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Pendragon investigates Arthurian history, archaeology
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Main theme for this issue - 'What Merlin Means to Me'.

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Editorial

'At last!' - I hear you say - 'PENDRAGON is going over to colour! A new era dawns: small-journalism will never be the same again!' Sorry to disillusion you: the varicoloured streaks and blobs you may see on this editorial page are merely a subtle mixture of blood, tears and sweat (mine) resulting from my efforts to get this edition out in time for Christmas. The trouble with editorials is that at the time of writing them the editor cannot be sure whether or not a specified aim will be achieved. He can only try - driving himself to the limit and beyond in performing his sacred duty to those he serves...

So now, having enlisted your benign sympathy and reduced many of you to tears, let me wish you on behalf of all of us at Pendragon a very Happy Yuletide (if this Journal is out in time) or Imbolc, Easter, or even Beltane (if it isn't). Now for an example of editorial adroitness: see how cleverly mention of the Celtic fire festivals leads into the announcement that the fine Celtic scholar, Dr. Anne Ross, has joined Pendragon! A warm welcome to her and thanks to Fred for being instrumental in her enrolment.

Shortage of space has made it necessary to combine 'Hear Ye' with the editorial in this issue (the two items often overlap anyway). Now recent editions of PENDRAGON have all run to 36 pages (as you will have noticed if you got past the first page with its difficult two-syllable words). This is great - so long as we have something to fill them with. As I implied above, there was no shortage of material for this issue but there is very little so far for the Spring edition. So get writing, some of you!. The number of letters we print also varies considerably: there were six pages last time; only two this. We COULD include more but the fulsome (though richly deserved) praise of which they mostly consist would get boring after the first few hundred 'Goodness-what-absolutely-marvellous-people-you-are!' remarks and lead mean-spirited members like Bob Trubshaw of 'Mercian Mysteries' to make the scurrilous suggestion that we write them ourselves. [Word-processors at dawn, Bob!] On the subject of letters, by the way, may we mention this again: if you want a personal reply please, PLEASE send an s.a.e. Next to printing costs, postage is the biggest drain on our funds.

PENDRAGON IMPRINTS. Fred is handling this matter and has made an excellent job of collating and typing material for Imprint No.2, which consists of the first four issues ever of PENDRAGON. Imprint No.1 was 'A for Arthur' - the story of the founding of the Society. This was a photocopy of the original, retyped in places by Geoff where legibility was poor. Both imprints are available at £1.00 each, incl. p.& p.

Once again there is no specific theme for this issue, though an earlier theme (two issues old) has at length inspired one or two people to write. (including a certain V.I.P.) Does Merlin mean anything to YOU? If so, tell us about it. (No thank you, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, you know what you can do with your piece on Miss Monroe. M.E.R.L.I.N does not spell 'Marilyn').

Talking of imprints and Merlin (as we were before Deirdre interrupted) we had intended to reprint Sid Birchby's 1978 article, 'Merlin at Alderley Edge' - in accordance with Fred's suggestion in 'Talking Head' that we might re-run selected articles from past issues. Unfortunately space won't allow it. Look forward to it in the Spring edition.

Well, it remains to wish you all once more ... [Oh no! 'Not YOU again, Deirdre ... Oh, all right: I suppose if Father Christmas DID get stuck up the chimney, as the children's song tells us, he might suffer from Santa Claustrophobia. Is there any chance of YOU getting stuck up a chimney? Or down a mine-shaft or something? Do please try. And yes; the Christmas present you wanted is on its way - though it's rather unusual. Not many people ask Santa for cod and chips. Still we hope you enjoy it. Don't worry about the label; 'POISON' is French for 'fish'. Give our love to Chip-ping Cod-bury ...]

And that about wraps it up, folks: you can read on now -

what Merlin means to me

beryl Mercer

One word: POWER. All that I have read about Merlin seems to stress that he was an epitome, an archetypal symbol of power. Where this power came from, how it was developed, is never really clarified, so I fall back on my old, oft-proclaimed theory - viz., that he was in direct contact with his own mighty superconscious.

That this contact was a painful and even dangerous process is, however, made very clear (one offshoot of my own theory is that the mysterious and so-far unexplained cases of spontaneous human combustion may be caused by just such a contact - sudden, unshielded, unearthed, uninsulated ...).

'A voice was shouting, high and monotonous, gasping. I could not get my breath. Pain broke through me, spreading from groin and belly like blood bursting from a wound. I could see nothing. I felt my hands knotting and stretching. My head hurt, and the rock was hard and streaming wet under my cheekbone. I had fainted, and they had seized me as I lay and were killing me: this was my blood seeping from me to spread into the pool ... I choked on breath like bile. My hands tore in pain at the rock, and my eyes were open, but all I could see was the whirl of banners and wings and wolves' eyes and sick mouths gaping, and the tail of a comet like a brand, and stars shooting through a rain of blood.'

'Pain went through me again, a hot knife into the bowels. I screamed and suddenly my hands were free. I threw them up between me and the flashing visions and I heard my own voice calling, but could not tell what I called. In front of me the visions whirled, fractured, broke open in intolerable light, then shut again into darkness and silence.' (CC, p.287).

'It was more than a headache', said Ninian. 'It was like a sharp pain right through the brain. I've never felt anything like that before. Am I ill?

'No. You are merely a seer, an eye and a voice for a most tyrannous god. You have had a waking dream, what men call a vision' (LE, p.310).

'It was all the art Galapas taught me, apart from certain tricks of healing ... I found it easy, even to make the ice-cold fire and the wild fire, and the fire that goes like a whip through the dark; which was just as well, because I was young to be taught such things, and it is an art which, if you are unfit or unprepared, can strike you blind.' (CC, p.93).

Sometimes this 'tyrannous' power deserted him, fell into abeyance - even before he transferred it (whether willingly or not) to Nimue:

'What power I had been given on that night at Tintagel had drained from me with the strength that had killed Britaeh. It had gone from me and was working, I thought, in a woman's body; in Ygraine, lying even now beside the King in that grim and battered near-isle of Tintagel, ten miles to the south. I could do nothing here. The air, solid as stone, would not let me through.' (HH, p.30).

'What had just happened at Tintagel had happened without my contriving. Something was moving; there was a kind of breathing brightness in the air, the wind of God brushing by, invisible in sunlight. Even for men who cannot see or hear them, the gods are still there, and I was not less than a man. I had not the arrogance - or the hardihood - to test my power again, but I put on hope, as a naked man welcomes rags in a winter storm.' (HH, p.83).

Places I always remember well, some of them so clearly that I feel even now as if I could walk into them, and that if I had the strength to concentrate, and the power that once fitted me like a rebuilt robe, I might even now rebuild them here in the dark as I rebuilt

the Giants' Dance for Ambrosius ... is as if he were here with me now ... even without my robe of power I can conjure up ... his eyes, the heavy lines of his body, the face ...' (CC, p.217).

Other people were conscious of this power; many feared it.

'Belasius told me you used every man according to his capacity, and that even if I were no use to you as a soldier, you would still use me somehow. This is true?'

'Quite true', said Ambrosius. 'I knew it straight away, before I even thought you might be my son, when I saw how you faced Uther that night in the field, with the visions still in your eyes, and the power all over you like a shining skin.' (CC, p.211).

'I hadn't imagined him so young.'

'Not so young. He must be two and twenty.'

'But to have done so much. They say his father the High King Ambrosius never took a step, in the last year or two, without talking it over with him. They say he sees the future in a candle flame and can win a battle from a hilltop a mile away.'

'They would say anything, of him.' ... (HH, p.22).

'I remember the first time I saw him, back in Britanny when he was a boy; he looked like something from the hollow hills. Talked like it too, sometimes; that is, when he talked at all. Don't let his quiet ways fool you; it's more than just book-learning and luck and a knack of timing; there's power there, and it's real.'

'So the stories are true?'

'The stories are true,' said Gandar flatly.' (HH, pp.23/24).

'I cannot lift you, Father,' I said, 'but lie still. I will bring the altar here to you.'

'I knelt beside the bed, looking at the red heart of the fire. The beat surged in my temples, hurting me. Deep in my belly the pain grew and burned. The sweat ran scalding down my face, and my bones shook in their sheath of flesh as, grain by grain and inch by shining inch, I built that altar-stone for him against the dark, blank wall.' ... (HH, p.270).

'I stretched out my hands. From the air pale fire came, running down the blade, so that runes - quivering and illegible - shimmered there. Then the fire spread, engulfing it, till, like a brand too brightly flaring, the flames died, and when they had gone, there stood the altar, pale stone, with nothing against it but the stone sword.'

'Arthur had not seen me use this kind of power before, and he watched open-mouthed as the flames broke out of the air and caught at the stone. He drew back, awed and a little frightened, and the only colour in his face was the wan light cast by the flames. When it was done he stood very still, licking dry lips. I smiled at him.'

'Come, be comfortable. You have seen me use magic before.'

'Yes. But seeing this - this kind of thing ... this power; I had no idea. You told us nothing of it.' (HH, p.346).

Arthur never forgot this power, never belittled it, always trusted it. What he said at the time of his acceptance as Uther's rightful heir was one of the foundation stones of his brilliant reign:

'I came round the altar till I stood before him. ... I knelt in front of him and put out my hands for his. But he cried out at that, and pulled me to my feet, and kissed me.'

'You do not kneel to me. Not you.'

'You are High King, and I am your servant.'

'What of it? The sword was yours, and we two know it. It doesn't matter what you call yourself, my servant, cousin, father, what you will - you are Merlin, and I'm nothing without you beside me.' (HH, p.433).

Mary Stewart's 'Merlin' refers to the 'god' who uses him and speaks through him.

From what I have read, nobody seems quite sure what, if anything, his 'religion' was. One of his tutors in Britanny, a man named Belasius, is 'a priest of the old religion' - probably a Druid.'

'He' (Belasius) 'wants to take me to the next meeting. Will you forbid this?'

"'No', said Ambrosius. 'Will you go?'

"'Yes', I said slowly. 'My lord, when you are looking for ... what I am looking for, you have to look in strange places. Men can never look at the sun, except downwards, at his reflection in things of earth. If he is reflected in a dirty puddle, he is still the sun. There is nowhere I will not look, to find him.' (CC, p.212).

I looked at Cadal soberly. 'There's nothing in this world that I'm not ready to see and learn, and no god that I'm not ready to approach in his own fashion. I told you that truth was the shadow of God. If I am to use it, I must know who He is. Do you understand me?'

"'How could I? What god are you talking about?'

"'I think there is only one. Oh, there are gods everywhere, in the hollow hills, in the wind and the sea, in the very grass we walk on and the air we breathe, and in the blood-stained shadows where men like Belasius wait for them. But I believe there must be one who is God Himself, like the great sea, and all the rest of us, small gods and men and all, like rivers, we all come to Him in the end.' (CC, p.201).

Merlin's mother, the Welsh princess, Niniane, is described as a Christian; he visits her, in St. Peter's Convent, where she is dying:

"'Will he' (Ambrosius) "be able to withstand Vortigern, and after him Hengist and the Saxons?'

I said, without pausing to consider how it would sound: 'I have said so, so it must be true.'

She crossed herself, her eyes at once startled and severe, and through it all, afraid. 'Merlin - beware of arrogance. Even if God has given you power -

'You mistake me, madam. I put it badly. I only meant that the god had said it through me, and because he had said it, it must be true. Ambrosius must win, it is in the stars. Don't be afraid for me, mother. Whatever god uses me, I am content to be his voice and his instrument. I go where he sends me, and when he has finished with me, he will take me back.'

'There is only one God,' she whispered.

"'That is what I am beginning to think . . .' (CC, pp.325/6).

