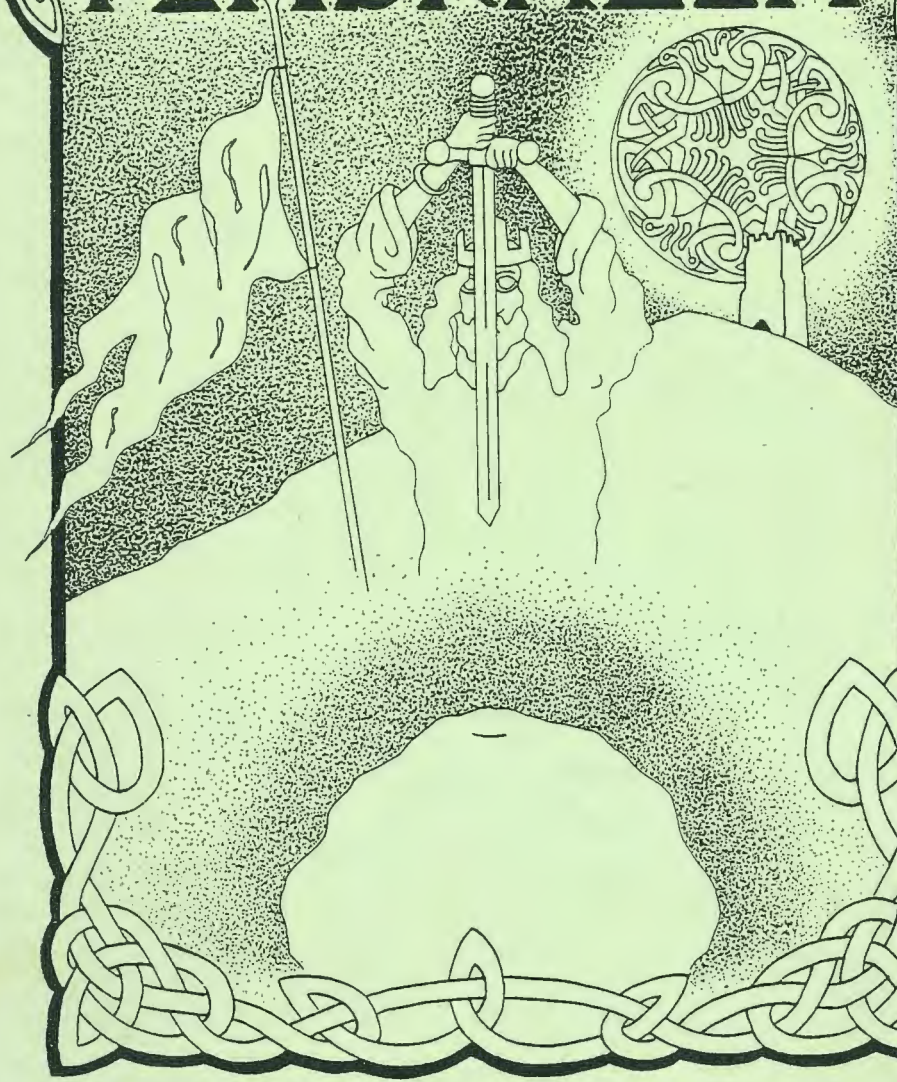




PENDRAGON



Pendragon

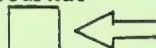
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Pendragon investigates Arthurian history, archaeology
and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain.
All opinions stated are those of the writers concerned.
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Main themes for this issue - What Arthur Means to Me.

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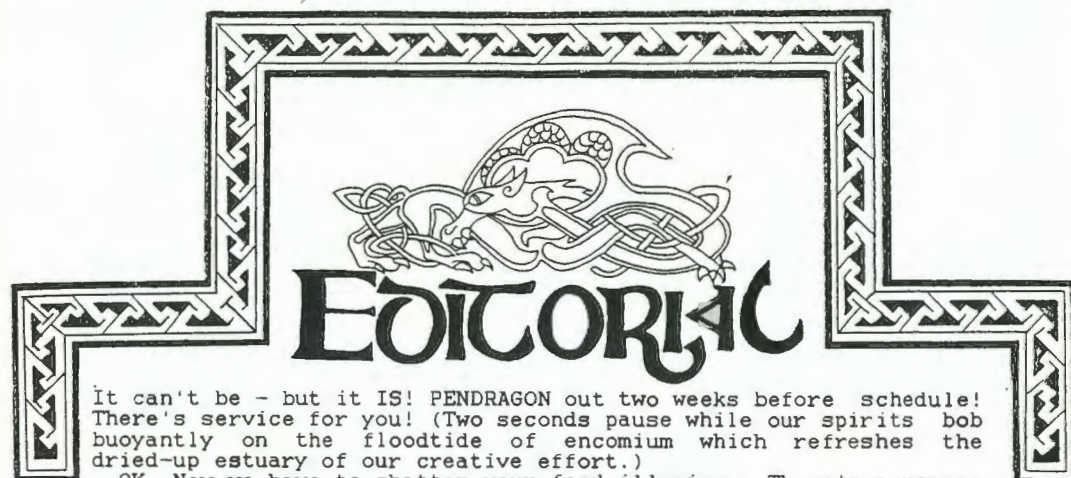
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It can't be - but it IS! PENDRAGON out two weeks before schedule!
There's service for you! (Two seconds pause while our spirits bob
buoyantly on the floodtide of encomium which refreshes the
dried-up estuary of our creative effort.)

OK. Now we have to shatter your fond illusions. There's a reason
- in fact there are two reasons, both prosaic - why this issue
had to come out early. Firstly, Geoff, due to domestic
circumstances, would have been unable to tackle the printing
nearer our normal date of publication, and secondly, Fred
Stedman-Jones has pointed out to me that I left the time of the
AGM rather vague in the last issue and also failed to invite
members to write or ring with points they would like put on the
Agenda (those who can't attend, of course.) There's an admission!
I had long since realised that nobody else was perfect: what a
come-down it was to have to join their ranks!

Although the trysting-place for the AGM (Gupshill Manor Licensed
Restaurant on the A38 Gloucester Road, one mile south of
Tewkesbury) is available from 10 a.m. on Saturday, 29th September
and Anne and I will be there from that time to greet people and
have a natter, we need to be more definite about the time the
official business starts. We'll make it between 1.30 and 2.00 p.m.
- which should give most folk time to arrive and have lunch. Tea,
coffee and biscuits will be supplied free by Anne - though if you
want to put anything in the 56-gallon barrel standing incon-
spicuously where you will trip over it, we won't say no: any
surplus will go into Society funds. Oh, and by the way: would you
people who haven't already written to say you are coming, but
intend to do so, just drop us a line so we can expect you? (But
we'll be just as pleased to see you anyway.)

It's an unwelcome fact that one of the most important matters to
be discussed at the AGM concerns the upping of subscriptions (for
the first time in 6 years, we might point out). At the moment our
finances are not in bad shape, but in my report as Treasurer I
will analyse this and explain why increased expenses will
inevitably come. The Society's financial mainstay to date has been
the generous donations many members have made over and above
their subs. (A list of these will be available for inspection at
the AGM.) I haven't yet studied the situation in detail, but at a
guess I'd say that without such donations we would be in the red.
Not a desirable state of affairs. Pendragon should not have to
rely on handouts, wonderful though it is of all those who make
them.

What else? Ah, yes. Kate Pollard reminds me that the date of the
AGM coincides with Michaelmas Day. Do any AGM-attenders feel able
to give us a short talk, poetry reading, ballad (or whatever)
suited to this occasion? I've been making tentative enquiries but
there's nothing definite at the date of writing this. Looking
forward to seeing you.

Quotes on Arthur from A pendragon pens by KATE POLLARD

'... It is an odd fact that there is just one hero claimed by all factions, and that hero is Arthur ... odd, too, that Arthur is as solid yet elusive as the island itself ... Battle Leader ... Count of Britain ... Mediaeval King ... Symbol of Christendom and Chivalry ... all sleeping and lost till the 1950s when a whole stream of books about Arthur began to roll into the bookshops ...'

(Jess Foster in 'A for Arthur'.)

'The tales of Arthur appeal particularly to the Celt in us; the down-to-earth Saxon responds more to Robin Hood.'

(Tim Porter in 'Arthur and Alfred' 1978.)

'I was also struck by the parallels in the stories of the mythical Bran and the semi-historical Arthur. Both were regarded as guardians of Britain who even after death would somehow defend the island.'

(Tim Porter in 'The Birth of an Arthurian Opera' 1978.)

'Arthur is an intensely personal demi-god ... wholly and unequivocally British. He was not borne here from a Land to the West, he did not climb out of a space-ship and he did not spring, fully armed, from an earthly magnetic hiccup anywhere near Stonehenge ... Arthur was a human being, he ate, drank, slept, and fornicated. He fought exceptionally well and slew droves of Saxons ... he was a brilliant leader of men and probably invented the kind of cavalry we have seen in Europe, largely unchanged, until the Second World War rendered them useless.'

(Roger Davies Webster in 'Arthur: a Sense of Place.' 1979.)

'Arthur is the Once and Future King; he is the embodiment of grace in human life; he is also a figure of reconciliation between cultures, having been at one time a British citizen of Imperial Rome, and later on an Anglo-Norman folk-hero.'

