it a 'little barge' and Layamon says it was a 'short boat'. Evidently whatever kind of vessel it was it was quite a small one. Looking back to an earlier part of Malory's work we notice that after the Fair Maid of Astolat died for love of Lancelot her body was put into a 'barget' which floated down the Thames, and 'a man steered the barget into Westminster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro ...'. 'Barget' can hardly mean anything other than 'a little barge', and that particular one was obviously a river vessel and could be rowed by one man. Malory's 'little barge' appears to have been of a similar type, for it 'hove by the bank', which suggests that it was on a river, and it could be rowed, for at the end 'And so then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him'.

I have elsewhere attempted to show that the battle of Camlam probably took place on the moors to the north of Cadbury Castle. Arthur assembled his army on the river Cam, and during the battle Mordred's army was gradually forced back as far as the river Brue, where a furious engagement took place in which Arthur was mortally wounded, and the remnants of Mordred's men finally escaped across the river Alham. Thus we had the 'battle from the

Cam to the 'Alham' which degenerated from Cam/Alham into Camilan, Kemeien, etc. and finally to Camiam.

This conception matches very well Malory's account of what happened. Perhaps the first point is that it may indicate who the ladies and queen(s) in the barge actually were. Malory seems a little uncertain of the number of queens in the barge for first he says that there were many fair ladies with a queen among them, then that Arthur was received by three queens, then that 'that queen' calls Arthur 'dear brother'. So we may conjecture that there was only one queen, or that if more than 'that queen' was the senior.

I would suggest that the queens came from Cadbury Castle, where they had been awaiting the result of the battle. When the battle was over, and perhaps having received some report of the sad result, a party went out to find Arthur. Cadbury Castle was a stronghold of Cadur, and there could be at least two queens there who might call Arthur 'dear brother'. Cadur's wife was a half-sister by marriage to Arthur and would have been one of them. The other could have been Morgan le Fay who was daughter to Cadur and half-sister to Arthur. She may have been at Cadbury by chance or perhaps for safety. She is the most likely one for she was also Queen of Avalon, and she is the one most frequently named as the Queen in the barge. The other named queens are the Queen of North Wales, and the Queen of the Wastelands: neither of them seem to have had any kinship with Arthur, and were probably introduced because of their somewhat romantic titles.

When the queen(s) and ladies found where Arthur was lying they obtained a river boat (perhaps with local knowledge they knew where to find it) and brought it to the bank of the Brue near to where Arthur was lying, and persuaded Bedivere to carry Arthur to it. Perhaps it was at the instigation of Morgan, who could guarantee medical help at Avalon, that they decided to convey Arthur there. Their destination appears to have been agreed between them, for both Malory and Layamon indicate that Arthur himself knew what they intended. One cannot know how far it was down the Brue to Avalon in those days, but it could not have been more than twenty miles: it was downstream all the way, and doubtless they would have received help from people along the banks as soon as they were away from the battle area. It was a rather desperate project, yet not entirely hopeless, and in any case perhaps the only course they could take.

Nearly all the accounts say, or suggest, that Arthur actually reached Avalon, and statements that attempts at healing were unsuccessful suggest that he was alive when he reached there. Perhaps the most informative statement is that found in a marginal note to William of Malmesbury's 'Antiquities of Glastonbury' which says that 'Arthur's body was borne to the Isle of Avallonia (now called Glastonbury) by a certain noble dame, a relative of his, called Morganis: and when he afterwards died he was buried in the said cemetery by her means'.



Exchange Journals

GLOUCESTERSHIRE EARTH MYSTERIES.

Nicely styled journal full of variety: a must for Gloucestershire-based Pendragons - and others. Features Dragons, Domesday, Dowsing, Spooks, Standing Stones, Arthur's Battles, mythology and so on. Editor: Danny Sullivan, GEM Magazine, 49 Moored Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Glos. GL53 0ET. 3 issues p.a. for £5.00.

NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES.

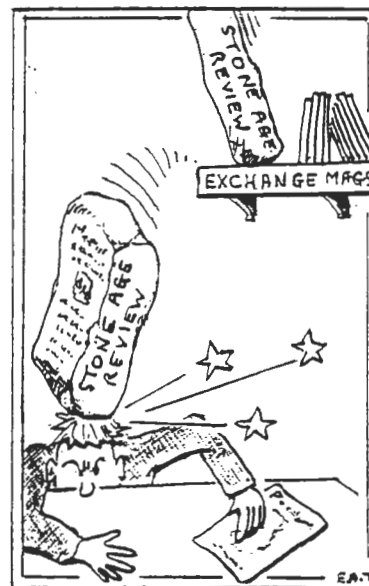
Has reached No.40, so it's got to be good. Competently produced with a large variety of articles - all interesting and well-written. Editor: Rob Wilson, 40b Welby Place, Meersbrook Park, Sheffield S8 9DB. 3 issues for £2.95 (I don't know how they do it!)

