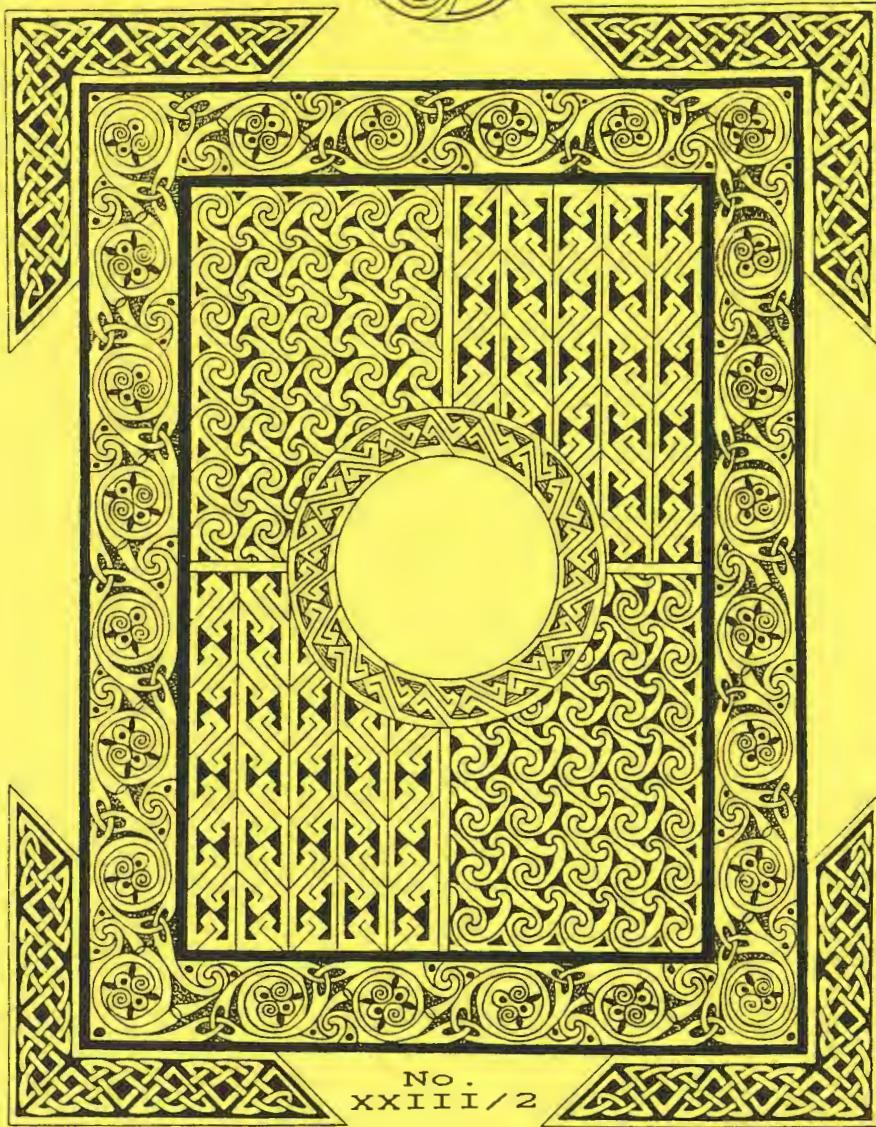




# PENDRAGON



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Pendragon investigates Arthurian history, archaeology  
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# The Last Eddie Coria

◊(but not the last editorial)◊

Yes, folk, 'the old order changeth, yielding place to new ... lest one good custom should corrupt the world'. Anne and I have reluctantly to retire from the enjoyable, rewarding but very demanding task of editing the Journal and dealing with the Society's finances and correspondence. Reasons? Domestic commitments and a decline in my health over the years (I am now 73).

It is not everyone who has the privilege of editing such a old-established and prestigious journal as PENDRAGON, and when we first saw the Society mentioned in the Gothic Image Bookshop in Glastonbury in the early eighties and applied for membership we had no idea that we would make so very many good friends and eventually be able to play a part in helping Pendragon over a bad patch. Now, however, having edited the magazine and handled Pendragon business for four years, the time has come to shed our responsibilities.