(Steven Banks in 'No Arthur Here' 1980.)

'The evidence for this man may at times be painfully thin, but there is one vital fact that all his critics and detractors have missed - he won't go away. Wraith-like and defying all known logic he calls through the ages to the British people as a collective entity.'

(Adrian Watts in 'Arthur: a new line of attack' 1980.)

'The belief in an unexpected deliverer is common throughout Europe with King Arthur being the most prominent British candidate ... such a tale appeals to the oppressed and most strongly in times of strife or perseverance ... The multiplicity of sites where national heroes sleep awaiting the call to lead may alternatively be interpreted as identifying locations of specific sanctity. That

they have remained a keynote in our history, especially in the case of King Arthur, suggests that the national psyche has never renounced such a belief.'

(Paul Screeton in 'Arthur, Merlin and Old Stones' 1981.)

'... my mind drifted back to the investiture of the Prince of Wales. During the ceremony his names were often repeated, so often that even I over ten years later can remember them: Charles Philip Edward Arthur George. Statistically this gives a one-in-five chance of the next King being Arthur the First of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ... Seriously, it has been expedient, politically, at various times to conjecture with such a name. Could he choose it to assist in lifting Albion out of its new Dark Age - riots, discord etc. into a more prosperous one? I'm sure it would have more popular appeal than all other names, apart perhaps from George.'

(Steve Blackburn in a letter to PENDRAGON in 1981/2)

'... Implements are ceremoniously thrust into the ground by gods demons or great men. Arthur was exceptional: he drew the sword from the stone. I wonder who put it in.'

(Steven Banks in 'Peruvian Current' 1981.)

'Maybe you thought of ARTHUR as a knight in full armour ... (who are you looking at?), or maybe you've read enough to know that he lived in the DARK AGES ... ('What's wrong with SUB-ROMAN or even EARLY CHRISTIAN? mutter mutter BUT! perhaps he was really a ROMAN (Ave!) or even a first century Briton! ('Wotcher!') or (gasp) a CONSTELLATION ... did he even live at all? (doubt - the final frontier.)

(Chris Lovegrove's cartoon cover for PENDRAGON in 1981.)

We are obviously not dealing with a simple fairy story in Arthur, but a profound and epic statement on all the facets of life. What an eternal tribute to the human intellect to produce a mythology so subtle and varied so that it is as poignant today as it was a millenium ago.'

(Adrian Vye in 'The Bear of Berne' 1982.)

'Arthurian legend is full of these alternating sun-kings ... I know the fashion nowadays is to hunt for an historical Arthur at the expense of the sun-and-seasonal theory but I do think this is a false trail - if only because none of the candidates so far put forward can show a trace of a Round Table or Grail Quest, which is, after all, what makes the whole subject so fascinating.'

(Mary Caine in a letter to PENDRAGON in 1989.)

'So why are Pendragonists attracted by places or themes like Glastonbury and the Arthurian saga? (Anyone who says it is because the word 'Pendragon' can be derived from the Cornish PENDRA (village) and GOON (idiot) will be excommunicated ... or something equally drastic. It could be that because of environment, upbringing, character quirks, past lives or just chance encounters with the genre we enter into harmony with past and present thought forms and events - by Sheldrake's morphic resonance [theory], ... What is intriguing in all this is the notion that ideas, legends and memories originating in Arthur's time and before may still be around exerting a direct influence on our minds.'

(Eddie Tooke in 'Einstein's Avalon' 1983/4.)

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WHAT ARTHUR MEANS TO ME CHRIS LOVEGROVE

THE ONION AND THE KEY.

A recent television programme about Rock Hudson revealed how the movie star aspired to be a stage actor, and played the King in the musical Camelot. The impression was that he found the role difficult but clearly satisfying.

'Difficult but satisfying' is rather a good description of what the figure of Arthur means to me. Difficult, firstly, because like the image of the peeled onion in Ibsen's Peer Gynt there appears, even after patient work, to be nothing at the core. It's hard to resist the conclusion that, even if there was an 'historical' Arthur, there remains nothing material that can be positively identified. Looking back, I have probably always suspected so.

So why such a long pursuit after a chimera? Well, if the facts of the matter are difficult to substantiate, the legend is rather more satisfying. The Mystery, as opposed to the History.

What do I mean by Mystery? certainly I am not talking about the Arthur which some novelists, film-makers and amateur historians depict when they try to penetrate the Celtic twilight or elucidate the barbaric Dark Ages with the romantic glow of Victorian medievalism. A medievalism that perceives the sword in the stone, the Round Table and the Holy Grail as the essence of the Arthurian story, but then equates it with Arthurian history, which it most certainly isn't. That, and the love triangles, represents graftings from other cultures, producing wonderful hybrid blooms, the result not of Merlin's sudden whims but of complex processes.

Nor am I talking about Agatha Christie mystery (try saying that with your teeth out). The primary meaning of Mystery is 'a religious truth, revealed to an initiate, but beyond human comprehension'.

Is Arthur religious then? Well, it's a commonplace that the story of a good man who was betrayed and killed, but whose supporters expect to return in their hour of need, applies equally to Arthur as to Jesus. But I'm not really thinking of religion here as a narrow system of faith and worship, which is the perception of some adherents, but as an attempt to know the unknowable, the process of which prompts modification of attitudes and deeds. If this sounds overly grand, a moment's thought will show that this has provided the motivation of every seeker after truth, whether scientist, artist, theist, agnostic or atheist, and if pursued wholeheartedly can indeed change lives.

Certainly the Arthurian Mystery, as represented by its mythology (both ancient and modern!) has affected me. The late Joseph Campbell (subject of a recent BBC series) put it this way:

Through the wonder tales ... symbolic expression is given to the unconscious desires, fears and tensions that underlie

the conscious patterns of human behaviour. Mythology, in other words, is psychology misread as biography, history, and cosmology ... (The Hero with a Thousand Faces, 1949/Abacus 1975, p221).

Arthur was the means to unlock the door to me, as initiate, into a vast realm of stories and situations that stir the imagination and provide the impetus to move on to related fields. Megaliths and mazes, literature and leys, cathedrals and Cathars, graves and Gaia, folklore and fakes, pottery and parapsychology, these and other doors were also revealed when I went through the gate labelled 'Arthur'.

I don't think Rock Hudson was fussed that a real post-Roman kinglet wouldn't really have used designer armour from a thousand years in the future, or declaimed in an Anglo-Saxon tongue to the accompaniment of a twentieth-century orchestra, or borrowed elements from the Kennedy mythology. No doubt he gained satisfaction from acquiring insights into his own psychological make-up. No doubt he won't be the last one to do the same.



BOOK REVIEW



'THE GRAIL TRADITION' by John Matthews (Element Books 1990. Paperback £4.99.)

'We are dealing here with high things,' says Matthews. 'with a mystery that is almost too much for us. But we can learn and grow, from studying it, by sharing the adventure of the Quest with those far-off people of the Arthurian world, who in truth are not so far off at all.'

Evocative stuff, and this is an evocative book. It not only analyses Grail history and legend but gives details of psychic exercises based on the idea that the Grail is not merely a bygone myth but can be very much an object/symbol for our times. The Quest is not over but now the Grail-knights may be women as well as men. Grail-working is for all. (Good news for the 37.2% of Pendragon members who are ladies!)

Much of 'The Grail Tradition' can be considered deeply esoteric but Matthews wisely stresses the importance of keeping 'one foot in both worlds, the infinite and the mundane.' 'To be able to relate the realms of the everyday and the otherworldly into some kind of unity is to move close to the central mystery of the Grail.' One thinks of physicist Fritjof Capra's dictum: 'Science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science but man needs both.' Intellect and intuition are partners, not rivals.

John Matthews quotes the example of Perceval and suggests that it may be necessary to learn to become truly 'foolish' before one can begin the Quest. This might seem rather off-putting to scholarly (e.g. Pendragon) minds - until we remember that 'The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.' (1 Corinthians 3:19). But don't just take St. Paul's word for this. The basic premises of modern physics defy common sense and may therefore be considered 'foolish'. Mach's Principle (integral part of Relativity) 'savours of astrology' (Bertrand Russell); while Pauli's Exclusion Principle (essential to Quantum Theory) is 'a very general and elusive thing' with 'no dynamic aspect to it at all' (Prof. Henry Margenau of Yale). Two examples, surely, of 'foolishness' that even in physics seems essential before progress can be made in the quest for Truth.

The Grail Quest, then, is 'on'. John Matthews gives us guidance - plus a great deal of background information. If you're too steeped in outmoded scientific superstition to enjoy ALL he has to say ... well you should still find 'The Grail Tradition' worth reading.

Letters

In the past I have had a number of friends who claimed to be golf widows, as their husbands haunted the golf courses every available moment.

I have sometimes felt like a widow myself and slightly resented the mistresses who have demanded my husband's attention - the theatre, Welsh history, etc., etc. I could go on at length but I should certainly include his passion for myths and legends - with Arthur and his followers looming large. I have had to come to terms with this and have now joined him in his quest.

As a Welsh woman, Arthur as an historic Celtic leader has always held a fascination for me and I have felt his spirit close when I am in lonely hilly places. The Arthurian literature and paintings have enriched me also, but seemed removed from the Arthur I knew as a Celtic hero.