Mrs. Stewart also has him initiated into the cult of Mithras, the soldiers' god; Ambrosius and his brother Uther were also Mithras-worshippers. However, after Ambrosius has made his triumphal entry into the city of York, there is first a secret Mithraic ceremony, and then:

Eight days later was the official ceremony of thanksgiving. Ambrosius was there, with all his officers, even Uther - 'for', as Ambrosius said to me later, 'as you will find, all gods who are born of the light are brothers, and in this land, if Mithras who gives us victory is to bear the face of Christ, why, then, we worship Christ.' (CC, p.349).

When Uther Pendragon is making arrangements for Merlin to take charge of Ygraine's child as soon as it is born, he says:

"'There's one thing, though, where the Queen will have her way: she wants the child baptised as a Christian.'

I glanced at the Mithras altar against the tent wall. 'And you?'

"'What does it matter? He will never be King . . .' (HH, p.104).

After the lifting of the sword in the Perilous Chapel:

"... when the new King and his nobles and captains had gone from the chapel, it could be seen that the wildfire of the new god had scoured the place of all that had formerly been held sacred, leaving only the altar, to be freshly decked for him alone.

I had long known that this god brooked no companions. He was not mine, nor (I suspected) would he ever be Arthur's, but throughout the sweet three corners of Britain he was moving, emptying the ancient shrines, and changing the face of worship. I had seen with awe, and with grief, how his fires had swept away the signs of an older kind of holiness; but he had marked the Perilous Chapel - and perhaps the sword - as his own, beyond denying.' (LE, pp.14/15).

"'What's he like, this youngster that they say King Uther handed

the sword to?'

"'He is young, but a man turned, and a good soldier. He can lead men, and he has enough sense to listen to his elders.'

"'Is he a Christian, this young Arthur? Will he knock down the temple, in the name of this new-fangled god, or will he respect what's gone before?'

"'He will be crowned by the Christian bishops, and bend his knees to his parents' God. But he is a man of this land, and he knows the gods of this land, and the people who still serve those gods on the hills and by the springs and fording-places. You will find that his armies will pass by without harm, and that if he ever comes here himself he will say a prayer to the god and make an offering.' (LE, p.49).

H. Warner Munn wrote, in *Merlin's Godson* (p.8):

"'Druidism warred in his heart with Christian tenets.'

C.S. Lewis (a committed Christian) seems a little unsure of the religious status of his 'Merlin' in *That Hideous Strength*. He refers to him, more than once, as a Druid:

"'If you are truly of the College, why do they dress you like a slave?'

"'Your own garments are not those of a Druid.'

"'That stroke was well put by.'

BUT: "'We have been mistaken,' said the Director. 'So has the enemy. This man is Merlinus Ambrosius. They thought that if he came back he would be on their side. I find he is on ours. You, Dimble, ought to realise that this was always a possibility.'

"'That is true', said Dimble. 'I suppose it was - well, the look of the thing. And his appalling bloodthirstiness.'

"'I have been startled by it myself,' said Ransom.

"'Is he a Christian?' asked Dimble.

"'Yes,' said Ransom. (THS, p.171).

'Merlin addressed Dimble. 'The Pendragon tells me that you accuse me for a fierce and cruel man. It is a charge I never heard before. A third part of my substance I gave to widows and poor men. I never sought the death of any but felons and heathen Saxons.' . . .' (THS, p.171).

'At the beginning the grand mystery for the Company had been why the enemy wanted Bragdon Wood. By intense study in collaboration with Dr. Dimble, the Director had at last come to a certain conclusion. They knew that Edgestow lay in what had been the very heart of ancient Logres, and that an historical Merlin had once worked in Bragdon Wood.

'What he had done there they did not know: but they had all, by various routes, come too far either to consider his art mere legend and imposture, or to equate it exactly with what the Renaissance called Magic. They thought that Merlin's art was the last survival of something older and different - something brought to Western Europe after the fall of Atlantis and going back to an era in which the general relations of mind and matter on this planet had been other than those we know. It had probably differed from Renaissance Magic profoundly. It had possibly (though this was doubtful) been less guilty; it had certainly been more effective.' (THS, p.119).

I believe there are also at least two books in which 'Merlin' is not a name but a title (sorry, I can't quote book-titles or authors) - and 'the Merlin' is the same as 'the priest' or 'the shaman' - or even 'the witch-doctor'! Certainly there are, in British mythology, at least two other versions of Merlin in his 'wild man of the woods' persona: Sulbhne and Lailoken.

I have yet to be convinced of the existence of Atlantis, Lemuria etc., despite the alleged finding of undersea pyramids in the Bermuda Triangle, off Bimini (and why this was never followed up. I cannot understand. This kind of inexplicable hiatus always makes me suspect HOAX!) (CL, p.195 et seq.).

If, as some people maintain, modern-day Egyptians are descendants of Atlantean survivors, then those who favour the destruction of Thera as the Atlantis catastrophe would seem to have the best case. On the other hand, I have heard it said that the original Atlanteans were copper-skinned, and that the Amerinds

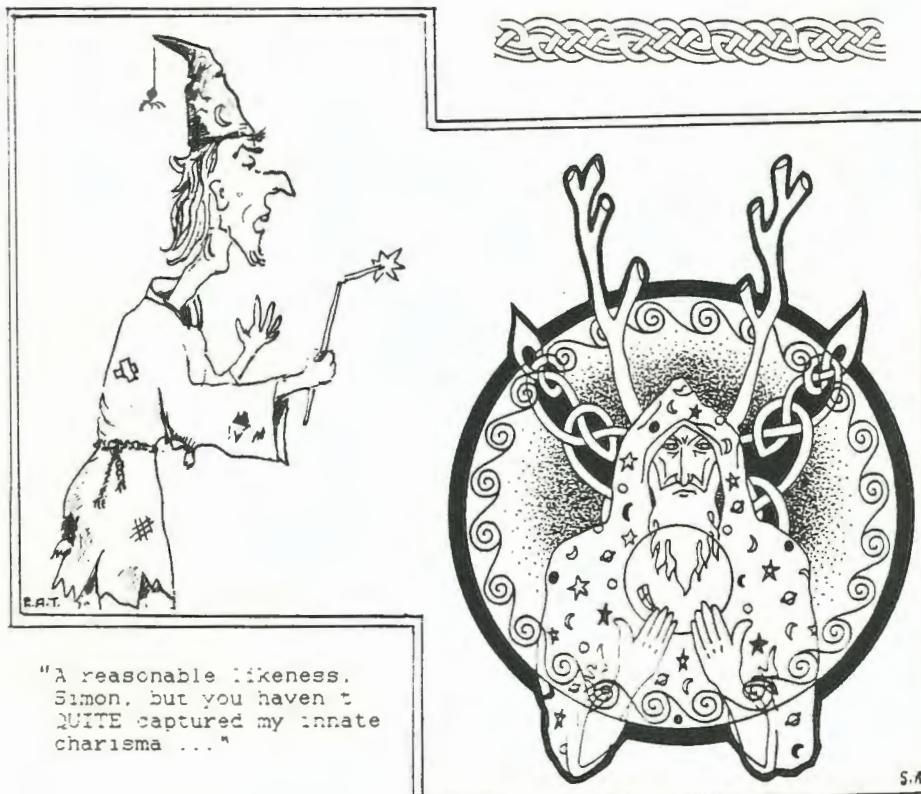
are their true descendants - which, of course, opens up the claim for a lost continent in the West Atlantic. But I cannot see that either site makes a lot of sense in connection with Lewis's remarks about Atlantean magic being brought to Western Europe. (Unless he thought that Druids had a claim to Atlantean ancestry, too?)

Be that as it may, every writer who has used Merlin as a character has delineated his power as one of the main threads of his/her story. From Susan Cooper to Mary Stewart, from H. Warner Mann to C.S. Lewis, from Bob Stewart to John Matthews. Marian Green to Gareth Knight, Geoffrey Ashe to Nikolai Tolstoy, T.E. White to Alan Jay Lerner, Peter Quiller to Paul Broadhurst ... the list is virtually endless, and intriguingly variegated - but the power theme is invariably to the fore.

It is said that there is an exception to every rule. In this case, I would suggest that Merlin is the outstanding exception to Lord Acton's dictum that 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'

References:

CC: The Crystal Cave by Mary Stewart. Hodder & Stoughton, 1970.
HH: The Hollow Hills by Mary Stewart. Hodder & Stoughton, 1973.
LE: The Last Enchantment by Mary Stewart. Hodder & Stoughton, 1979.
THS: That Hideous Strength by C.S. Lewis. Bodley Head Ltd.. 1945; Pan pb. 1955.
CL: Crystal Legends by Moyra Caldecott. Aquarian Press, 1990.
Merlin's Jodson by H. Warner Munn. Ballantine Books, 1976.
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The Dark is Rising - a series of five books by Susan Cooper. Chatto & Windus, 1965. 1973. 1974. 1975. & 1977.



Publicity

There has been much talk in recent years about the need for publicity and to build up the membership of our society. Claims to double the membership in twelve months have been made, but PENDRAGON continues with roughly the same number on the roll from year to year. Often, more members fail to renew their subscription than new members join us to take their places. Although, having said this, the number of journals printed each quarter has steadily climbed since I took over their printing about four years ago.

Publicity is, of course, the answer. What kind of publicity? is the question. Many of you will have read the comments made by both Fred and Eddie in the last journal about my efforts during the summer regards Ian Forrester Roberts' exhibition.

Ian rang me one evening asked if the society had any publicity which he could put out at his exhibition. I knew there had been a leaflet about at one time, but I did not have a copy in my files. I spoke to Fred who told me that he and Eddie had been working on revamping an early leaflet. I asked him to send me down a copy and I would see what I could produce. The result was an A4 folded (A5) leaflet outline the History, Aims and Objects of the society and a membership application form. These put on display at Ian's exhibition.

But I also tried another little experiment in getting our name spread abroad - through my local tourist information centre.

On a visit to the Gloucester TIC I spotted a copy of Danny Sullivan's *Gloucestershire Earth Mysteries*. On an impulse I asked to speak to the manageress and told her about PENDRAGON. Although she did not want to take any journals - she said that her budget for purchasing such material for re-sale had run out - she did offer to take about 20 of the leaflets.

I almost ran home, printed them up and took them in. This was a few days before the Bank Holiday. The following week I dropped into the centre to see how they were going to find that they were all gone. I printed up a further two dozen and dropped in. When I checked at the end of September these were also gone. I have not put anymore in since, as I feel that with the summer over the number of visitors to the centre will probably have dropped off.

Why am I telling you all this? It seems to me, that there are a lot of people out there in the Great British World who are interested in Arthur and the Pendragon objective. Between the two outlets about 100+ leaflets were distributed, obviously by people who are interested. Fred and I decided to incorporate a 'dept. code' into the address to monitor how successful the exercise was. I know that four new members have joined us through the leaflet, but not from which source. Four out of a hundred does not seem many, but the point I am making is that these leaflet were taken by people who showed an interest and not distributed indiscriminately and some people do take their time deciding whether they are going to act upon leaflets they have picked up. .

It seems to me that this could be a publicity exercise which all members of the society can participate in without too much of their time being taken up. Most towns and cities have a Tourist Information Centre, usually in an easily accessible position. When next you are out shopping why not pop in and ask the manager if he would be willing to display a few of our leaflets. If he is, drop me a line (my address is inside the front cover) and I will post you some leaflets to take in.

This is just one idea for publicity. Does anyone else have any? If you do, send them to me and let's see if we cannot boost our figures still further - perhaps, even double them. To do this we need about 100 new members. I'm sure we can manage this between us. I look forward to hearing from you all.

GEOFF DANDO.