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS.

I mistakenly thought this diversely entertaining magazine had folded; as the last issue I had seen was over a year old. Hence I did not mention it in our Exchange list. Glad it's going strong and apologies to editor Paul Screeton, 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS25 2AT. Cost of F.F. is £4.00 for 4 issues.

DRAGON.

Not strictly an Exchange journal this. I subscribe to it because it's good and give it publicity for the same reason. DRAGON is more exclusively concerned with historical and archaeological matters than is PENDRAGON but I feel the two journals complement each other. Editor is Charles Evans-Gunther and his address is: DRAGON, c/o 9 Earl's Lea, FLINT, Clwyd CH6 5BT, N. Wales.

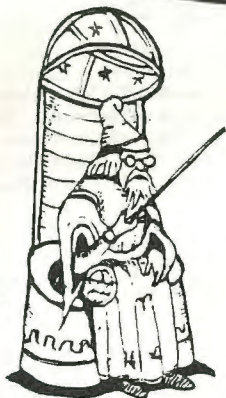


MERCIAN MYSTERIES

A newcomer to the small-journal scene. M.M. has good articles, including a detailed confidence-inspiring lesson on how to dowse, and not merely for water. Also a nice little piece on Samhain by 'Grimr' - appropriate because this first issue was designed to coincide with one of the Celtic festivals - as indeed will subsequent issues. (Hope you'll be able to meet your self-imposed deadlines, Paul!) Editor: Paul Nix, 12 Cromer Road, St Ann's, Nottingham, NG3 3LF. Cost £5.00 for 4 issues.

CSOSS (pronounced CSOSS).

Journal of the Chipping Sodbury Octogenarian Surfboard Society. Articles include 'Knit Yourself a Drystone Wall', 'Sheepdog Trials in the Tibetan Navy', and 'Rein-chrysanthemum, the DIY version of Rein-carnation. Editor, Deirdre. 4 issues per millennium to coincide with the orbital time of Pluto, god of the Two Worlds: Nether- and Disney-.



MERLIN'S MASTERMIND

I, Merlin, do challenge all ye Pendragons to a contest of wits. Solve all my clues - and those in my next manuscript and the one whose script is drawn forth first from Sir Fred's helm, with all answers true, shall inherit a treasure worth the keeping.

1. Merlin is mentioned in TWO of Shakespeare's plays, name ONE.
2. Where in Cornwall was Arthur's Court situated, according to the Welsh Triads?
3. By what name is Sir Gawaine's horse known, in 'Gawaine and the Green Knight'?
4. Nennius claimed that Arthur's son was killed by his father and buried in a grave that constantly changes size. What was the son's name?
5. Who inherited the crown of Britain after the Battle of Camlann?
6. In Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars which sign of the zodiac is said to represent Arthur?
7. Who is the father of Guinevere in Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'?
8. Which of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' tells the story of a knight of the Round Table?
9. Who played Merlin in the 1981 film 'Excalibur'?
10. In which room of the Palace of Westminster are the famous Arthurian frescoes to be found?
11. From which American state was the Yankee at King Arthur's court in Mark Twain's Arthurian tale?
12. Which of Arthur's weapons is called 'Carnwennan' in the 'Mabinogi'?

FF



Hear ye...

Season's Greetings!

This issue could have been sent out before Christmas, but what a galactic disaster if it had gone missing amongst all the trivial mail which proliferates at this time of year! Anyway, the deliberate delay gives us a chance to thank all those who have sent us cards and good wishes. We cannot reply personally except to return the rather thick one post-marked 'Chipping Sodbury' which was ticking on arrival.

Good news about our old friend Sid Birchby. We've had a hand-written card from him so he seems well on the mend.

Member Harry Fearnham is giving us free publicity on a computer network news bulletin to which he has access. Thanks a lot, Harry!

We warmly welcome as a new member someone who needs no introduction to those interested in Celtic Art. Courtney Davis. 'Nuff said.

Payment of subs. Please refer to the Pendragon Constitution, para. B7, in this issue.

We have three copies for sale of a well-produced booklet donated by member David Jones who wrote it. It's called Arthur and the Grail and it compresses personalities, legends and sources into 45 very readable pages. A snip at £1.75 incl. p. & p. Phone before sending money. First come, first served. Proceeds to Pendragon funds.

Members interested in New Age matters might like to know that the weekly Spiritualist journal Psychic News now includes, once a month, a four-page New Age Review. This touches on Green affairs, UFOs, ley lines, healing, meditation and what-have-you. Homeopathy and folk-medicine also find a place. Mention is made, for example, of those old remedies: arnica for strained muscles and rhus (sumach) for stretched ligaments. (No, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, although she probably incurred sprains and strains during her energetic Treasure Hunt series on TV, Arnica Rhus is NOT the ladies name.)

Happy New Year everybody!

Le Morte d'Arthur:

"And the new sun rose
bringing the new year"

Tennyson