I am now enjoying having my eyes opened to a wider perspective through the pages of PENDRAGON. Many thanks to all those who have contributed to my pleasure.
(Marilyn Stedman-Jones, Cheshire)

Thank you so much for your introductory material to the Pendragon Society. I had heard of your organisation from many different people, but never with enough information to get in touch.

I will be delighted to set up an exchange of journals. Notice on page 11 where I have condensed your material so that my readers can contact you.

My own work is on the Latin romances De Ortu Waluuanii and Historia Meriadoci. I would like to contribute something about these to your journal. These tales of Gawain and the Welsh prince Meriadoc are not very well known, but they are great fun.

I will be in England for the Arthurian Congress in August. I will try to call you then.
(Letter to F.S-J from Mildred Leake Day, editor QUONDAM ET FUTURUS, newsletter for Arthurian Studies, USA.)

What does Arthur mean to me? Jesus dressed up in the clothes and fashion of Olde England and representing the spirit of the people: a kind of caricaturesque personification of might and invincibility which yet crumbles at the power of the spirit, which always triumphs over matter. Needs more thinking about though ... Keep up the great work with the mag.

(Paul Smith, Burton-upon-Trent.)

The Roman recipes in the 'Square Meals' article will need some adjustment before trying them out - like substituting mince for brains in the 'Daily Dish'. Definitely leave out the assafoetida, which smells and tastes like garlic. I suggest that the Romans used it as a status symbol as it is a gummy stuff of Asian origin.

In the cartoon on page 6 I noticed that 'Gabriel' has been given a beard. This reminds me of a riddle of sorts:
Why are there so few angels with beards? Because men only get to Heaven by a close shave.
(Mary Bonney, Windsor)

(Ed. Note: Thanks a lot Mary: you can go off people you know ...!)

(To Fred Stedman-Jones):
Many thanks for the PENDRAGON. It is good to hear that the Society is active again. It did much good work in Jess Foster's day. I much enjoyed reading you on the perpetual choirs circle and your insights on the places.

Plinlimon is the old omphalos of Wales (see Rees and Rees. 'Celtic Heritage') and it is also the geographical centre of the

country. Try a compass centered there and with its circumference passing up the Severn. Interesting that the strange St. Michael church in a hollow is the point of Llantwit Major. This is clearly a Celtic site. I much look forward to what you have to say on the other sites.

I feel this circle with its 10 divisions may be very old as I've heard that zodiacs once had ten signs. I have a book on the 12-tribe and universal pattern out next year*, also one on Glastonbury, both mentioning the perpetual choirs in EVERY Celtic sanctuary.

Good to see your mention of crop circles. I'm editing a mag. on the subject.
(John Michell)

* [John's book is titled 'Twelve Tribe Nations, and the Science of Enchanting the Landscape' by John Michell and Christine Rhone. Thames and Hudson, £18.00.

The publisher's blurb: 'These subjects are not merely of antiquarian interest, but lead to the rediscovery of knowledge which produced harmony between nature and humanity - and is therefore as relevant to the present and future as it was to the past.'

I found Fred Stedman-Jones' piece rather bitty and his use of the famous (or should I say 'infamous') Perpetual Choirs of Iolo Morganwg gave me every reason not to read this article (even though I did). Edward 'Iolo Morganwg' Williams should be avoided on every account, not because everything he did was faked, but because finding the fact from the fiction is nearly impossible. He recreated South Wales giving it a history and literature (not to mention mysticism) that it didn't have (this is not to say that S.Wales didn't have a history. It was just that Iolo didn't like what there was). He took snippets of real facts and created whole histories - fiction which he put forward as fact. Early versions of the Perpetual

Choirs are somewhat different to dear old Iolo's.

Concerning Mary Bonney's letter: Arthur, according to Welsh tradition, did leave some progeny. If you would see my article in PENDRAGON Vol XVI No 1, Winter 1982-3, pp 6-10 - though it has some inaccuracies in it the basic information still stands. Arthur, through a number of unions had a number of children, most famous of whom was Llacheu - called by the Triads one of the most valiant of warriors. However, there doesn't seem to be a family tree beyond Arthur's immediate children - the possibility of a couple of religious grandchildren, which is a branch that leads to nowhere. Otherwise the descent from Arthur seems to be non-existent, unless someone knows better. There have been a number of people who claim such descent but a quick study of their genealogies soon shows wishful thinking on their parts. However, again, I do not rule out descendants from Arthur, at least into the Dark Ages, but direct connections between them and Arthur are tenuous - to put it mildly - and best left alone until further information comes forward. I also don't rule out the discovery of new information - much has disappeared in the past, even recent past, and so something may turn up.

Keep up the good work - you're doing an excellent job (it would be nice to have an editorial board, etc!) All the best with the AGM.

P.S. The older of the Triads concerning the Three Perpetual Choirs reads: 'One was at the Island of Afallach, and the second at Caer Caradawg, and the third at Bangor ...' This gives different sites.

Also the Triad related to the son of Arthur goes: 'Three Fearless Men of the Island of Britain: the first was Gwalchmai son of Gwyer, the second was Llacheu son of Arthur, and the third was Peredur son of Earl Efrog.'
(Charles Evans-Günther, Flint)

(Replies from Fred Stedman-Jones:

1. To John Michell:
Principibus placuisse viris non
ultima laus est.
Non cuivis homini contingit
adire Corinthum.
(*'Epistles'*, Horace.)
2. To Charles Evans-Günther:
Misce stultitiam consiliis
brevem:
Duice est desipere in loco.
(*'Odes'*, Horace.)

(Editorial note to all disputants:
Grammatici certant et adhuc sub
audice lis est. - *'Scholars*
dispute, and the case is still
before the courts.'
(*'Ars Poetica'*, Horace.)
There is little certainty or
finality where Dark Age matters
are concerned. Friendly argument
is, therefore, always welcome in
these columns.)



EXCHANGE JOURNALS

CAERDROIA - Editors Jeff and Deb Seward. 53 Thundersley Grove, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB. Mazes and labyrinths. Yearly. Write for details with SAE, or phone 0268 751915.

DRAGON - Editor Charles Evans-Gunther. Dragon, c/o 9 Earls Lea, Flint, Clwyd CH6 5BT. North Wales. Arthurian and Dark Age matters. Four issues for £4.50

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS - Editor Paul Screeton. 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS25 2AT. Four issues for £4.00

GLOUCESTERSHIRE EARTH MYSTERIES - Editor Danny Sullivan. GEM Magazine, 49 Moorend Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Glos. GL53 0ET. Three issues for £5.00

MERCIAN MYSTERIES - Editors Bob Trubshaw and Paul Nix. 12 Cromer Road, St. Ann's, Nottingham NG3 3LF. Four issues for £5.00

NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES - Editor Rob Wilson. 40b Welby Place, Meersbrook Park, Sheffield S8 9DB. Three issues for £2.95

THE BRISTOL TEMPLAR - Editor Julian Lea-Jones. 33 Springfield Grove, Henleaze, Bristol BS6 7XE. Local history. Membership with monthly meetings and 4 journals p.a. £8.00

QUONDAM ET FUTURUS: Quarterly for Arthurian Studies. Mildred Leake Day, editor. 2212 Pinehurst Drive, Gardendale AL 35071. Overseas subscriptions \$20.00, by first class airmail. An 'Independent newsletter' sharing Arthurian news from several Societies, Academies and Universities in America. Academic and literary emphasis. Board of directors includes Valerie Lagorio, University of Iowa.



In my last article I wrote in favourable terms about the concept of Arthur as an archetype relevant to this day and age. Since, however, Arthur must 'function' on a personal level, I feel it is necessary to be somewhat more objective in order to minimise the danger of a personal appraisal of Arthur degenerating into nothing more than a dry, intellectual discourse.

For me, Arthur functions on all levels. Historically, he remains a mystery, for as I never tire of saying, the history of the so-called 'Dark Ages' has been distorted by the censors of triumphant Roman Christianity. Furthermore, many researchers write seemingly in total ignorance of the socio-political realities of the Romano-Celtic world, arrows depicting Arthur's campaigns sweeping across the map as though England in the 6th century could be compared to Flanders in 1915.

The mystery, and the romance, are necessary, for Arthur represents the male element in the racial subconscious of Britain. As such, he is potentially dangerous, and Geoffrey Ashe in his now dated but still very relevant book 'The Finger and the Moon' illustrates that danger all too clearly.

Arthur, however, goes deeper. He is the archetypal hero who achieves miracles, dies, and returns to Avalon, Annwn, whatever one likes to call it, and there waits to return when the time is ripe. He is the native British version of this universal hero and as such can be compared to other traditions, even to Jesus Christ, Tammuz, Osiris, et al. Perhaps his saving grace is that from the legends no theology evolved which could corrupt the whole thing into an organized system of religious belief, thus rendering him in some way pure.

Our hero is on a personal level the Divine Spark which resides in us all, and which can be called upon to arise and come forth to do battle with whatever monsters of the intellect may disturb the psyche. Because the Arthurian legends are capable of many interpretations this must be a personal thing, for the basic material is malleable. Judaeo-Christian liberalism coupled with the Protestant work ethic have made us into socio-economic units at the mercy of market forces subordinate to the great god Profit. Not that the concept of profit is evil per se - it is simply that we have to live with the consequences of the marriage in the 19th century between Judaeo-Christianity and scientific materialism.