Sir Perceval and the Red Knight

by ALBY STONE

Chretien de Troyes' twelfth-century romance *Perceval* describes how the young hero, after having left his mother in order to pursue a career in knighthood, comes to the court of King Arthur. As he approaches, he sees a knight leaving, wearing red armour and carrying a golden cup. Perceval immediately covets the knight's arms, and declares that he will ask the king to grant them to him. Inside, he learns that the Red Knight of the forest of Quinquercor had taken Arthur's cup, poured the contents over the queen, then made off with it. Perceval asks the king to make him a knight, and to grant him the Red Knight's arms; the king's seneschal, Kay, mocks him, saying that he can have them if he can take them, earning himself a rebuke from the king. A girl laughs for the first time in six years, and tells Perceval that he will be the best knight in the world; she is slapped by Kay, who also kicks the court fool into the fire. However, Perceval rides off after the Red Knight. When he finds the knight, Perceval demands the red armour, eventually provoking a violent response. In reply, Perceval throws his spear, which strikes the knight in the eye and exits through the nape of his neck, killing him instantly. The boy then tries to get the armour off, but does not know how to remove it. Yvonet, who had been observing, shows him how to do so, and Perceval dons the armour over his own rough clothing. Wearing so, and Perceval tells Yvonet to return the king's cup and tell Kay that he will avenge the slapping of the girl, then rides off on the Red Knight's horse.

This fairly short adventure is rarely given any more than a cursory mention in studies of the Grail legend. At first sight, this neglect seems pretty well justified: it is a rather short adventure, and seems to serve only as a device to account for the hero's possession of the appropriate accoutrements of knighthood and to give him a shove in the right direction. And yet, it has several features that mark it as a crucial episode in the hero's progress.

For one thing, this episode is repeated almost exactly in a number of other romances. The version in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* is virtually identical, except that the Red Knight is named as Ither of Gaheviez, whose lands have been taken by Arthur. In the Welsh romance *Peredur*, there is no mention of the boy making a girl laugh, and the colour of the armour is not specified, but the episode is otherwise the same. The account given by the Middle English poem *Sir Percevalle* of *Galles* is more or less the same, but also tells us that the Red Knight steals the cup every five years, and that he had first done so, and

killed Perceval's father, fifteen years earlier, introducing a revenge theme to help justify the killing.

When these four accounts are compared, several interesting points emerge. One obvious point is that there has been some effort made to justify or rationalise the Red Knight's death: as revenge for the insult to the queen, or as unwitting retribution for the death of Perceval's father. Wolfram, with characteristic honesty, does not seek to justify the killing - indeed, one's sympathies are entirely with the wronged Ither, who tells his killer-to-be to apologise to the queen on his behalf, and whose death is mourned by women, rather than his rude and selfish killer, who has even used a weapon frowned upon by the code of Chivalry. The conclusion here is that the Red Knight's death is necessary, but misunderstood by the romancers, who distorted its significance and - with the exception of Wolfram - tried to explain it away by introducing revenge as a means of justifying it.

Two further points emerge from this. The first is that, for some reason, the Red Knight's death is absolutely essential if the hero is to progress any further. The second is that the manner of the Red Knight's demise may also be of some importance.

A clue to the necessity of Perceval killing the Red Knight can be found in the *Didot Perceval*. This romance has no corresponding adventure, but it does account for Perceval's acquisition of the coveted red armour. A great tournament is held at Pentecost, but Perceval does not take part because he has been wounded in the hand. Elaine, Gawain's sister, sends him a message asking him to joust in her honour, and to wear the vermillion armour that she will provide for him. Perceval agrees, and proves unbeatable. Shortly afterwards, when Perceval has embarked upon the quest for the Grail, he does fight and overcome a knight wearing vermillion, but does not kill him. There is a fundamental difference between this account and those previously mentioned, in that here Perceval is already a fully-armed knight, not the callow boy of *Perceval* and the rest. Thus, he is already armed, with no need to take the equipment of a vanquished opponent. The *Didot Perceval* gets round this obstacle in true chivalric style, by making his red armour a present from a female admirer, and allows Perceval to demonstrate his mercy by allowing his vermillion-armoured foe to remain alive. Evidently, the important thing is for the hero to be clad in red before he can seek out the Grail. In *Perlesvaus*, the young Perceval sees a White Knight fighting a losing battle against a Red Knight, and hurls his spear at the latter, killing him; the boy then takes the dead man's horse. After this, he bears a red shield with a white stag design. Later in the same romance, Perceval kills another Red Knight with a lance-thrust, again taking his horse.

Perlesvaus has nothing to say of the hero wearing red, although the red background of his shield may be a vestige of that idea. In *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, though, Galahad - in this case taking Perceval's place as the knight destined to attain the Grail - first appears at Arthur's court wearing red armour, and when he takes this off he is dressed in a red tunic and mantle. Similarly, Perceval is stripped of his armour and dressed in a red mantle when he comes to the Grail Castle in *Perceval*.

On the whole, this does not happen to other characters. Gawain, for instance, in the First Continuation of *Perceval*, is given a grey and white fur-lined gown when he comes to the Grail Castle. On the other hand, the hero of *Parzival* is given a cloth-of-gold gown to wear; though by the look of some medieval artefacts, this could be of a reddish hue. Overall, it can be suggested that the chosen knight had to be dressed in red in order to pursue the quest.

To find out why this should be necessary, we only have to consider the rôle played by that colour in Celtic tradition. Anne Ross (*Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 411) states that red 'is the colour usually associated with death in the Celtic world, and as a result red horsemen are sometimes represented as constituting an omen of disaster' - an idea that she illustrates by reference to the Irish story *The Destruction of Dé Derga's Hostel*, in which three men with red hair, red equipment, and red horses appear to Conaire and are instrumental in breaking one of the *gessa* that bring about his end; and the red war-goddess, riding in a chariot drawn by a single red horse, met by Cú Chulainn in the *Táin*. In the former the hostel where Conaire met his death assumes a grim significance: Dé Derga, the 'Red God', appears to be death personified. Bearing in mind that the Grail Quest is certainly an otherworld journey in search of an otherworldly vessel with some rather interesting properties of prolonging life, a vessel related to the life-restoring cauldron of Branwen Daughter of Llyr, it seems that the importance of the red armour is rooted in the association of the colour with death. In other words, the hero has to assume the colour of death in order to enter the realm of the dead; although his victory over the Red Knight could also be seen as a symbolic triumph over death itself, and a subsequent measure of control over the process. On the whole, it may be more useful to see *Perceval*'s victory over the Red Knight as a symbolic death - after all, he then effectively becomes the Red Knight - an initiatory process equivalent to the ritual death and rebirth of ancient mystery cults and, more appropriately perhaps, shamanic initiations, where the death-experience allows the shaman controlled access to the otherworld. In other words, being 'dead' himself, or wearing the colour of the dead, *Perceval* is able to enter the land of the dead in search of the vessel that gives life.

The way in which *Perceval* kills the Red Knight is important to this process. Chrétien and Wolfram both tell us that the Red Knight is speared, through the eye, and the author of *Peregrine* agrees. By dint of his being the earliest-known author of a Grail romance, Chrétien ought to be taken seriously here, along with those who agree with or have followed his version of the story. There are several parallels to this in Celtic myth: the killing of Balor by Lugh at the Second Battle of Mag Tuireadh, although in most accounts the victim is slain by a *tathlum*, a slingshot, in the eye, rather than by Lugh's powerful magic spear; the destruction of Goll's eye by Lugh's spear in *The Boyhood Deeds of Finn*; and Culhwch's similar treatment of Ysbaddaden in *Culhwch and Olwen*. But there is nothing particularly initiatory about Balor's death, although it, like the others, has a ritualistic aspect, the source of which lies in archaic Indo-European traditions of sacrifice and the motif of the lightning-spear. Ritual spearing also occurs in Norse tradition, in two contexts: firstly, the dead are marked with a spear to

cont. on p14



King Arthur and Marcus the Black with the dragon captured from the TV weather map

THE ONCE - AND PRESENT - KING?

'Truth, Honour and Justice' is the motto of a group of dedicated Celtic warriors led by Arthur Pendragon - a reincarnation of you-know-who; or so he believes. He is head of a growing 'Loyal Table' and lesser lights in the Arthurian firmament, also reincarnated. Their avowed aim is to succour those in distress.

Cranky? Possibly. Unconventional? Certainly. After all, unlike roll down Glastonbury Tor with an egg in his mouth - or if he did, Malory must have missed it. Nor was the erstwhile King ever arrested for breach of the peace. Shocking *lèse-majesté*!

Nevertheless, one feels that the earlier Arthur might not have disapproved too strongly of a small group of Farnborough men who (featured daily on Granada TV) to draw attention to the plight of the homeless - vacating it only when they were allowed to carry off the Welsh Red Dragon symbol as 'spoils of war'. Actually they were merely borrowing it to parade through the streets of their hometown, raising money to help charitable organisations. They collected £181 and Margaret Taylor, an 'Open Door' fund raiser, commented 'Such outrageous and dastardly deeds by warm-hearted characters like Arthur and his Warband are needed to draw attention to the plight of homeless youngsters. Our sincere thanks Rex himself observed: 'The whole thing was a bit light-hearted and Arthur it got a serious point across'.

The Pendragon has also been among those meeting English Heritage at Solstices and Equinoxes and has been filmed by C.B.S. for American TV on the Tor, in a secret cave, in a priesthole and at Stonehenge, raising money for charity.

Raise your glasses, then, to the 'Loyal Arthurian Warband'. The needy must find it comforting to have the L.A.W. on their side!

(The photograph appeared in *The Aldershot News* along with a sympathetic report by James Taylor.)

cont. from p12

consecrate them to Odin, as described in *Ynglinga Saga*; secondly, human sacrifice was carried out by spearing, while the victims were simultaneously hanged. An instance of this double-death sacrifice occurs in *Gautreks Saga*, where King Vikar is so slain by his own followers; but the great exemplar must be Odin's own ordeal recounted in the poem *Hávamál*, in which he himself says that he hanged for nine nights on the World Tree, pierced by a spear, as a sacrifice to himself, to gain knowledge of the runes.

Unfortunately, Odin does not say where on his body he was pierced, nor is *Gautreks Saga* eloquent on that point with regard to Vikar. *Ynglinga Saga*, too, is silent as to the nature of the mark made by the spear on those dedicated to Odin. This lack of detail is rather frustrating, especially as all we need to know is whether or not the spear was used to wound the eye of the victim. Elsewhere in Old Norse literature, we are told that Odin exchanged an eye for a single draught from Mimir's Well, in order to acquire wisdom, but we are not told how the removal of the eye was effected. It is just possible that the two stories may be variants of a now-lost original, in which the drink from the well is Odin's reward for his hardships on the tree: *Hávamál* does state that the god had no food or drink during his ordeal. In that case, Odin's self-sacrifice (which is also an initiation) would involve him spearing himself in the eye. This would then have a certain thematic relevance to Perceval's slaughter of the Red Knight. But as it stands so far, the argument is tenuous.

However, there are a few pieces of historical evidence to support this idea. On December 23rd 679 the Merovingian king Dagobert II was murdered at Stenay, in the Ardennes. Acting under orders from Pepin the Fat, Mayor of the king's palace, a servant followed Dagobert to a stream, found him sleeping there, and speared him through the eye. This smacks of a ritual killing: apart from the method, the date is near enough to midwinter, the most important time of the Germanic year, a time of when omens are traditionally given great credence. The spearing has a slight resemblance to the death of the hero Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied*, speared through the chest as he rests by a stream, and to the spearing of Lleu Llaw Gyffes under magical or ritual conditions by Gronw Pebyr in the Welsh story *Math Son of Mathonwy*. Neither of these are speared in the eye, however. One other notable example of death by eye-piercing is that of the English king Harold at the Battle of Hastings in 1066; the offending weapon was reputedly an arrow, rather than a spear, but the accounts of Harold's death are generally unreliable.