This marriage has brought not only ecological disaster but has knocked the spiritual guts out of this country. It has given us material benefits but has denuded our souls of something vital. For me, that is where magic and ritual come in. For me, that vital spark which is my own personal spiritual strength can be brought forth without recourse to discredited theologies. If I choose to call that vital spark Arthur it is because I am a native of these

islands and have a right to call upon my own spiritual tradition.

Naturally this does not always entail donning a robe. Neither does it mean that I am some kind of pseudo-druid. It does mean that an inner process can take place whereby I am able to reassert my spiritual identity and my link with this land in which I was born without becoming either a little Englander or a crypto-fascist. It is because Arthur can act on the collective psyche that I mooted the idea of ritual in a former article.

I have already mentioned ecology, and our present-day preoccupation with the healing of the land of course finds an echo in the Arthurian saga. Unless the wounded king within ourselves is healed, we have no chance of healing the land or arresting the creeping sickness in our society. Through my concept of Arthur I try to do my bit, and hope that my words may encourage others to use Arthur as a vehicle to enable them to do likewise.

Beryl Mercer sent along a cutting from the Western Morning News of 25.6.90 - printed too late for inclusion in our Summer issue:

ARTHUR 'BURIED NEAR GRETN'.

King Arthur was buried a few miles east of the Longtown exit of the M6, near Gretna Green, Burke's Peerage claimed today.

The legendary monarch was interred in what is now known as the parish of Arthuret, according to new research by American Professor Norma Goodrich, an expert on the Arthurian legend.

But Professor Charles Thomas, head of the Institute of Cornish Studies, last night dismissed the claim.

'It's not possible,' he said and added that Goodrich 'not long ago claimed to have found the Round Table at Arthuroon, 'when it was something people had known about and dismissed for 300 years.'

'The name Arthuret is pure coincidence, and nothing to do with King Arthur.' ...

Prof. Goodrich reached her conclusion after studying C6th records, ancient Scottish and French texts and Irish epics.

'The veil of mystery on Arthurian legend is at last being slowly lifted ... said Harold Brooks-Baker, of Burke's Peerage.

'This ranks among a whole range of dubious claims,' said Somerset spokesman Roger Smith. 'We know Arthur was buried in Glastonbury, though we can no more prove it than those 20 different places in Cornwall and others in Scotland and Wales.'

Prof. Goodrich, who has written books about Arthur and Merlin, believes Arthur is buried in an old churchyard which lies under the Church of St. Michael and All Angels at Arthuret, or Arthur's Head.

[It is confidently expected that Excalibur will be discovered in a duckpond in Ashby-de-la-Zouche in time for our next issue.]

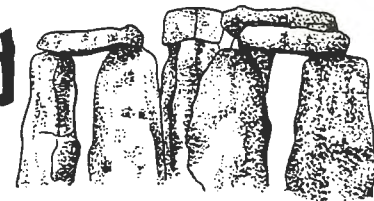
And here's the latest update in the corn circle saga, printed in The Sunday Express, 12.8.90. My attention was drawn to it by a local interested non-member Joan Evason):

'I witnessed a corn circle being formed in 1934. I was gazing over a field of corn ... when I heard a crackling like fire and saw a whirlwind in the centre of the field, spinning stalks, seeds and dust up into the air for about 100 or more feet.

I found a perfect circle of flattened corn, the stalks interlaced and their ears lying on each other (some even plaited) on the periphery. The circle was hot to the touch. There was nothing to be seen in the sky - no wind and no sound. Maybe on a windless day the corn stalks form an electric current which attracts an electric force in the atmosphere meeting with such pressure that the corn is pressed hard on to the ground in a circular motion. A sort of miniature tornado.'

(K.Skin, Cambridge)

did giants build Stonehenge?



IVOR SNOOK

Stonehenge was built in about B.C.1800, but at that time archaeology has no records of any inhabitants of Britain except stone-age primitives. One cannot believe that such people could have had the ability and organisation necessary for such a project. At about the time that Stonehenge was first being built some people, also unknown, were building huge mounds known as burial mounds.

British legendary history ascribes the building of Stonehenge and another large stone circle at Callanish to the work of giants and black men. It is Geoffrey of Monmouth in his 'History of the Kings of Britain' (1136 A.D.) who provides the legend regarding Stonehenge (which he refers to as 'the Giants' Dance'). According to Geoffrey, King Aurelius of Britain was desirous of erecting an impressive monument to a number of his supporters who had been killed by treachery. He was advised by Merlin to

'send for the Giants' Dance, which is in Kilaraus, a mountain in Ireland ... they are mystical stones, and of a medicinal virtue. The giants of old brought them from the farthest coast of Africa, and placed them in Ireland whilst they inhabited that country'.

Geoffrey has confused Wales with Ireland, but the first ring of stones erected at Stonehenge actually came from South Wales. This part of the account being correct may suggest that there is some truth in the reference to giants.

Callanish is a huge circle of stones with many stone avenues which lies in the Isle of Lewis, off the west coast of Scotland, and some 500 miles north of Stonehenge. It is archaeologically as important as Stonehenge, and may possibly be older. There are two legends about this circle. The first says

'At sunrise of Midsummer day the Shining One walks along the avenue. The Priest King who came to the island to raise the stones brought both the stones and black men to raise them. He and other priests wore robes of bird skins and feathers'.

The reference to sunrise of midsummer day and the presence of priests suggests that the worship of the sun was practised at Callanish as it was at Stonehenge. The second legend says that the stones of Callanish

'were erected by the false men - giants who would not build a church nor let themselves be baptised by St.Kieran, who turned them into stone'.

Here we obviously have a mixture of two legends, one of the stones being erected by giants, and a super-imposed Christian legend about St.Kieran turning the builders into stones. Probably 'false men' simply means in the Christian legend that the giants were not Christians.

In 'The Mabinogion' Lady Guest gathered together some of the early legends or folk tales of the Welsh. It contains two stories concerning 'black men'. In 'Peredur, son of Evrawc' Peredur meets a black man who has had an eye put out and asks him who put out his eye. The black man says that he lost it fighting a serpent by a cairn, upon a mound which is called 'The Mound of Mourning'. In 'The Lady of the Fountain' a knight is told to follow a certain road until he comes to a glade with a mound in the centre, where he will see a black man of great stature on the top of the mound, who is not smaller in size than two men of this world. In these tales one black man is a giant and the other presumably of normal size. It is interesting that both of them are closely connected with mounds, the building of which was probably contemporary with the earliest period of Stonehenge.

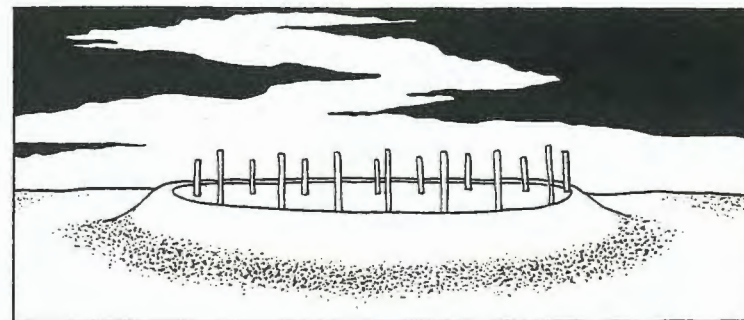
A recurrent theme in legends of giants from many parts of Britain is that two giants take up position on the tops of neighbouring hills and amuse themselves by throwing huge rocks at each other. Whilst there is no direct reference to stone structures this seems to suggest that the giants were supposed to be proficient in handling large stones.

From the legends it is not entirely clear whether the giants and the black men were separate races or actually one and the same. One legend regarding Callanish says that a Priest King brought to the island both the stones and black men to raise them, whilst the other legend says that the stones were erected by giants. Geoffrey of Monmouth's legend says that the bluestone circles at Stonehenge were first erected in South Wales by giants who brought the stones from Africa. In fact the stones came from the area where they were first erected, so it is not impossible that someone receiving the legend of black men erecting those stones assumed that they had been brought by Africans from their own country. If these stones were erected by giants in South Wales and subsequently taken to Stonehenge there must have been giants in Britain before any stones were erected at Stonehenge. In the two legends from the Mabinogion one black man is a giant, the other apparently not, but that they are both connected with mounds suggests that their time of existence was thought to be contemporary with the beginnings of Stonehenge.

An interesting account of the British giants is to be found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'History of the Kings of Britain'. There we read of Brutus and his warband who originated from Troy and fought their way across Europe finally landing in Britain in about B.C.1100. At one point during the journey Brutus consulted a statue of Diana which would give answers to those who came to consult her. Brutus asked to be told his company's fate and where they would settle down. He was told that

'There lies beyond the Gallic bounds
An island which the western sea surrounds.
By giants once possessed, now few remain
To bar thy entrance or obstruct thy reign'.

The island referred to is obviously Britain, and Geoffrey comments that when Brutus finally landed here 'The island was then called Albion and was inhabited by none but a few giants'. Once settled in Britain, Corineus, Brutus' main chieftain, began to take over Cornwall, where the giants were in greater numbers than elsewhere. Corineus' men were attacked by a band of twenty giants, which seems to be a very small number to attack what must have been a considerable invading force, and may support the statement that they were few in number.



All the giants were killed except their leader Goemagot, whom Corineus subsequently wrestled and defeated. Geoffrey's account states that Goemagot was twelve cubits tall, which would be from 18 to 20 feet. It is difficult to visualise how Corineus could wrestle with a man three times his own height. Obviously the stature of the giant has increased in the telling.

It is thought that from about 1400 B.C. groups of an aristocratic warrior people, known as the 'Wessex people' began to arrive in Britain. It could well be that Brutus and his company were one such group, and it might well be that the earliest 'Wessex people' took over Stonehenge from the giants, whom they afterwards exterminated.

One would expect that if a tall race actually existed in Britain in ancient times then archaeology would have discovered some remains of them. Unfortunately whilst the skeletons of large men have been discovered from time to time in various places the discoverers have not recorded their exact size. For instance in 1600 'a skeleton of gigantic stature' was found at Flowers Barrow in Dorset, and in 1870 the skeleton of 'an unusually tall man' was found at Lesneuth Round Barrow. In his 'History of Cornwall' (1602) Richard Carew states that 'Not far from Land's End there is a village called Trebegean, in English 'The town of the giant's grave', near whereunto and within memory (as I have been informed) certain workmen searching for tin discovered a long square vault which contained the bones of an excessive big carcase and verified the etymology of the name'.

However there are a few discoveries in which the height of cadavers have been stated. 'The statistical Account of Scotland' vol. 1X records the discovery in Scotland of a number of stone coffins containing skeletons of men seven feet four inches (2.23m) tall. On the island of Lundy, off the coast of North Devon, there was found in 1850 the burial of a man and his wife in stone coffins. The man was estimated to be eight feet (2.43m) tall, and his wife seven feet ten inches. Remains of other persons of normal height were also found on the island. At Burgh Castle in Norfolk the skeleton of a man seven feet four inches tall, said to be Saxon, was found. In a cellar below the chapel at St. Michael's Mount, off the coast of Cornwall and the centre of several giant legends, was discovered the skeleton of a man seven feet eight inches tall.

There is a remarkable account of a grave discovered in 1687 at Allen's Close, Derbyshire, where in the centre of a stone-walled

enclosure and buried beneath a mound there was discovered the skeleton of a man nine feet tall, and surrounded by 100 other skeletons.

It is not only these ancient skeletons which reveal the existence of men of great height in this country, for there are occasional records of men of similar height who have lived here right up to modern times. It should not be overlooked that the seven feet four inch man of Burgh Castle, if a Saxon, must have lived here later than about A.D.450. In the English civil war there were at the battle of Bath (1643) two very tall men. One Anthony Paine, the personal servant of Sir Bevil Grenville, was seven feet four inches tall. The other, John Langherne of Truro, lieutenant of a cavalry regiment, was known as 'Long Langherne' and was seven feet six inches tall. John Munro in 'The British race' (1909) refers to a man in Scotland, a Dr. Macleod, who was seven feet six inches tall and was referred to as 'the High Priest of Morven'. In March 1968 the Sunday Express newspaper contained an article about a tall man living in Kent and the difficulties that his height of seven feet four inches caused him. He had a father six feet three inches in height and a brother six feet five inches. He also had an ancestor, a village blacksmith, whose height is unknown but who was referred to as 'an absolute giant of a man'. There is a man still living, who may be the same person, but whose height is stated to be seven feet six and a half inches. A former gamekeeper living in Nottinghamshire was seven feet two inches tall before a hip operation reduced his height.

It will be seen from the foregoing that ancient legends of Britain claim that stone structures such as Stonehenge and Callanish were erected by 'giants' assisted by 'black men'. Other legends of 'black men' connect them with ancient mounds, which would have been constructed at about the same time as Stonehenge. Folk tales of giants frequently depict them standing upon neighbouring hills (mounds?) and hurling huge stones at each other.

There must be a link here between the giants and their manipulation of large stones. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth a race of giants had once inhabited Britain but was dying out by about B.C.1100. Archaeology reports the finding of 'huge carcasses' at various places, and of the remains of men varying in height from seven feet four inches to nine feet, some in stone coffins, some in mounds. People of height from seven feet two inches to seven feet six and a half inches have been recorded as living in modern times.

It seems a very reasonable hypothesis that there was once a race of tall people in Britain, possibly averaging seven feet six inches in height. These would be referred to as 'giants' by the stone-age people amongst whom they lived and who themselves probably averaged only about five feet six inches in height. They may have been referred to as 'black men' if they were dark of hair and skin whilst the stone-agers were fair haired and light of skin. The occasional appearance of men of similar height in modern times may indicate that some genes from the giants have been passed down through the centuries.

If Stonehenge was built by 'giants' it would have been by that race of tall men, and the evidence tends to demonstrate that they may have existed at the appropriate time.



'The Head of Bran was taken by his seven companions to Harlech, where they lived in happy enchantment for seven years, and the birds of Rhiannon sang to them across the water. Then they journeyed on to Gwailes and the Head of Bran continued to converse pleasantly with them for 80 years at The Assembly of the Wondrous Head.'

'THE TALKING HEAD'

ARTHURIAN THEATRE NEWS:

There seems to be a minor proliferation of Arthurian plays this year. The dire 'Gadzooks, Sir Kay, thou hast pierced my pauldron' style of the past seems to have been displaced by a more experimental approach, in keeping with contemporary theatre practice. I have not yet managed to see the Lyric's 'Morte d'Arthur' by David Freeman, but they are advertising it with the following quotes: 'I'd trade it all for this year's Lears and a couple of Chekhovs besides' (New Statesman) and 'Theatrical Dungeons and Dragons, big, bold and a bit crazy, but wouldn't life be emptier without such things?' (The Times).

The Dukes Theatre, Lancaster featured 'Tales of King Arthur' by John Chambers in their 1990 Promenade Season. Their publicity leaflet described the production as 'a new working of the tales which re-creates all the pageantry, sorcery and spectacle of the original saga ... Arthur and his knights heroically battle with fantastical and terrifying monsters, sinister enchantresses and wicked yet valiant foes.'

The New Victoria Theatre, Newcastle, Staffs included 'Merlin and the Sleeping King' as a Christmas play for the young, by Nigel Bryant. Publicity note: 'The mists come down on the fields and woods. It is the beginning of a magical adventure, a tale of dragons and wizards, and a journey to find the secret of the Sleeping King.'

Two more Merlin plays are to be seen at the Edinburgh Fringe this year: 'Merlin' by Fergus Kennedy, described by the company as 'powerful drama and poetic imagery wrapped in a rich and original musical score' and by the Liverpool Daily Post as 'a fascinating journey through Celtic legend filled with marvellous music.' The other was 'Blue Merlin' by Mike Fenlason of The Unlikely Theatre Company of Arizona. Described as 'The new American Southwest writing' they publicised it as a dramatisation of 'the return of Merlin the Magician and his quest for Arthur' and their housestyle as 'an admixture of myth, sex and satire.'

It would be splendid if a group of Pendragons could get together to work on an Arthurian production of a dramatised story-telling activity sometime: there is the know-how among members. Shades of Tim Porter's 'Green Branch' Company!

THE XVth INTERNATIONAL ARTHURIAN CONGRESS:

This was held at Durham University, August 11th-18th. Scholars

worldwide assembled to present some 87 papers on aspects of Arthurian and Medieval literature, with titles like: 'Narrative Strategy and the Tristan Tapestries of Brussels.' Special events included a concert, banquet, excursions to The Wall, Castles of Northumbria and York. Unfortunately, news of the conference was received too late to notify members in time. This triennial Congress should be due again in 1993 - at a shrewd guess - and we'll let you all know about it in plenty of time. (See how confidently we plan ahead?)

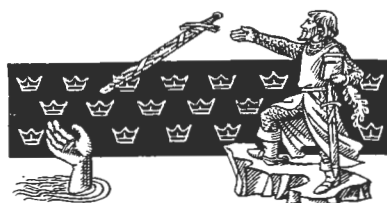
'PAST TIMES' TOURS:

Visitors to some of our more tourist-conscious cities (Oxford, York, Exeter, Cambridge) may have discovered 'Past Times' Shops (Historical Collections Ltd.) who specialise in 'fine and unusual gifts from every age of Britain's past'. These include Stone Age, Celtic, Viking, Saxon and Medieval replicas. Some of these are very tasteful indeed. A catalogue can be obtained from them at Wootton Business Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6LG.

This year Past Times have joined with Cultural Heritage and Citisights to offer Study Tour Breaks, exploring sites associated with their products. These tours included Prehistoric Britain, Hadrian's Wall, Lindisfarne and the Early Church and Arthur's Britain (sites visited included: Glastonbury and South Cadbury, Winchester, Castle Dore, St. Michael's Mount, Dozmary Pool, Tintagel and Land's End and concluded on May Day at Padstow for the festivities of the 'Oss.) Good value at £199, including guides. Phone (0865) 326111 for information. Perhaps we could fill our own bus next year!

KING ARTHUR'S BOOKSHOP:

Yes, he's undercover at Tintagel, waiting to take over the great bookchains. Sorry! Near the lane leading down to the castle, A.P. and M.Davy keep the above-named bookshop which is well worth a browse if you're in the area. Send for a list of books to: King Arthur's Bookshop, 1 Castle Hill, Tintagel, Cornwall, PL34 ODD, or telephone 0840 770308.