The manner of Dagobert's death is of particular interest, as an emblem of Merovingian kingship was a spear, which was ritually used by one king to confer status on his nephew. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (*The Long-Haired Kings*, p. 201) links this specifically with Woden, whose cult is not usually associated with the Franks, although there is some fragmentary evidence to support its presence among them. If there was no Woden-cult among the Franks, then it would make them unique among Germanic peoples, as all others had either flourishing cults of Woden or Odin, or at least preserved a tradition of that god as founder of the tribe or ancestor of the ruling dynasty. The ritual sacrifice of kings (to Odin) is known from several Norse sources, and it would be a surprise indeed if no

other Germanic peoples engaged in that practice. In her much-maligned book *The Divine King in England*, Margaret Murray presents an impressive list of English kings, slain by apparent treachery or in mysterious circumstances, whose names are compounds of *Os*, an Old English word with the general meaning 'god', but always denoting Woden/Odin when used with the definitive article, as does the Old Norse cognate. Inevitably, Murray sees all these as sacrificial victims, and she may have a point. It is perhaps unfortunate that Murray goes too far, stretching her thesis and the evidence to an alarming degree, so causing most serious historians to doubt not only her scholarship, but also her sanity. As it is, she is almost certainly correct in her inference that those particular kings were thus dedicated to Woden, and it may well be that they were 'dedicated' to the god in both senses of the word. It is also interesting that one of the alleged sacrificial victims proposed by Murray is William II of England, killed by a 'stray' arrow while hunting in the New Forest. His nickname was *Rufus*, 'the red'.

The episode of Perceval and the Red Knight, then, seems to exhibit signs of being influenced by Celtic traditions concerning the colour red, along with a putative Celto-Germanic sacrificial practice, one that was probably reserved for kings. The former would be a natural consequence of the known Celtic antecedents of the Arthurian genre. The latter, as a mostly Germanic phenomenon, seems to have occurred precisely in those areas where the Grail romances reached their fruition, in France and England. The exceptions that have relevance here are the episodes in *Parzival*, which in any case was composed by a German who shows some signs of being aware of a pagan German tradition; and *Peredur*, a Welsh romance, but one that was almost certainly adapted from Chrétien's *Perceval*, thus returning the Celtic element of the tradition to its roots. It is not impossible that the Celts themselves practiced the sacrifice of their kings, but it seems unlikely, on the whole. Even the murder of Lleu Llaw Gyffes, and most of the story in which it is embedded, probably owes more to Scandinavian or Old English influence than it does to any 'native' Welsh or Irish tradition. Germanic kingship possessed a numinosity that the Celtic institution never attained, ultimately due to the Germanic tradition of tracing the descent of their kings from Odin or Woden, as shown by the royal genealogies of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and hinted at in *Ynglinga Saga*. Ither, the Red Knight in Wolfram's version of the episode, is a king in his own right, and Chrétien implies that the Red Knight of the forest of Quinqueroi is also one. This means that by taking the Red Knight's armour, Perceval is himself assuming the mantle of kingship, a status ratified by his fulfilment of the Grail Quest. This is an otherworldly kingship, as the colour of his new attire - the colour of the dead - indicates, and the nature of the Grail Castle affirms. Like Odin in *Hávamál*, the young knight makes a sacrifice of himself to himself - that is, to the sacrality embodied in kingship, according to the Germanic model. At the same time, he achieves the Grail Quest in miniature, by recovering the stolen cup and revitalising Arthur, who at this point acts out the part that will later be taken in earnest by the Fisher King. In the light of all this, Perceval's adventure with the Red Knight then ceases to be an incidental curiosity, and becomes instead a pivotal episode in the knight's career, and an integral and essential part of the overall narrative structure.

WHAT *merlin* MEANS TO ME

by Nicola Stevenson

When I thought about writing this article, I decided to ask a few ordinary people with no interest in Arthur, what first came to mind when I said Merlin.

The response was practically unanimous:- a tall man with a long white beard and a pointed hat with stars on it. One friend did say it was a computer but I patted her on the head and said 'Never mind!'

I suppose the widespread belief is that magicians and wizards do dress this way. That charming Disney film 'The Sword in the Stone' strengthens this view by dressing Merlin in exactly this way and by making him slightly batty.

I prefer to look on him as a wise man, a druid such as portrayed in Marion Bradley's 'Mists of Avalon'. This must have been nearer the truth as to his character - a counsellor; a religious man brought up in druid ways but tolerant; basically good, but not above dabbling in lives and events to bring about the Golden Age as prophesied.

In Stephen Lawhead's books he is descended from Atlantean stock which explains his seemingly magical powers. There are many myths surrounding Atlantis and her people. Why shouldn't some survivors have landed in Britain and blended in with the community. One theory attributes the rise of some great cultures such as the Egyptians to Atlantean refugees.

A similar thing, with Merlin as instigator, could have brought about the glorious age of Arthur.

Merlin's magical powers have also been shown in different aspects. There's the belief - associated with his Disney character - that he waved his magic wand and hey presto! anything could happen. I believe it was much more subtle than that.

He was a very learned man in so many fields. What appeared to be magic to ordinary people was purely his clever mind employing the skills he had learnt. Moving Stonehenge or building Camelot, it was engineering at its best. On the other hand he could make things happen just by thinking about them. This was probably a form of thought pressure, which is fairly common, even today. Some people develop their latent psi abilities (sometimes without being aware of it) and can make others respond to their thoughts. Merlin obviously knew he had this ability and used it accordingly.

My inner picture of Merlin is comforting. He would be a willing listener and problem solver. Probably a little awe-inspiring but never frightening.

P.S. Some may see the above as a limited view but unfortunately I have access to only a limited number of sources.



We are grateful to Charles Evans Günther for allowing us to reprint the following review from the current edition of *Dragon* (Autumn/Winter '92)

THE KING WHO RETURNED TWICE



On Saturday 31st October, 1992 at Bodelwyddan Castle a very interesting talk was given by Mr. Dafydd Glyn Jones, a senior lecturer at the Department of Welsh Language and Literature, University of North Wales, Bangor. The original lecture was to have been given by Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones, whom the lecturer praised and described as a man of commitment and passion.

Mr. Jones began first by mentioning the supposed burial of Arthur at Glastonbury showing that the King of England preferred Arthur firmly placed in a grave. He then went on to tell the tale of Craig y Dinas. Here we hear of Arthur and his knights sleeping in a cave waiting to be woken in time of need. (This gives me the strange mental image of one of those fire-alarms which are covered with glass and you have to break them. In this case it read "Break to wake".) A wiseman guides a shepherd to the cave and shows him the sleeping heroes but warns him if he causes a certain bell to ring the knights will wake up, then he should say something like: "Go back to sleep, the time has not yet come!" In the cave were also two piles of treasure - one of gold and the other of silver; the shepherd was told he could take as much as he wished but only from pile. The young man took plenty of gold but greed made him return to the cave, he accidentally struck the bell and the knights woke up crying "Is it time?" but the shepherd forgot what to say. He was beaten up, the gold taken from him and he was never able to find the cave again. There are similar stories but later Arthur is made to sleep in the Vale of Avalon waiting to come back and deliver the English in their time of need. Who then will Arthur support, the English or the Welsh?

To some Arthur is the most famous Welshman in history. However, he was not quite a Welshman and not quite in history. Mr. Jones explained this statement in pointing out that the Welsh language and culture was only evolving in this period and didn't coalesce until the mid 6th to mid 7th centuries. Arthur is usually positioned in time during the second half of the 5th century and so this is a little too early to class him as Welsh. Also most of what we know of Arthur comes from the 9th century and by then he was already a folk-hero. So Arthur is really on the very fringes of documented history.

Though at first Arthur belonged to folk-lore and occasionally appeared in poetry by the 12th century, the tale of Culhwch and Olwen had been written and within less than 50 years Geoffrey of Monmouth had composed his History of the Kings of Britain. This then,

suggested Mr. Jones, was the first coming of Arthur into Welsh literature. At this point the lecturer told the story of Culhwch and Olwen, making comparisons between Arthur's varied unusual followers with the characters who appeared in the bar scene from "Star Wars". This first coming began with Culhwch but bloomed with Geoffrey's work spreading out right across the Norman world. Arthur appeared in various guises - from the warrior of ancient poetry, the primitive hero of Culhwch, the king of Geoffrey to the idle monarch on the sidelines of the French tales until, in Wales, he became satirised in The Dream of Rhonabwy. This was the last time Arthur appeared in any new literature in Wales. There were adaptations but nothing original. Mr. Jones quoted from Sir Ifor Williams who said that Arthur took a trip abroad and returned in Paris fashions. This was the end of the first return of Arthur.

In 1902 the National Eisteddfod of Wales was held in Bangor and it was decided between W. Lewis Jones, Head of the English Department, and John Morris Jones, Head of the Welsh Department, both of the University of North Wales, what were the set subjects for the competitions. These included the passing of Arthur and Tristan and Isolt. The chair was won by T. Gwyn Jones with a marvellous piece of poetry on the passing of Arthur that is still so powerful that Mr. Glyn Jones said "the feeling would be too much for me to quote from it." Nevertheless there is still no Welsh T.H. White, no Welsh Mary Stewart, no Welsh Rosemary Sutcliff. Today, Arthur's place has been taken over by characters from the Four Branches of the Mabinogi - Pwyll, Rhiannon, Pryderi, Brân and Branwen, Gwydion Blodeuwedd and Lleu. But in 1986 R.M. (Bobi) Jones, published "Hunlelf Arthur" - a massive tome of 230 pages, 21 000 lines of poetry telling of the sleeping Arthur's nightmare. He has Arthur meeting many famous characters from Welsh history including Llywelyn the Last, Dafydd ap Gwilym, Owain Glyndŵr, Henry Tudor, Twm Shon Catti, Charles Edwards, Henry Morgan, Robert Recorde, Dic Penderyn and David Lloyd George. Many of these people had dual characters like Twm Shon Catti who was a bandit and a magistrate, Henry Morgan who was a pirate and a governor or David Lloyd George who enjoyed bashing the English but also wanted to be accepted by the English. At one point in this epic Arthur appears as plain Arthur Jones - but he is baited like a bear ("arth" = bear) in what could be a TV study, circus or the National Eisteddfod. The poem begins with "Genesis" - the death of a dream and the beginning of a nightmare - and end with "Datguddiad" (Revelation) - the nightmare continues.

Mr. Dafydd Glyn Jones saw this as the second return of Arthur. From the time of Arthur it was 600 years to the establishment of the Arthurian stories - the first return, and from the dream of Rhonabwy - the end of the Arthurian tales in Wales - it was 600 years till the second return. If Arthur sleeps in a cave, finished Mr. Jones, and someone rings the bell waking Arthur from his long sleep - "Let us hope that he picks the right side!"

I found Mr. Jones' lecture very interesting and certainly enjoyed his comparisons between Arthur's men and the "A Team" and "Star Wars" and also how he pointed out the similarity between Henry Tudor's defeat of Richard III, whose emblem was a boar, and the hunt of the wild boar - Twrch Trwyth in Culhwch and Olwen. It was a really excellent day with the added bonus of meeting Fred Steadman-Jones, Chairman of the PENDRAGON Society, and his wife.

What Merlin means to me

Eddie Cooke

In my childhood, tales of the wizard of King Arthur's court enthralled me as they had done countless children before me and would do countless children yet to come.