EXCAVATIONS AT TINTAGEL:

Preliminary excavations on the Tintagel site, led by Christopher Morris of Durham University, have revealed that buildings of the 5th and 6th on the site are much more extensive than had been anticipated. Eastern Mediterranean pottery has been found and the Byzantine connection with Tintagel is leading to a re-examination of the relationship of Britain with the Mediterranean during the Arthurian period.

STONEHENGE:

The Times, 23rd April, 1990. Norman Hammond reported that scientists from the Open University have proposed that the bluestones of Stonehenge were deposited from their original site on to Salisbury Plain by glacial action. I seem to have heard that one before. The 'Merlin Effect'?

[Yes, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, the Welsh Druids MAY have moved the bluestones by 'drums, songs and the clash of cymbals' as John Michell suggests, and hence they MAY have been called 'rock singers' but their leader was NOT Elvis Preselly.]

ARTHUR'S O'ON:

'What!' I hear you say, 'again?' An article on this topic appeared in DRAGON, Vol.3 No.3 (Spring '89). It is well illustrated, with a map and elevations, and quotes the Independent and Guardian on the claims put forward by Harold Brooks-Baker of Burke's Peerage and Dr. Norma Goodrich (that it was used by Arthur and his Inner Circle as the Round Table). Charles Evans-Gunther describes the O'on as 'a Roman tropeum or war memorial situated not far from the second Roman wall.' He vividly dismisses the theories of the two pundits as 'like using comic books and Hollywood war movies as a basis to write a history of the second world war.' Martin Henig's 'Religion in Roman Britain' (Batsford '84) gives the following confirmation of the war-memorial origins of the O'on:

Antoninus Pius followed Hadrian's policies closely and was responsible for the Antonine Wall. Arthur's O'on in the Carron Valley, north of Falkirk, probably commemorated the construction of the Antonine Wall, and the building may have recalled Hadrian's masterpiece - the Pantheon - to the travelled beholder. It was very probably the most remarkable temple or temple-like structure of Roman Britain to have survived into modern times. It contained a statue - we have a record of a bronze figure being found - but whether of Jupiter, Victory or some other deity is not known. The O'on was demolished tragically in 1743 in order to provide stone for the repair of a dam, but we have drawings by Stukely, Gordon and others, while a replica was subsequently built in 1763 by Sir James Clerk and his architect-mason John Baxter, as a dove-cote on the stable block of Penicuik House, Midlothian! There is a photograph of this and references to two learned articles by K.A.Skeer.

I think with this I shall leave this topic for good! (Ed. note: See also news-cutting sent in by Beryl Mercer elsewhere in this issue.)

CELTIC AND ARTHURIAN ART:

Our own Celtic artist Simon Rouse is hoping to exhibit some of his artwork at the Merlin Conference this year. Courtney Davis has taken an interest in his designs: I think they deserve some attention.

The August edition of the magazine PREDICTION featured on its cover 'The Table of Knights' from the Grail Quest Series, which was reproduced by the kind permission of the artist, Courtney Davis. This edition contains the first of a two-part article on Glastonbury's Round Table by Stephanie Wilson: a summary of Kathleen Maltwood and Mary Caine's writings. (Mary is a member of the Pendragon Society, if you didn't know, and gave a slide show at last year's AGM, of her visits to the Glastonbury Zodiac. This was an excellent idea, and we would be very pleased if members this year would be prepared to talk about their interests informally to other members at the AGM.)

Those Pendragons who have admired Simon's Celtic designs may like to know that a book has been published in America titled 'Celtic Copy Book - Celtic Designs to Photocopy' by Amy L.Lusebrink. The only address I have is 'Bruceston Mills.

WV. (Scotpress) USA. I'll try to find out more. How altruistic - to allow others to use your designs freely: you can produce your own letterheads, embroideries etc., without fear of arrest. I understand from the notes to the Arthurian Exhibition at Theatr Clwyd last year that Courtney Davis is to produce embroidery designs also.

Equally altruistic is the note which appears in the Exchange Journal 'MERCIAN MYSTERIES', editor Paul Nix: 'All articles are the copyright of the author and MERCIAN MYSTERIES, but reproduction is permitted with appropriate credit by non-profit-making groups. A generous offer, Paul, which we'll be happy to take up if you print anything Arthurian. [Ed. note: Yes, Paul, and we'll be pleased to reciprocate where PENDRAGON articles are concerned.]

EXCHANGE JOURNALS:

Two articles in recent Exchange Journals may be of interest to members:

- (i) 'The Wright Stuff' (DRAGON, June 1990) This takes up Paul Screeton's article in PENDRAGON XX/1. 'Crimdon and Camlann' showing connections between Durham and Arthur.
- (ii) 'In Search of King Arthur around Stroud' (GLOUCESTERSHIRE EARTH MYSTERIES, No.8). The article connects the Arthurian Battle of Cat Coit Celidon with the Roman villa at Woodchester.

AN ARTHURIAN TAROT:

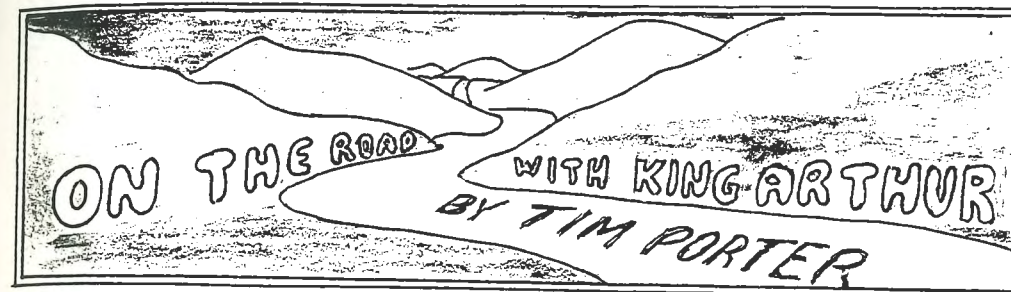
The Arthurian Tarot by John and Caitlin Matthews (who else?) has been published by Aquarian Press. It comes in a plastic pack with a handbook at £15.99. There is an expanded companion volume, 'Hallowquest', available separately at £7.99. It is described in the publisher's copy as a revelation of 'the ancient traditions of the Arthurian Mysteries as a living mythos for creative visualisation and personal transformation'. The four suits are Sword, Spear, Grail and Stone, the four elements of the Western Mystery Tradition, and most of the major trumps are renamed to suit the Arthurian pattern. The book includes 'new ways of using the tarot' which includes rituals, meditations and shamanic journeys. If the tarot as a symbol system for psychic and psychological exploration appeals to you then you'll be excited by it. If Arthurian 'mysteries' are not your bag, then just give it a miss. Foreign members might like details: Aquarian Press, Wellesborough, Northamptonshire. NN8 2RQ. The ISBN number is ISBN 0-85030-755-4. I expect it has already arrived in the States.

I am reminded that Courtney Davis (I'll have to charge for all this free publicity!) is also due to publish a tarot this year. Should be quite something artistically. With Bob Stewart's Merlin Tarot and the Norse Tarot, both with accompanying books, Western mystery buffs are now well catered for - though it would be nice to have a Northern Tradition pack from Nigel Pennick, also a member of our society - as is John Matthews (name dropper!).

OVER TO YOU:

Bran had seven companions to help him keep up his Assembly. I would be delighted to receive news items, cuttings, snippets of information suitable for this column. It's YOUR journal, and this is a way everyone can contribute. See you next Christmas.

Fred Stedman-Jones.



I first became aware of Arthur as a young child, when my brother and I were read the stories of the Knights of the Round Table, and adopted the characters into our play. As a teenager, full of grandiose ideas about how I was going to be a composer, I planned a cycle of five operas based on Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King', but never got as far as writing anything down!

My first serious brush with the Matter of Britain came when I was a music student. Four of us were co-opted to write a composite opera for children, based on 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'. I was to take the third section, the part about the Christmas Games at Castle Bertilak. I can't remember whether I completed my part of the opera or not, but I can remember how we fled in confusion when confronted by the unruly children to whom we had to sell our scheme. In short, the thing never got off the ground.

However, a few years later I was asked by a teacher friend to write an opera for her school, and the 'Gawain' idea resurfaced in my mind. Bude Grammar School presented the complete work in the summer of 1971. It was very much a 'folk opera', using several traditional melodies, and with an orchestra and a country dance band facing one another across the stage.

At that time I was very much concerned with founding and running the Celtic Opera Group, and later the same year I presented 'Sir Gawain' in Okehampton with this company. From that time forward, productions of 'Sir Gawain' became almost an annual event at the New Year, both with the Celtic Opera Group and the Green Branch which succeeded it. In 1976 we first used the new 'slimmed down' version with a chamber ensemble instead of an orchestra, enabling us to tour with the show.

'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' is a theatrical gift. For a start, one has to have an impressive Green Knight, a giant figure with detachable head. Secondly it is a good story, keeping the audience guessing right up to the end. In the opera, Arthur is the archetypal noble king, though capable of playfulness when the court carouses, even letting his hair down enough to indulge in a game of leapfrog!