I saw him, typically, as a dark-cloaked, bearded figure with an aquiline nose and piercing eyes. I saw him with a star-tipped wand and a traffic cone on his head - or I would have done but it was before traffic cones were invented. (No, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, it was NOT before TRAFFIC was invented.) The Merlin of children's stories faded with time and growing sophistication into that nostalgic limbo of childhood fantasies inhabited by Santa Claus, dragons and fairies. The world became a sad and cynical place, dark with disillusionment. 'There never was a merry world', said John Selden, 'since the fairies left off dancing'.

The master magician had passed on - if, indeed he had ever lived. Or, if the old tales have any basis of truth, he languishes forever in a rocky tomb, a crystal cave, a misty Otherworld tower beneath a whitethorn bush or an ancient oak in the Forest of Broceliande in Brittany, his power neutralised, his trust betrayed - like Samson and Caractacus before him - by a faithless female.

What, then, does Merlin mean to me? Dead or imprisoned, his role can scarcely be other than that of a symbol, as potent as a powder puff: as valid as a six-pound note. He may have helped Arthur in the past, but what guidance could he give - what magic could he work - in our modern world of computers, car-bombs and corruption? For all our nostalgia, he must be regarded as a dead letter, a pale ghost from a superstitious past, a hypnopompic dream-image evaporating in the harsh light of analytical wakefulness - - - -

'By Mithras! For such a missaying you will win scant worship. Truly shalt thou go guerdonless, for meseemeth thou art the falsest paynim and most dotard of any at this time alive.'

Eh? Now where did THAT thought come from? It must be tiredness due to sitting too long at this word-processor after a tiring day. I'll lie back for a bit ... and relax ... Ah, that's better! Now to resume -

Dullard! Can you not dissever your own thoughts from mine?

Now THAT wasn't me. Who is it speaking in that archaic fashion?

Art so daffish that thou wit not that I am he that men call Merlin - but late risen from a mind-built dungeon all to-brast by the winds of change? As for my speech, I use the idiom men expect of me, that of Thomas Malory. The new natural philosophy thou callest science falsely called the damsel 'Vivien' - she who by covin and trickery prisoned me - for her name meaneth 'life', yet science brought not life but death. But though life, the animus, may be mischieved, it may never be to-riven and fordone. So albeit I was for a span 'lost to life and use and name and fame', by cyclic law I now return to amend the damage wrought by lewd and contrarious beliefs. For the illumination that an orgulous craft assayed to bring is now seen to light only the walls of a prison more durable than the gossamer tower in which I lay for so many centuries. 'The prison house' as that seemly member of our College, Plato, avowed, 'is the world of sight'.

But a new, truer illumination is at hand, and I, Merlin, whose name spells 'limner' - one who illuminates - have a puissant part to play. Therefore do I straitly charge you to use that subtil and marvelloust engine before you so that I may be holpen to deliverly tell all who can read -

What mankind means to me.

ERGEN

Since I have now to impart new and wood-seeming notions, I will assay to lapse but little into the patois of Malory which I employed but to command your attention. If you could view me with your inner sight I might appear as you envisioned me in your childhood. The ancients rightwise clyped me 'Shape-shifter'. This is mostly because mind - itself formless - contrariously creates form and can crystallise unshaped archetypes into the semblances that belief and tradition dictate. This craft of the mind to model the nature of appearances is ensampled in a small way by the Stigmata, where great emotion can cause physical marks on parts of the body they could not in truth occupy. Thus the nails, to support the weight, must needs go through the wrists - not the hands. Yet in all known cases the marks of the Crucifixion appear on the palms of believers because this is where, in their unlearnedness, they expect them to appear.

Mithras, the god I served in Arthur's day - and serve yet - was known as the Friend of Man: therefore I, too, am the friend of man, using my powers to guide him on the spiral pathway of evolution; not, perhaps as in the old days when men saw me walking the forest paths of enchanted Logres and holding converse with the small gods of the springs, bridges and crossroads but as one who can inspire more advanced souls to see Nature as a living body of which man may be a cooperating part but never the master. For, as Francis Bacon (another of the College) said, 'Naturae enim non imperatur. nisi parendo' - 'Nature cannot be ordered about, except by obeying her'. Your priests and pedants will make great dole at this humbler role for man, a role so repugnant to their arrogance. But all will learn - MUST learn - lest they dureth not but perish.

I have said that I serve the god Mithras but this may mislead you somewhat until you learn that all gods are one god, and thus by serving one do I serve them all. As haut men of science such as Kaluza and Klein, David Bohm and many another now perceive, the universe cannot be limned in terms of 'this' and 'that'. Division and diversity belong only to your lower dimension of perception and experience. Such limited concepts are pleasing to those of a 'reductionist' bent, but this philosophy studies only the parts and thus sees not their dependence on the Whole which alone gives them meaning. Yet amid this gallimaufry of contrarious yet established theories and devices a new awareness is become on-live and grows apace. Some rebels who prize sincerity above status, seeking no worldly gree or pleasaunce, are glimpsing the truth that subsumes the illusions. Man's destiny is to be a sworn brother of all in Nature, using his crafts and skills for the welfare of the Whole.

Now where, you ask, are the signs and way-marks that betray the paths science needs must tread towards a new understanding? Such evidences are legion and meseemeth one may, without disworship, abandon that which faileth to yield new enlightenment, embracing instead other notions and methods. Thus, when your 19th century 'ethers' proved intractable, the Relativity theory of Dr. Einstein

pronounced them false and heralded a change in the outlook of science. And thus it was with quantum theory and its author, Max Planck. The quantum conceit ushered in the Age of Uncertainty. The atoms of Democritus, Newton and Laplace yielded to particles ever more fugitive until a barrier was reached beyond which no device of man could ever penetrate. Newton's 'great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered' by man's ingenuity, and for all his wit and enterprise must ever remain so, though theories may proliferate and formulae run riot. Within the intangible atom and beyond the reddened stars lie mysterious realms - impervious to argument and analysis: realms where, peradventure, gods may dwell - 'discrete ... entities that are responsible for the detailed working of the universe', as Dr. Evan Harris Walker wisely put it.

Natural law, once rampant, is now all to-rushed and saunce credit. Time, far from being an 'ever-flowing stream', is become an inconstant exudation from matter and, in theory leastways, could be made to run back. It is a droll thought that if indeed I, Merlin, lived backwards in time, as your T.H. White weened, it would not offence Einstein and his henchmen!

But this is an idle and fanciful thought. New theories, which were once scorned and missaid, are become clean and virtuous. Such outlandish engines and devices as morphogenetic fields, catastrophe theory and the Mandelbrot set with its 'chaos mathematics' and all-important 'fractals' are the new playthings of dolorous men goaded by frustration and wanhope to adopt wood-sounding measures. What, then, are these fractals by which they set such store? Why, 'tis claimed they are the very shapes of nature that underlie all things, uniting microcosm with macrocosm, the small with the large, the local with the non-local, thus bringing a oneness and intermeddling between entities that did once appear remote and unconnected. Yet these correspondences of shape have ever been the veriest foundation of magic and wizardry, which manipulate minor things to influence major happenings of like character.

Francis Thompson, the poet, foresaw these changes clearly before ever the theories of Einstein, Planck and their kind flashed like firedrakes athwart the scientific firmament:

'When to the new eyes of thee
All things by immortal power,
Near or far.
Hiddenly,
To each other linked are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star.'

Chaos mathematics (which studies the inconstancies purblind men see in Nature) and fractals are the creatures of a mathematician that hight Benoit Mandelbrot. Is it by some whimsical shift of Fate or is it, mayhap, a sign from the gods that this newest Grail-seeker bears the same name as the Castle of the Grail, Cor Benoit - the Blessed Body? One may weave fanciful webs around such matters - just as one may weave numerical webs around ALL events and phenomena - as that haut mathematician, Bertrand Russell considered. He also saw mathematics as an admission of man's ignorance, not a sign of his knowledge. It is a measure of man's failure to envisage truth. And this underpins what Blaise Pascal said some 300 years agoe [a seemly name that, for my master, too, was named Blaise!] 'The greatest achievement of reason is to realise that there is a limit to reason'. When that deep truth is no longer privy but becomes apparent to all; when all begin to admit - as Peitgen and Richter, workers with the Mandelbrot set, admit - 'perhaps we should believe in magic'; when we see, with Arthur Koestler that 'on a higher turn of the spiral we are once more plunged into the magic world', then will my task be made easier; the task of bringing a new awareness and humility to men, and, through humility, enlightenment; so mankind may cast off the trappings of age-old ignorance and don the garments of the gods.

Prepare to feel my presence in days to come!

Excalibur Books

Telephone: (0247) 458579.

SPECIAL LIST 66

Books in this list are new. Prices are in British and American currency. Postage is extra. No reply-regret sold. Do not send cash with order.

This list consists of new books on Arthuriana and related subjects.

Coghlan, Ronan: <i>ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ARTHURIAN LEGENDS</i> . An alphabetical guide to Arthurian persons, places and objects, now in paperback.	PB £6.99 \$12.95
Caine, Mary: <i>THE GLASTONBURY ZODIAC</i> . Large volume dealing with this subject.	PB £9.95 \$16.00
Hutchings, R.J.: <i>THE KING ARTHUR ILLUSTRATED GUIDE</i> . Deals with places with Arthurian associations.	PB £2.95 \$4.95
Radford/Swanton: <i>ARTHURIAN SITES IN THE WEST</i> .	PB £2.95 \$4.95
Hock, David: <i>THE EARLIEST ARTHURIAN NAMES IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL</i> .	PB £2.60 \$4.30
Benjamin, Rupert: <i>THE SEED OF AVALON</i> . Argues that Jesus had British connections.	PB £1.95 \$3.25
Clinch/Williams: <i>KING ARTHUR IN SOMERSET</i> .	PB £3.50 \$5.95
Durbury/Williams: <i>KING ARTHUR COUNTRY IN CORNWALL</i> .	PB £2.95 \$4.95
Anderson, A.A.: <i>ARTHUR - THE GREATEST BRITON OF THEM ALL</i> . Pamphlet.	PB £1.00 \$1.60
Skene, W.F.: <i>ARTHUR AND THE BRITONS IN WALES AND SCOTLAND</i> .	PB £5.95 \$9.85
Bryce, Derek: <i>THE MYSTICAL WAY AND THE ARTHURIAN QUEST</i> . PB £4.95 \$8.25	
Bradley, Michael: <i>HOLY GRAIL ACROSS THE ATLANTIC</i> . Book on the Holy Blood/Holy Grail theme, involving pre-Columbian contact with America. This book is a Canadian import.	PB £12.50
Bradley, Michael: <i>THE COLUMBUS CONSPIRACY</i> . Sequel to the above.	PB £12.50
Stone, Alby: <i>A SPLENDID PILLAR</i> - images of the axis mundi in the Grail romances.	PB £2.95 \$4.95
Stone, Alby: <i>THE BLEEDING LANCE</i> - myth, ritual and the Grail legend.	PB £2.95 \$4.95
Gold, Nicholas: <i>THE QUEEN AND THE CAULDRON</i> . The author expounds a novel theory about Arthur.	PB £4.95 \$8.25
Weston, Jessie L.: <i>THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL</i> .	PB £9.40 \$15.50
Weston, Jessie L.: <i>FROM RITUAL TO ROMANCE</i> .	PB £10.70 \$17.70
Beckett, Michael: <i>THE PYRAMID AND THE GRAIL</i> .	PB £4.95 \$8.25
Skeat, W.W. (ed): <i>JOSEPH OF ARIMATHIE</i> . Includes a poem written about 1350, <i>Life of Joseph of Arimathey</i> (printed by Wynkyn de Worde), <i>De Sancto Joseph ab Arimathia</i> (printed 1516) and <i>The Life of Joseph of Arimathey</i> (1520).	PB £5.95 \$9.85
Whitfield, E.J.: <i>SCILLY AND ITS LEGENDS</i> . Includes the Arthurian legend of the destruction of Lyonesse.	PB £7.50 \$12.50
Anonymous: <i>THE BIRTH OF MERLIN</i> . Play, perhaps partially written by Shakespeare. Added chapters by R.J. Stewart, etc.	PB £7.95 \$13.25
Coon, Robert: <i>VOYAGE TO AVALON</i> .	PB £4.95 \$8.25
Roberts, Anthony: <i>SACRED GLASTONBURY</i> . Booklet.	PB £1.00 \$1.60
Fortune, Dion: <i>THE SEA PRIESTESS</i> . Novel of Morgan in modern times.	PB £4.50 \$7.50
Fortune, Dion: <i>MOON MAGIC</i> . Sequel to above.	PB £4.99 \$8.25



★ TELEVISION

Arthur, in one form or another, re-emerged from the television wastelands recently in two not-to-be-missed Golden Turkey classics:

King Arthur was a Gentleman: Channel 4, 11th December, (reviewed Pendragon XX 1/4), starred Arthur Askey, Evelyn Dell and Diana Shelton (1942, b/w).

Siege of the Saxons: Channel 4, 5th December, with Janet Scott, Ronald Lewis, Ronald Howard and John Laurie: 'Arthurian legend meets Robin Hood.' This was a swash-buckling goodies and baddies, anachronistic Hollywood treatment from 1963, in glorious technicolour. If we do ever organise an Arthurian residential course we must screen these gems during the evening leisure slot!

The Isle is Full of Noises: BBC 1, 1st November. This 40 minute programme was a celebration of Celtic New Year or Hallowe'en. Everyman set out to explore our 'British inheritance and the ways in which the deep tribal roots of these Islands are still discernable today.' In fact it was an atmospheric evocation of the Celtic sensitivity to the land, to nature, to the watercourses and to animal life; to the life force which streams from the Great Mother Herself. Beautiful imagery was accompanied by readings from Shakespeare, Goethe, Yeats and the Mabinogi and informed commentary from Alan Garner, Anne Ross and others.

This is a recording I shall

treasure: I've already watched it six times.

★ RADIO

Caractacus: Elgar's cantata was broadcast live from the Barbican, London on 25th October, featuring the London Symphony Orchestra with David Wilson-Johnson in the leading role. During the 20 minute interval professor Barri Jones defended his theory, based on recent aerial archaeological evidence, that the site of the battle was at Llanymynech near Oswestry in North Shropshire. I



was torn between my elation that the battle might have been waged in the 'Warrior Sector' of my Perpetual Choirs Decagon (Pendragon XX 4, Autumn '90) and my sentimental preference for the oldest recorded tradition. In his *Folk Heroes of Britain* (1982), Charles Kightly makes the case again that the battle was fought above the South Shropshire hamlet of Chapel Lawn, near the border town of Knighton. This is where my father played as a boy long ago and I heard the tale of heroism at his knees. Edward Lhuyd was told of the tradition by the local inhabitants in the 1560s and was 'bold enough to confirm that...this must be the identical

spot where Ostorius contended with Caractacus.' Aren't the by-ways of history fascinating ?

* HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT SOCIETIES

During the past 25 years these societies have mushroomed in this country. Dressing up in authentically researched costumes and attempting to portray a period of our history in great detail has become an all-absorbing hobby for between 10 and 15,000 adults. In 1991 some of the larger groups met in London and set up a National Association (NARES) to encourage support, provide codes of practice and advance the interests of their members. I contacted NARES for an address list of their member societies and wrote to the four whose interests lie in the Roman, Celtic, Saxon and Norse periods of our history.

Only two have replied to my several letters, enclosing SAEs (please remember to do the same), in passing on details to members I cannot guarantee a reply to their enquiries in the cases of those I have marked (N/R).

The Dark Ages Society: Mr. R. Stone, 10 Old Hall Street, Folly Island, Hertford, SG14 1QQ (N/R)

The Norse Film and Pageant Society: Mr. C. Robinson, Flat 2, 16 Magdella Rd., Mapperley Park, Nottingham, NG3 5DF. (N/R)

The Ermine Street Guard: Mr. C. Haines, Oaklands Farm, Dog Lane, Crickerly Hill, Witcombe, Glos, GL3 4UG. (0452-862235)

Established in 1972, this is a society dedicated to research into the Roman Army and the reconstruction of Roman armour and equipment. Those of you who have seen them will agree that their research is immaculate. A small detachment of the Roman Imperial Army gives displays showing aspects of a Roman soldier's training and the firing of artillery weapons. The Guard has taken part in many films and television documentaries and have paraded at many Roman sites and museums in this country and in

France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Holland. They have also visited and loaned equipment to schools and universities.

The society welcomes new members and associate membership is available for those who cannot take an active role. Chris Haines sent me six coloured postcards which persuaded me that I don't have the legs to represent Imperial Roman might !

Their 1993 programme includes 10 public displays between April and October, 4 for English Heritage, and each will include a static display, a mobile display (drill and Roman army tactics), plus the use of three artillery weapons. An exhibition accompanies the displays and you can see armour and equipment and talk to Guard members. (Brush up on your Latin first !)



Regia Anglorum: The publicity for the society is very welcoming and exciting: 'All we need are people with a sense of humour and a love of adventure...imagine Saxon, Viking and Celtic armies clashing in valleys that once belonged to the disputed kingdoms of Britain - imagine being a part of that.'

Membership is based on local groups, you can start your own where a branch doesn't already exist and attend the High Witan six times a year. Groups reflect their local history and may become Vikings, Saxons, Welsh or Normans. There is a question sheet that sets out to answer commonly asked questions. I just loved, "What about combat, can my girlfriend fight ?" Answer:

"Yes, but she must disguise herself as a man to ensure the accurate appearance of the 'army' in display."

The society demands the highest standards of realism and authenticity - they can erect a tented environment of 20 structures with specialists in 20 crafts, provide personnel for film work and they have a 40' timber ship powered by oars or 400 sq. foot sails with a trained crew. Families and older folk are particularly welcome and talks and displays can be arranged. The National Organiser, who can provide information, posters, contacts and a professionally made video is:

J. Kim Siddorn, 9 Durleigh Close, Headley Park, Bristol, BS13 7NQ (0272-646818)

Other Societies and Events: There are, of course, many other societies outside NARES and the best way to find out about enactment events around the country in 1993 is to write to: The Special Events Unit, English Heritage, Keysign House, 429 Oxford Street, London (071-973-3457) and ask to be put on their mailing list to receive a copy of the 1993 Events Diary due out next March/April.

Their '92 Diary included: The Order of the Black Prince, Knights of the Plantagenet Kings, The Plantagenet Society, Medieval Heritage Society, The Lion Rampant, The Roman Army of Britain. (No Arthurian Enactment Society - anyone feel like dressing up ?)

One of the highlights of 1993 will be a series of displays commemorating the 1,950th anniversary of the Roman invasion in A.D.43.

The address of NARES, for those wishing to know about other groups: Secretary, NARES, 49 Stagsden, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, Cambs, PE2 ORW. (SAE please).

A great many of our fellow-citizens obviously believe that history is certainly not bunk.

* BATTLE ORDERS

The cost of equipment needed to become a warrior of the past can be quite high. Regia Anglorum estimates basic kit at about £60, a spear and shield about 'fifteen quid apiece'. Swords start at about £70. Film work and entrance fees to events can help, of course. If you want to go freelance or to buy a quality sword as a wall decoration then Battle Orders of 71 Eastbourne Road, L. Willingdon, Eastbourne, E. Sussex, BN20 9NR will send you a catalogue for £1.50. Their high quality swords include: Richard the Lionheart, Robin Hood and The Sword in the Stone designs. Prices are high for such craftsmanship, be warned !



* ART AND ARTEFACTS

1. The Celtic Art of Courtney Davis. The Visionary Collection of nine high quality prints of Courtney's work is currently available. For further information about the availability of his work contact: Spirit of Celtia, 15 Market St., Abbotsbury, Weymouth, Dorset, DT3 4JR.

2. Castle Welsh Crafts. Celtic jewellery, Arthurian legend statuettes, tapes, etc. Mr. Bob Rice, 1 Castle St., Cardiff. (0222-343038)

3. Wildgoose Studio Celtic Art. Sculpture, statues and bas-reliefs in cold-cast bronze finish. From Ireland but stocked by Body and Soul Bookshop, 52 Hamilton Place, Edinburgh, EH3 5AX (031-226-3066). Ask for their fine book catalogue.

Moon Goddess, Round Celtic Cross, Glendalough Celtic Cross, Deirdre(!) Very pleasing.

4. Simant Bostock.

Bronze finish casts of Newgrange Triple Spiral, Rock Valley Labyrinth from Tintagel, Celtic Wheel. Also from Body and Soul.

* CALENDARS AND BOOKS

1. Calendars:

Celtic Symbolism: paintings on Celtic themes. £9.95.

Lunar Tree Calendar: the 13 lunar months, with associated plants, animals, festivals. £5.75. Highly recommended. Both from Body and Soul, Edinburgh.

2. Llanerch Publishers: Publish a series of small-press facsimile reprints. Over 80 titles of Celtic interest/Saints/Anglo-Saxon/Medieval, etc. Beautifully produced and CHEAP. Some titles: Mabinogion Tales, Black book of Carmarthen, Joseph of Arimathea. Average price: £4.95. I'm slowly buying my way through the whole list!

Lists from: Llanerch Publishers, Felinfach, Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales, SA48 8PJ. (0570-470567).

3. Pendragon Imprints: With No.2 completed and published I'm reading through our past editions ready to start work on the first Thematic Anthology in the New Year.

* ARTHURIAN ROLE PLAYING

Last time I wrote about *Kingdom*, the Arthurian board game, but I was unable to find an address for a supplier. Naturally, we have received enquiries from members about its availability! I visited John Benney of The Gameskeeper Specialist Games Shop at 105 Cowley Rd., Oxford, OX4 1HU (0865-721348); he told me he can supply the de-luxe version at £27.99 and agreed to be our Pendragon contact for role-playing games.

Readers who are into Dungeons and Dragons will find Chaosium Inc. books by Greg Stafford will give them everything they need to set up their own role-play games. These American books, copiously illustrated, are fascinating to browse even if you don't want to play. Here's a list:

2709. King Arthur Pendragon. £12.99 (Basic Text)

2706. Tournament of Dreams. (Pendragon Adventures)

2707. Knights Adventurous. (Pendragon Expansions)

2708. The Boy King. (Arthur claims the Throne of Britain)

2705. The Grey Knight. (Gawaine accused of Murder)

2710. Savage Mountains. (Adventures in Legendary Wales)

2901. Prince Valiant. (Family role-playing based on comic strip)

Also of interest are:

The King Arthur Companion, background to the legends, Phillis Ann Karr, (Book).

Excalibur, a boxed game from Wotan Games, £17.50.

If you have a local games shop ask about these titles - postage costs will have to be included from Oxford. You could also write to America for descriptive literature to Chaosium Inc., 950-A 56th Street, Oakland, CA 94608-3129.



* CELTICA LECTURES

I attended the last two Celtica 1992 lectures.

The Mythology of Arthur was given by Dr. Anne Ross at ECTARC, Llangollen on 25th September. Dr. Ross made comparisons between Arthur and Fionn Mac Cumhaill as legendary hunters who led war bands, performed heroic feats and harrowed the Otherworld for its treasures and talismans, fighting with monsters and transformed deities. The lecture focussed on the theme of a bear god (Art., 'bear') who may have

fused with a historical Celtic hero. The iconography of pagan Celtic times was illustrated in a series of vivid slides which evoked the strange beauty of the Celtic vision. Dr. Ross is a sure guide to the mysterious shadowlands of Celtic prehistory. My cup was filled to overflowing by my enrollment of four new members and Dr. Ross herself!