In 1973 I portrayed Arthur again on stage, this time in the opera 'The Entertaining of the Noble Head'. This time, however, it was the historical Arthur I was concerned with. The story of the opera works on three parallel levels - 1. a mythic tale from the Mabinogion; 2. The real Arthur; 3. a modern story. I had my modern heroine, an artist called Katy, finding her way into the past by walking into her own paintings. The past with which she becomes involved is that of the 5th/6th century, in which Arthur is defending Britain against the Saxon invaders. So we took care to costume Arthur as 'authentically' as possible, and portrayed him as a bluff cavalry-officer type.

The Noble Head' has been staged twice, both times as a West Country tour. It is one of my more 'serious' (for want of a better word) pieces, with a musical idiom more difficult than 'Gawain'. In 1973 I saw it as a personal statement of some importance, though I think if it were done now, it would seem to have dated rather seriously.

In 1974 the Celtic Opera Group disbanded, to be succeeded in 1976 by the Green Branch Theatre Company. I soon broadened my scope to writing plays in rhyming verse, and it wasn't long before I subjected Arthurian legend to this treatment. Thus in 1981 we presented a pantomime 'The Marvels of Merlin'. 'Merlin' is based partly on Geoffrey of Monmouth, partly on the Welsh tale 'Culhwch and Olwen'. It features a principal boy, a dame, and an all-singing-dancing cast. Arthur is presented as a guileless naive youth whom Merlin works like a glove-puppet. The knights are morons who only want adventure, which Merlin doles out to them like a sort of ration. In fact Merlin runs everything, leaving us to wonder what will happen when he is gone ...

Be quiet you boys. I hate this noise;
My mind's on higher things.
It's plain to see you don't need me -
I'm through with courts and kings.
Cheer up young knight, you'll be all right,
I've left you in good hands;
King Arthur copes, he knows the ropes.
He sort of understands
The way to rule, though any fool
Could do it with some practice;
And by the way, I ought to say
He must be married: fact is
All kings need wives to share their lives.
And Arthur p'raps might make
A handsome pair with Guinevere;
So will you undertake
To see it done this week, old son?
She ought to be okay,
And if she's not, I think we've got
A limitless array
Of willing girls with flaxen curls
To bring him forth an heir.
And if they can't, then still we shan't
Have any cause to fear,
Because there dwells beyond the fells
A hephew to the king:
What is his name? - it's all the same -
Mordred, or some such thing;
He ought to do for such as you.
I've heard he's not too bad:
I think that's all, so have a ball!
Chin up! Don't look so sad.

I tried to show what happened next in the 1984 sequel 'Lancelot: the Tale of the Grail'. In this play, King Arthur is left alone: with Merlin gone, everything seems to go wrong - for instance his disappointing marriage to Guinevere, and the disappearance of the knights on their wild-goose chase after the Grail ...



How silent stands the Hall!
I feel the shadows fall.
Now they are gone, I'd have them stay -
I often wished they'd go away;
Their stupid chatter bored me stiff -
But in their absence, it's as if
The dark that lay in wait
Had slipped within the gate.

I now have all the time I need
To study history, to read,
And all those other pleasant things
Which seldom come the way of kings.
I should be full of high delight,
Yet only feel the fall of night
And know that I'm alone
Upon a shaky throne.

Shall I go seek out Guinevere?
Perhaps not. I don't think she'll care
To see me now; she's with her dames -
I do not even know their names
These days; they have their lives to lead
And frankly, I don't think they need
Their husbands and their sons at all
And think that knighthood's rather small,
And what's more I agree!
But still they won't want me.

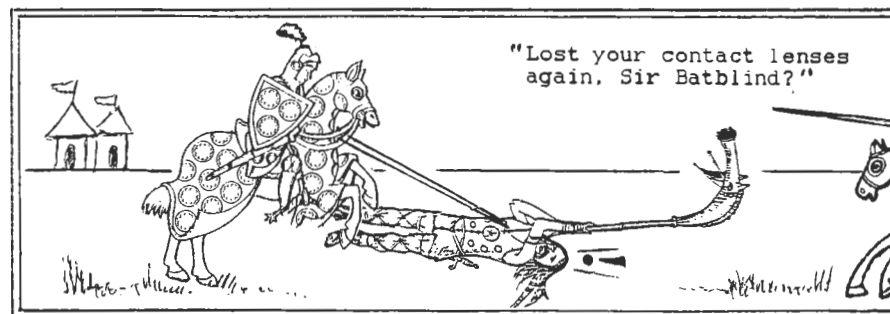
I'll sit awhile and watch the fire ...

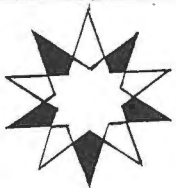
MORDRED: A traveller craves an audience, sire.

Thus Mordred makes his first appearance at Arthur's Court. I remember how Steven Deproost played the part in the first production of 'Lancelot' - oily smooth one moment, spitting venom the next.

I'm sorry to have to tell you that in this play Arthur emerges as a bumbling idiot, well-meaning but clueless. His reputation is an illusion, created by Merlin, and now bolstered by the deeds of Lancelot. So in various plays I've presented Arthur across the spectrum, from hero to fool.

'Merlin' and 'Lancelot' have had three productions each. Those were exciting days: to see ones ideas come to life on stage is a thrilling experience. At present, Green Branch is disbanded, but I hope to start another company in the future.





Perpetual Choirs

The Whiteleaved Oak Decagon



I resume my investigation of John Michell's hypothesis of a pattern existing between and extending from the Three Major Centres of British religion and mystery tradition. Iolo Morganwg is not really of any concern to my considerations: the structure of the Decagon is no part of his interesting if gnostic writing.

Having said this, my studies have progressed to a point where I feel I cannot do justice to them in a magazine context; I am going to publish them in booklet or book form. For now I shall content myself with summarising the significance of each vertex briefly and outline the dominant theme which seems to arise there. I believe these themes may be pursued in literature and art, and used as meditations and pathworkings, and as the keys to developing new skills for self-development. The aphorisms are those of the bard Amergin, of course, not Taliesin. I am omitting the tarot attributions as these are promising to be more fruitful than I had anticipated, and I wish to consider them in more detail. I would be delighted to correspond on this subject with any interested reader.



Goring-on-Thames (1) 'I am a teardrop from heaven - I am the queen of every hive.'

The Initiation of the Elements. Malkuth

The great crossroads of the ancient Ridgeway and the River Thames. Horses gallop beneath the open sky, symbols of Rhiannon and Epona. This is where we may contact the Earth Mother-Gaia, Demeter. Our journey begins here with our own bodies and love of each other, and for Nature and natural things: for fruitfulness of crops and living things, for the grain cycle, for growth and decay, for the rich earth, rain, sky and sunshine. A Roman-Celtic temple was situated high above the ancient ford and Dorchester on Thames is an important religious site with continuity of worship from earliest times. Nature magic, dedication to green things.



Stonehenge (2) 'I am an infant - who but I knows the secret of the Dolmen Arch.'

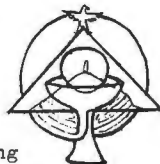
The Initiation of the Standing Stones. Kether

The Great Omphalos of Britain. Circles, stones and barrows: temples built for individual and collective rites of passage connected with the solar/lunar year- apart from normal boundaries of time and space. Symbol systems of life within the great pattern of the cosmos, to which man links his own microcosmic existence. A place to draw down and offer, up from the still point at the centre of a circle within the revolving zodiac. 'Each stone has its virtue' (Merlin). Taliesin of the Radiant Brow expresses this vision. Seasonal and astrological linked rituals and initiations. Earth energy studies.



(3) Glastonbury 'I am the shield to every head - I am the blaze on every hill.'

Ironically, the place where most could be said, but least need be said. The Isle of Avalon, The phoenix Tor with St. Michael's church, the hollow hill of Gwyn ap Nudd with its spiral maze of initiation. The surrounding Zodiac, the Wattle Church and the Great Abbey with the grave of the sleeping King; the Chalice Well with its hidden grail, the flowering thorn of Joseph of Arimathea. Home of British Christianity and centre of Arthurian mysteries and the Grail. A place to remember sacrificed heroes and gods, to see old things afresh and to follow new paths.



(4) Llantwit Major 'I have been a light in a lantern - A word in a Book.'

The Initiation of the Anointed One. Chokmah

I gave detailed information on this Caer last time. It is a significant centre to focus one's understanding of the Celtic Church. I would recommend readers to 'The Celtic Alternative' by Shirley Toulson (Rider, 1987). The publishers claim 'the book leaves us with the challenging notion that the Celtic Church still has much to teach us of tolerance, persistence and a tough but gentle kindness.' Ms. Toulson examines the history, teaching and practices of the Celtic Church, linking them culturally & spiritually with the religion of the druids. She also shows significant links with the Coptic Christians of Egypt-the 'desert fathers.' 'From Bethlehem to Calvary: The Initiations of Jesus' by Alice Bailey (Lucis Press, 1937) exemplify the 5 stages of man's spiritual journey-through Christ's experiences, actual & symbolic. Learning & teaching with others, acceptance and love.



(5) Llandovery 'I am a Wizard - who but I sets the cool head aflame with fire?'