The second lecture, at Bodelwyddan Castle on 31st October, was to have been given by Dr. Bedwyr Lewis Jones; sadly, however, this great Welsh scholar and personality died suddenly on 29th August. His place was taken by his University colleague Dafydd Glyn Jones. Marilyn and I were delighted with the lecture and spent the early evening with Charles Evans Günther, Editor of *Dragon*, so it proved to be another excellent day. Charles has kindly agreed to our printing his review of the lecture in this edition.

* CELTICA 1993

Celtica is to continue its activities for a third year and another splendid brochure has been issued, full of interesting news of events and festivals to be held in Wales next year and two feature articles: *Some Ancient Churchyards* and *The Waters of Wales*. These publications bring great credit on The Wales Tourist Board, as indeed, do all their publications and products. Send for your copy to: Celtica, The Wales Tourist Board, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd., Cardiff, S. Glam., CF2 1UY (0222-499909).

It would be foolish of me to list the same information but I would like to draw your attention to *The Celtic Heritage Summer School* (19th-26th June) to be held at St. Deiniol's Residential Library, Howarden, Clwyd. Dr. Miranda Green and other leaders will explore Celtic paganism, the growth of the Celtic Church, its spirituality and art, with a tour of Celtic sites in North Wales. Contact Keith Thompson (0244-

532350). Howarden is about 6 miles from Chester and was the home of Prime Minister Gladstone. Residential accommodation is simple but comfortable and the food good, AND there are 30,000 books in the splendid neo-Gothic library!

* OTHER LECTURES AND COURSES

1. King Arthur - Myth, Romance and Reality. Two day course. 5.00 p.m., 13th Feb. 93 - 3.45 p.m., 14th Feb.

Residential: £39.25; Non-residential: £34.75
The Enrolment Secretary, Dept. Extra Mural Studies, The University, Manchester, M13 9PL.

2. Aberystwyth Celtic Summer School. 11th-30th July, '93. Theological College, Aberystwyth. World famous summer school that gives new insights into the disciplines of Celtic studies.

Contact: Gerald Morgan, 10-11 Laura Place, Aberystwyth, Dyfed. (0970-622577)



* EXCHANGE MAGAZINES

Dragon. This is really the only exchange magazine that is concerned with Arthur and the Dark Ages and should be seen as our sister/brother journal. The current edition (Autumn/Winter 92.) is a double one and is packed with fascinating articles: there is a biography and interview with Rosemary Sutcliff complete with biblio. and two fine photographs; also an excellent book review section and some fascinating news about the activities of Messrs Blackett and Wilson, the well-known Arthurian experts of South Wales. If you are truly

interested in the life and times of Arthur then you really don't know what you are missing if you don't take *Dragon*. Ask your family for a Christmas subscription. (Only £4.50).

Dragon also sends out leaflet supplements in between editions. These include up-to-date information about courses and events and two well-researched obituaries have appeared for Rosemary Sutcliff and Prof. Bedwyr Lewis Jones.

A VISIT TO WELSH WALES

If you are considering exploring North Wales next year you must visit the Lleyn Peninsula. This is really Welsh Wales where 79% of the population speak the old tongue. Here lies the mountain mass *Yr Eifl* known to the Saesneg as The Rivals. The highest of its 3 peaks reaches 1,849' and rises sheer from sea level. A path leads from the road to *Tre'r Ceiri*, the Town of the Giants, a magnificent Iron Age site. Over 150 ctyiau or hut circles may be traced among the rocks, the largest 16' across. The ramparts are still 15' wide in places and the settlement covers over 5 acres. From the village of Llithfaen on the slopes of The Rivals you can descend a rough track to the deep glen below. This is the Nant Gwrtheyrn Valley, named after Vortigern the Celtic chieftain who fled there after losing his kingdom to the Saxons he had summoned to his aid. A skeleton discovered in a large tumulus on the southern slopes was obviously identified with the traitor. The village was said to be cursed by holy men who were driven away by the villagers in pagan times and many tales are told of this strange isolated place.

Above the bay of Porth y Nant is a village built for workers in the granite quarries in the C19th but the valley was abandoned in 1959 and became desolate. In recent years the buildings have been restored and it is now the home of the Welsh National Language Centre which is open all the year round. It also acts as a resource

and information centre for lesser used languages such as Basque, Breton, Catalan and Romansch. There is self-catering accommodation, a restaurant, a library and a social centre. All this in a setting of woodland and seashore at the foot of precipitous cliffs. Wild Wales indeed!

Residential courses are offered of various lengths to suit all levels. Sessions are conducted in small groups, the emphasis being on communication in the living spoken language. Day visitors are welcome to share the unique atmosphere of the place and to enjoy a talk and a meal. Write for the 92-93 Prospectus and ask for details of day visits. National Language Centre, Nant Gwrtheyrn, Llithfaen, Pwllheli, LL53 6PA.

A schools' information pack is also available. Who knows, you might even learn the true meaning of the great mountain *Yr Eifl*. If the weather allows you must drive down to Aberdaron, at the Land's End of North Wales and sail on board the *Bugail Enlli II* to Bardsey, the Isle where 20,000 Saints are said to be buried and Merlin sleeps with the 13 Treasures of Britain. The tradition continues: Sister Helen Mary, a hermit nun who lives on the island, is supported by the Sisters of the Love of God in Oxford.



A happy Yuletide to all our members and may the Son of Light be born again in all our hearts this Christmastide.

BOOK REVIEWS

VISIONS OF BOWMEN AND ANGELS by Kevin McClure, 42 Victoria Road, Mount Charles, St. Austell, Cornwall PL25 4QD. £2.00.

King Arthur is traditionally expected to return to Britain's aid at a time of national need - but he may have been pre-empted.

During the retreat from Mons in Belgium in 1914 the British forces suffered losses of some 5000 men out of the 65,000 engaged. These losses might have been much higher were it not for timely succour by St. George and other supernatural beings.

Tales were told in the early days of the First World War of England's patron saint, troops of angels and Agincourt-type bowmen appearing in mystical clouds and putting the fear of God into the pursuing enemy, stampeding their horses and enabling the British to escape to comparative safety.

'But,' I hear you saying, 'didn't these stories have their roots in a piece of fiction by Arthur Machen in *The Evening News* of 29th September, 1914? And didn't Machen himself affirm that there is no truth in them?' That's what I thought too but meticulous research by Kevin McClure casts some slight doubt on this simplistic dismissal of these strange events. Unless one rejects all the private letters, press reports and word-of-mouth testimonies as pure fabrications, the situation remains fluid. There is also some evidence that sightings of ghostly but well-disposed entities predated Machen's fictitious account.

Kevin, editor of *THE WILD PLACES* (see Exchange page), deals with the topic in his familiar balanced and unprejudiced manner. He discusses the merits and the shortcomings of his sources and comes to no positive conclusion: 'I still don't know what happened during the retreat from Mons: I doubt that I ever will.' - but - 'We all have our own thresholds of belief and acceptance'.

Did Arthur Machen, despite his denials, have access to prior information before writing his piece? Kevin doubts that he received 'a secret tip-off unknown to the rest of the press'. This raises a point. Hallucination, due to extreme battle fatigue, could account for some of the reports, but not all. One wonders, fancifully, if Machen could have received a subconscious tip-off from paranormal sources which inspired him to write as he did. And if paranormal sources exist, does it require more than a small additional stretch of credulity to accept that an immense surge of emotional energy, born of dire need and focussed by consensus, might invoke, from some incorporeal Otherworld of malleable forms, angelic archetypes, Agincourt archery-types and a Saintly simulacrum? After all, we have a sort of parallel in quantum physics where 'virtual particles' can be forced into fugitive manifestation by intense gravitational fields - and perhaps by thought itself. 'Sometimes,' says nuclear scientist David Langford, 'it seemed that physicists were creating the sub-atomic universe around them, forcing new particles into existence ...'

Hypnotism, its modus operandi and implications so studiously ignored by most parapsychological debunkers, demonstrates the power of positive belief to create physical effects. Airy-fairy speculation, of course, born of my fevered imagination, but £2.00 (incl. p. & p.) spent on this well-researched and compiled 32-page booklet may enable you to come up with a better - and more mundane - theory of your own.

[No, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury. I'm quite sure that St. George didn't drink Carling Black Label and that the angels didn't breakfast on Weetabix. If these had been invented in August 1914 the war would have been over by Christmas.]

Eddie Tooke

A SPLENDID PILLAR: Images of the Axis Mundi in the Grail Romances. Alby Stone.

Alby Stone is a scholar, the quality and insight of his research, his handling of sources and his ability to express difficult and diffuse ideas concisely all testify to this.

I had already enjoyed Nigel Pennick's *Cosmic Axis* and Bob Trubshaw's *Quest for the Amphalos* before reading *A Splendid Pillar* and I found that the three booklets make a happy trilogy. *A Splendid Pillar* sets out to examine the cosmological inferences of the Grail Romances, which occur in two contexts; at the Grail Castle itself and at various locations in the hero's adventures along the way to the Castle. The images of the Axis Mundi in the romances are seen to possess the characteristics attributed to the Cosmic Centre in the pre-Christian traditions of Europe. The mythology of the centre is linked to the hero's path to the Grail. It is a journey to the central place where earth is joined to the otherworlds, the place of creation and of fertility. Simultaneously it is a quest, a process of testing leading to kingship; kingship in the sense that the individual is led to find his own cosmic centre and achieves his own spiritual renewal.

Along the way the writer guides us safely to see the world's great sacred sites - the pillars and markstones of Delphi in Greece and the Irminsul of the Germanic peoples; the Pfalzfeld of the Celts and the Lia Fail of Ireland. We gaze on the sacred oak tree in which Lleu Llaw Gyffes was reborn from his wasted eagle form, and we journey to the centre of Britain where the hostile twins struggle in cosmic strife beneath the earth. We hear the clash of the Thunder Gods' hammers and the slow grinding of the Cosmic Mill round which the constellations turn. At the end of your journey you may drink of the Well at the World's End, for all places and all times are one there and if you are lucky you will witness the freeing of the Waters of Life and the Wasteland renewed.

Alby Stone is a reliable guide and his fee is modest. Another gem from Heart of Albion Press 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough, LE12 6UJ. £2.95 (F.C.S'J.)

THE BLEEDING LANCE: Myth, Ritual and the Grail Legend. Alby Stone.

The Bleeding Lance (or Spear) appears in most of the Grail stories but is according to Mr. Stone of greater antiquity than the romances of the 12th and 13th centuries. The Lance is carried in procession together with the Grail in the presence of Perceval and the Fisher King for the first time in Chretien de Troyes' "Perceval, ou le Conte de Graal." Unfortunately, this story was not finished. Mr. Stone shows that the Lance has obscure origins going back to Celtic tales from Ireland. These pagan elements were taken up by Chretien and later writers and given a Christian element. The Lance is often connected with Longinus and is even believed to have been a real spear head found in various parts of the world including the Vatican and the Habsburg Treasures in Vienna.

Though this is without any doubt a useful booklet to the student of Arthuriana and especially the Grail studies, it concentrates more on the pagan aspects of the Lance while seemingly ignoring a number of obvious facts. While the Lance is male symbol, the Grail is definitely female, and it is interesting how many important parts are played by women. However, in 'Parzival' by Wolfram von Eschenbach, which seems to finish off Chretien's tale, it shows that once the hero has asked the Fisher King - Anfortas - the question: "Dear Uncle, what ails you?" - the king is cured and the Lance disappears from the scene. A little later the Grail procession is repeated and there is no mention of the Lance. This must mean that the Lance was only relevant to the Fisher King - his wound and so on.