The Initiation of the Magus. Hod

Also covered last time. This is the sphere of wonder-workers, magicians, conjure-men, herbalists, doctors; of Mercury and Magic-of the Master wonder-worker Merlin. Its emphasis is intellectual and creative, combining logical insight with inspiration. Suitable areas to concentrate on would be ritual magic, healing, astral voyaging, the Bardic sciences. Skills of communication are highly significant here, and creative writing, calligraphy, and musical composition might be considered. Reading: 'The Quest for Merlin', Nikolai Tolstoy (Sceptre, 1985) and the writings of Bob Stewart and Caitlin Matthews. Mind over matter.



(6) Plynlimon 'I am a height where Druids walk - I am a strong tide of the Deep.'

The Initiation of The Silver Wheel. Yesod

See last journal for details. This is the sphere of the Moon, of enchantment and dreams, of the female as recipient and transmitter, of nurturing inner power. The White Lady-Arianrhod, Ceridwen, Luna, Diana-bears her lover away to Avalon or other realms. Areas of activity and study would include divination, trance, dreamwork, art images produced from the subconscious (surrealism), fantasy writing, moon and water magic, kundalini-duality of male and female. Imagination and dream.



(7) Lower Hordley 'I am a boar for valour - I am the spear point that gives battle.'

The Initiation of the Warrior. Geburah

The sphere of the Hawk Gods. This is Borderland country since time immemorial: frontier of the Roman Empire against the Celts, Border between Mercia and Powys, Norman and Welsh. Offa's Dyke and the great hillfort at Oswestry bear witness. To be a warrior was the ideal life for the Celt, a hero among warriors. In symbolic form: the quest to heal the Wasteland, Gawain's journey to face the Green Knight, defeat of winter powers, slayer of the wild beast (the Id); wisdom of the Wolfways. Overcoming fear, doing away with the old. Areas of interest are: lessons learned from overcoming fear, comradeship of endeavour, self defence, the symbolism of the Sword of Light, Symbolic board games. Psychic self defence.



Field (8) 'I am a stag of seven tines - I have been a snake on a hill.'

The Initiation of the Guardian of the Totems. Netzach

Forest and Wildwood. Abbots Bromley horn dance a strong symbol here. The Chartley herd of ancient White Cattle, the Bagot goat herd. The Horned God, Cernunnos and his consort, the serpent knowledge of self-from depths to heights. Natural instincts-the Anima, instinctive drives, intuition, wisdom, direct earth force and natural contacts, fertility. Contacting the totem guide, shamanism, pagan ritual: the god and goddess. Biblio: 'Mabon & the Mysteries of Britain', Caitlin Matthews (Arkana, 1987). 'The Elements of Shamanism', Bob Stewart (Element Books).



Enderby (9)

'I am a thorn beneath the skin - I am the Womb/
Tomb of every hope.'

The Initiation of the Underworld.

Binah

King Lear buried under River Soar in Cavern of Janus-god of beginnings & endings. Richard III slain at Bosworth-Tudor King ascended throne of Britain-Arthur restored. Black Annis the Devouring Mother ate children in cave in the Fane Hills (Panu); the goddess in her katabolic role, devouring Mother, descent into cauldron of rebirth; Black Godiva, Kali aspect, Roman Mithraeum or Temple of Bacchus (at Carrawburgh a Mother goddess figure found in Mithraic temple). Underground initiations, ordeals of heat and cold, frightening images, identification with risen God, rebirth of Sun at Winter Solstice. Devouring Mother as tomb, descent into Cauldron of Rebirth. Solar and Lunar aspects of death.

Underworld Initiations, Mystery cults-death and resurrection.

Biblio: 'The Underworld Initiation', Bob Stewart (Aquarian Press, 1985).



Potterspurry (10)

'I am a world of science - I am a hill of Poetry.'

The Initiation of Aquarius.

Chesed

Eight roads cross the Quse in this circle. Chesed: the City, Castle, beneficent Father. Hope of having learnt old lessons, time to resolve problems, to balance to rebuild. Milton Keynes, new self-sufficient city built on sites of older settlements. Midsummer Boulevard, laid out to line of Summer Solstice, Maze: 70's architecture. Open University, energy for new forms to emerge, new ideas, hope. Place for Master Teachers, Builders of future. Need for (i) self-evaluation, (ii) adjustment to others. Image: holding empty Grail Cup to sky full of stars. The Corn King, Athena-protectress of the City. Building a new corner stone within self: New Age studies, pursuing one's skills, developing talents, learning crafts, meeting to share with others, pursue new goals. Make a cup, paint a picture, write a poem.

And now we're back to Goring-on-Thames. As I drove up from the river in June a section of a rainbow rose between the Ridgeway and the low clouds in a great wall of colour: encouragement enough for me to pursue these studies further. I appreciate that my earlier article may have been 'pitty' in that I was attempting to present enough objective evidence to establish a dominant theme in each 'caer'. The converse may now be true, hence my decision to expand the material in another context.



St. Michael
carries the
Dragonpower



Fred Stedman-Jones (C) 1990.

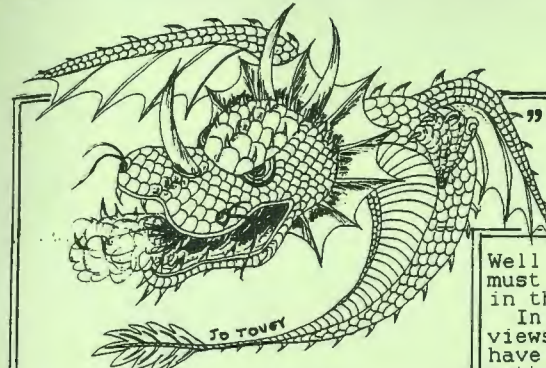
'A MYSTERY TO THE WORLD IS THIS STAVE OF ARTHUR.'

In my naive optimism I expected to be deluged with answers to the puzzle set in the last issue:

Mean they to find thee, Arthur, Great King?
Thinketh ye of that Dream-age returning?
Of that Sangreal romance, sire, a lay do men sing -
As man's heart for golden Camelot is a-yearning.

Only Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury sent in an answer but as it exploded when I opened the envelope I never did find out if she'd got it right.

Actually the secret is that the second line is an anagram of the first line and the fourth line is an anagram of the third. Easy, wasn't it? Shame on you!



"WHAT ARTHUR MEANS TO ME"

Well, what does Arthur mean to you? He must mean SOMETHING or you wouldn't be in this Society.

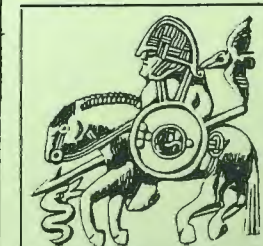
In this issue you will have seen the views of some Pendragon members: they have taken time to think about the matter - to analyse their attitudes - perhaps for the first time.

This is precisely the effect the current theme was intended to have. We've got a few pieces in hand (or on the way) from others on the same subject, for Issue No. 21/1, including dazzling ex cathedra treatises from Fred and myself. BUT WE NEED MORE!

So how about it, stalwart Pendragons? You MUST have a story to tell: a story that could be of interest to others, perhaps coinciding with their own views. ('Marry, Sir Eddie! Rust my habergeon if I speak not sooth! Yon knight is of a mind like unto mine own!')

A good response will serve yet another purpose: it will help the production team to know what members' needs and interests are - so we can take a sadistic delight in ignoring them and doing our own thing.

So make our day! Sharpen up your quills and get writing!



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hear



Ye—

We're happy to publicize member Ian Forrester Roberts' 'LAND OF ARTHUR' Exhibition of Celtic and Medieval Legend at The Old Library, The Hayes, Cardiff. This has been open since July and closes on 6th October, so there's still plenty of time for you to attend.

Ian had hoped to put on an exhibition at Tewkesbury to coincide with the AGM but alas; no venue was available.

Pendragon members who have seen one of Ian's shows before will be aware of the high standards he has attained in the past, and he assures me that the display is now bigger and better than ever - not an easy achievement if the one I saw at Winchester in 1984 is anything to go by. If you can get to Cardiff, then, you shouldn't be disappointed.

Pendragon member from early days, Steven Banks, regrets he will be in South Africa at the time of the AGM but sends his good wishes to everyone.

We are very pleased to welcome back a distinguished one-time member of Pendragon, John Matthews. (A review of a recent book of his appears in this issue). Another new subscriber whose name will be familiar to everyone interested in geomancy, zodiacs, sacred geometry and prehistory is Nigel Pennick. Welcome Nigel!

Paul Nix of MERCIAN MYSTERIES has generously given permission for non-profit journals to reprint, merely with acknowledgements, any material of interest from his own magazine. Thanks Paul: you've started something worthwhile. PENDRAGON hereby follows suit.

A new feature appears in this issue of PENDRAGON - Fred Stedman-Jones's 'The Talking Head'. It will vary in length from issue to issue, depending on how many news items and other matters of interest come Fred's way. But it's up to members to keep Fred - or me - advised on happenings in their own areas which they think may interest others. (Yes, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, I KNOW Geoffrey Ashe, in 'Avalonian Quest', hints at links between the Asian 'Shambala' and Glastonbury, but the activities of the Chipping Sodbury 'Did St. Paul Cross Tibet with King Arthur?' Society will interest no one. I don't care if the Tibetan Ho Lee Bible DOES mention 'The Yaks of the Apostles'. Anyway, the Mallory who tackled Everest was George, not Sir Thomas ...)

Celtic Art-Simon Rouse