For those interested in the Grail tales this is a useful, interesting little booklet - well worth buying. (Heart of Albion Press, £2.95)

(C.E.- G)

THE CIRCLEMAKERS by Andrew Collins. ABC Books, PO Box 189, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 1NF. £4.95.

Andrew Collins brings a wealth of diverse knowledge to this investigation of the crop circle phenomenon. This makes for interesting reading and is supported by an easy narrative style. He does not hide his changing feelings as success and failure succeed each other in his quest. This gives an impression of frankness and makes his readers feel they are 'in on the act'.

In fact at one point, in his chapter entitled 'The Dream Shattered', he reveals that as recently as September 1991 he nearly abandoned his mission after hearing that the hoaxers Dave Chorley and Doug Bower had claimed to be responsible for over 200 fake crop circles since 1978. To his credit, Andy reports all this without rancour or recriminations. What made matters worse for crop-circle addicts was the fact that leading researcher Pat Delgado pronounced one of their fake creations genuine: 'In no way could this be a hoax'. Says Andy, learning about this, 'I felt as if I had been kicked squarely in the stomach'.

That was in September 1991 and for four months his interest waned. In January this year, however, various events and a lot of inductive thinking made him conclude that hoaxing was not the exclusive cause of crop circles. Certain phenomena and conditions could not be so easily explained away. Statistically, too, the odds seemed against consistent fraud, and just one affirmative is all it takes to cancel out all the negatives.

Various psychic experiences involving himself and his mediumistic girl-friend Debbie were also convincing to him - though these, of course, would be purely subjective to a third party.

Accepting the underlying genuineness of the circle phenomenon, Andy calls on his extensive scholarship as he formulates a comprehensive theory of their formation and their purpose based on the 'orgone energy' theories of the brilliant but off-beat researcher Wilhelm Reich. Reich's orgone energy may or may not be a reality: by its very nature it should be undetectable if, as Andy Collins states, it is 'mass-free'. However, assuming that orgone energy exists, the author uses it to account for a whole host of other mysterious forces and phenomena, good and bad, such as UFOs, ley lines, folklore beliefs, shamanism, strange illnesses and non-human intelligences.

One or two points, however, bother me in Andy's technical discourse. He talks of 'orgone bioforms' (living, energetic entities) evaporating 'back into the higher realms of the electromagnetic spectrum'. This seems to me to be in direct conflict with the idea of 'mass-free' orgone energy which (as he quotes elsewhere) is 'hidden from scientific detection' by occupying these higher realms. Bearing in mind Planck's Rule $e = hf$ (where e is energy and f is frequency), the higher the 'realms' the greater the energy and the more detectable it is by its harmful effects - viz cosmic radiation, which necessitates heavy shielding in spacecraft. In fact, applying de Broglie's formula $\lambda = h/mV$ to Planck's Rule, we can derive Einstein's devastating mass/energy equation $e = mc^2$. Briefly, then, I cannot see how orgone energy - if it has the characteristics claimed for it - can occupy any part of the EM spectrum. Still I'm no physicist and would gladly accept that I may have got it wrong.

The publisher's blurb on the back cover of *THE CIRCLEMAKERS* states: 'Crop circles hold powerful and sinister secrets that cannot be ignored'. This modestly priced 351-page paperback makes reference in passing to such a variety of matters (corpse candles and chaos mathematics to name but two) that whether or not you have more than a sketchy interest in the phenomenon, the book itself is not to be ignored.

Eddie Tooke

TINTAGEL AND THE ARTHURIAN MYTHOS by Paul Broadhurst (Pendragon Press, Box 888, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 7YH. 203pp £35.00.)
(There is no administrative connection with the proprietors of PENDRAGON magazine, though obviously their subjects overlap.)

As your own friendly Pendragoman will doubtless be delighted to confirm for the benefit of Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury and her many admirers, the word *Mythos* is of course the singular of *Ourthos* (= Arthos, or Arthur.) Since Arthur is himself a highly singular character with a highly plural origin, there can hardly be a better word for him. So they've got the title correct anyway - which is a promising start. Simply judged as an aesthetic object entirely irrespective of its literary content (I'll come to that in a minute) the book is a really beautiful production with artistry and craftsmanship in superb combination. The cover has gold-effect printing embossed on to a green leather-effect background. (There is no dust-jacket, but it would be a crime to conceal this cover.) The book's layout and printing are first-class. There is a grangerised coloured frontispiece, with other photographs by the author and original artwork by Vivienne Shanley distributed throughout. Ms. Shanley is also responsible for the end-papers.

The book's theme is that (a) Tintagel was an important ritual site centuries, if not millennia, before the mediaeval castle was built, and (b) it is simply one of a network of such sites scattered liberally across the landscape both in Cornwall and elsewhere. The author makes out a very good case for (a), on both historical and topographical grounds. With regard to (b), the case for the various individual sites is also convincingly argued, if by necessity in less detail, and the case for the earth-currents that are held to link them all together rests mainly on the dowsing of the author's friend Hamish Miller. (A bit of authoritative geological expertise would be a very valuable asset here.)

Where the author is simply consolidating historical and topographical information there can hardly be any disputing it, and the conclusions he draws from it seem eminently reasonable. He admits, however, that the book was produced in something of a hurry, in the midst of ongoing research, and that new evidence keeps turning up all the time. So in places he leans rather heavily on the works of others, the research for which was often less meticulous than his own. The name Bodmin, for instance, he supposes rather vaguely to refer to the numerous megalithic monuments on Bodmin Moor, whereas in fact the moor (formerly Foweymoor) did not acquire its 'Bodmin' monniker until the early nineteenth century.

The book ends with an account of a sequence of dowsing expeditions tracing the alleged earth-currents across the landscape, and some philosophising on the matter. Presumably any competent dowser will confirm the findings if required.

I'll finish by noting that the work is not quite as Arthurian as its name implies. In fact, if all reference to Arthur (and to Merlin etc.) were to be deleted, powerful arguments concerning Tintagel's prehistoric importance would still remain.

{Recommended - if you can afford it...}

Archie Mercer (guest reviewer)

LETTERS

I would like to comment on David Pykitt's 'The Quest for the Historical King Arthur'. However, it would take an article roughly the same length or even longer to do it justice.

The historicity of Athrwys ap Meurig cannot be doubted: that he is the secret identity of Arthur must be doubted. Equally Arthfael (Arthmael) may have been an historical character (his life wasn't written down until the 16th century). That Arthfael and Athrwys are the same person is dubious - and that both are Arthur more incredible. That people like Arthfael and Athrwys may have added to the myth of Arthur could be a possibility. However, neither of them were Arthur.

The evidence is so unreliable as to make it worthless. To say that Magnus Maximus had a son called Constantine is based on legend not fact - whereas chroniclers living during Maximus's lifetime told of only one son (Flavius Victor) and two daughters. The Maximus dynasty ended with Victor's murder in 388 AD. Back-tracking from Morgan ap Caradog (a descendant of Athrwys ap Meurig), who attended a council at Gloucester in 1175, must place Athrwys in the 7th century - at the earliest in the late 6th century. Others would place him in the late 7th or early 8th. Arthfael, it can be shown from other characters mentioned, must have lived in the second half of the 6th century. Both the dates of Athrwys and Arthfael put them out of range of Arthur who must have lived at least before 537 AD - but more than likely in the late 5th century. David's article is very interesting and I suggest that studies of both Athrwys ap Meurig and Arthfael should be made without worrying about them being Arthur's secret identity. The quest for the historical Arthur goes on!

(Charles Evans-Günther, Clwyd.)

Dear Editor,
A challenging examination question, set by the Department of Sophistry of the University of Baloney, has recently come to my notice:

Which of the following statements by historians do you consider: (a) are true (b) sound true (c) sound like bunk (d) are bunk?

1. R.G.Collingwood suggested that the imperial military office of Comes Britanniarum, Count of the Britons, continued after the end of Roman authority and Arthur in that capacity led a force of imperial-type cavalry to which the pedestrian Saxons had no answer.

2. The *Annales Cambriae* is a tenth-century Latin chronicle in which the inclusion of Arthur tells in favour of his reality but also throws a problem into relief: the way his career is spread over an impossible stretch of time.

3. Etienne de Rouen, in his *Draco Normannicus* relates that when Henry II, Plantagenet, was preparing to attack Brittany in 1167 he received a letter from Arthur announcing his return.

4. Men may have believed in 1203 that John had ordered Arthur's execution, but the truth seems to have been far worse. Ten years later a well-informed English chronicler wrote that John had actually killed his nephew himself in a drunken rage after dinner, on 3 April 1203.

Provide supporting evidence for answers you have marked (a) or (b); there is no need to give any evidence for answers you have marked (c) or (d).

N.B. You may not quote historians to support your opinions unless you are certain they are not misinterpreting the evidence.

(100 marks)

Fred Stedman-Jones, Cheshire.

I was sorry to hear about Rosemary Sutcliff. I don't think you actually said in the obit that she was an early Pendragon member.

The Llanelen work continues. Nik Wright is currently undertaking the massive task of cataloguing all the information and the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff is eagerly awaiting all the finds and archives. There are still reports to be had from specialists. When there's anything further to report I'll let you know.

(Kate Pollard, Bristol.)

Re the 'History is Bunk' debate: Fred has a good 'touche' point about my own remarks being based on fiction. However I would like to make it clear that, although I am 99% convinced of the innocence of Richard III, (based on the genuine and painstaking 'homework' done by Josephine Tey for her brilliant book, 'Daughter of Time') - I said only that the historians could be wrong about King John - not that they definitely were. Re my intake of history being mainly fiction-based, I have two points to make: (1), I always disliked history intensely at school, because it had all happened already, so there was absolutely nothing that I could do to change it. If anyone ventures to point out that humanity learns from the lessons of the past, I usually fall about laughing ... well, I mean, just look at the world today - who has learned what? I ask you! (2), I would respectfully point out that the historical beliefs of a great many people are firmly based on the works of William Shakespeare, which are just as fictional as any modern historical novel, nicht wahr? Which leads to two other points: (a), that Francis Bacon wrote the plays; and (b), it has just occurred to me to wonder why Shakespeare never wrote a play about (King) Arthur?

(Beryl Mercer, Truro.)

[It is difficult to say whether Shakespeare's reason for omitting to write about Arthur was natural timidity or a tendency to overlook opportunities.

All the real people he wrote about were dead and so could not harm him. Arthur, however, might only be sleeping and could, therefore, return and take umbrage at something he had said. It is for this reason that Shakespeare frequently wrote under the pseudonym 'Francis Bacon' - after the inventor of his favourite pastime, back-gammon.

As the Bard said in the unpublished sequel to 'As You Like It' - 'As You Positively Hate It' - 'Silence is virtue when others might hirtue' - an attitude which makes the historical reliability of all his works suspect.

My statement that Shakespeare tended to miss chances is supported by his treatment of King Lear. He wrote the whole play without once quoting - or even referring to - the limerick form of verse for which the legendary British king (Edward to his friends) is chiefly remembered.

As a point of interest, Shakespeare's fear of reprisals - especially where Arthur was concerned - was probably sparked off when he discovered a defaced copy of Caxton's *Morte d'Arthur* in a second-hand book shop. The 'hur' was missing from the title - stolen by General Lew Wallace who, up till then, had been going to call his famous book about gladiators merely 'Ben'. This left only 'Morte d'Art' and convinced the superstitious Shakespeare that he would meet his death by being struck by a dart. On being told at his local that darts were colloquially called 'arrows' he uttered his immortal phrase 'Arrows by any other name' etc.

Not a lot of people know all this, so I hope it clears up a few points. Ed.]

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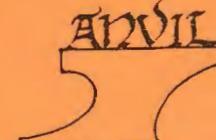
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