None of us can be all things to all people and I'm sure we haven't been able to please all our readers all of the time - that would be impossible in a journal with such a broad approach to Arthurian matters, but we've tried hard to preserve a balance between the realistic and the romantic; between the mystical and the matter-of-fact. This does not mean that every individual issue reflects such a balance. An editor is, of course, totally dependent upon the contributions he receives (unless he writes everything himself!) For example, Issue No.22/3 was entirely devoted to historical matters (because that's all the material we had to hand), whereas the last issue and this current one are largely about that fictitious (or factitious?) character Merlin. Readers, incidentally, will have noticed that promised themes do not always materialise and I have often had to shelve a theme temporarily - simply because we haven't received the appropriate contributions. This tendency to a dearth of material emphasises one point very clearly: without its multifarious approach to Arthur, PENDRAGON WOULD HAVE FOLDED LONG AGO. I cannot stress this fact too strongly.

It is nice to be able to report that membership has been steadily rising and, thanks to the energetic publicity campaign of Fred, Geoff and Simon (to name them in alphabetical order!), those stalwart members of our production team without whom you wouldn't be reading this editorial today, the rate of joining is increasing.

It is only honest to say that the influx of new members is not solely due to publicity efforts. The sad demise of DRAGON, edited by Charles Evans-Günther, has resulted in applications to join our Society. Charles, a Pendragon member himself and a staunch supporter, has kindly urged his ex-members to take out Pendragon membership and a number have already done so. We welcome them, and hope they will find in the pages of our Journal some compensation for the loss of their own very good magazine. In the main the DRAGON approach to Arthurian matters has been of a non-romantic, non-mystical nature. This attitude will be as welcome as all other aspects of the Arthurian canon and will help guarantee a lively and stimulating Journal in the years ahead.

But - you will be wondering with all that shrewd perspicacity characteristic of Pendragon members - who will be taking over the editorial, financial and secretarial functions? Will there be a hiatus waiting indefinitely to be filled? The short and happy answer is NO. Our Chairman, the redoubtable Fred Stedman-Jones of Smithy House, Newton-by Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX, will, with his wife Marilyn, ensure the Society's continuity and ALL correspondence should in future be addressed to them. (Any PERSONAL letters to Anne and myself should be addressed to Rose Cottage, Dingle Lane, Hillend, Twynning, Glos. GL20 6DW.)

Yes, Fred and Marilyn have gallantly opted to carry the load - and let me state, categorically, there is nobody, but NOBODY more

competent to do so. Fred's energy, enterprise and diverse skills have been apparent to all who have read his numerous contributions and entertaining 'Talking Head' feature. Thank you Fred for stepping into the breach. May the Force be with you and with Marilyn.

The democratic election of permanent officers will take place at an A.G.M. later this year. Without wishing to preempt any decisions taken at that A.G.M., this seems an opportune time to point out the benefit - not to say necessity - of having the major offices based at one address. The overlap between the various aspects of organisation can otherwise cause considerable problems. Centralisation existed at Bristol, where Chris Lovegrove and Kate Pollard co-operated in running Society affairs; it has been the case at Twynings, and should continue to be the case in future, wherever the venue.

What else is to be said? Most important of all must be expressions of gratitude for the support I have received during my term as editor of PENDRAGON. This has come from Society members in general in the form of encouraging and complimentary remarks and these, of course, are due not merely to myself but to the most loyal and co-operative production team any editor could wish for - Fred with his wide scholarship; Simon with his brilliant Celtic artwork - second to none in the country; Geoff, without whose low-cost printing facilities the Journal would have died in 1989, and my wife Anne, whose suggestions, proof-reading and unbelievable 90 words per minute on the word-processor have been totally indispensable. Other staunch supporters should also be mentioned but to name some and not others would be invidious. Instead, I recommend that you glance through the 16 issues of PENDRAGON that have been produced during the last four years and note the names of the contributors and the frequency with which their work appears. To all these folk, my warmest gratitude - and also to those generous souls who regularly enclose donations with their subs. (not possible for everybody of course!) As a point of interest, all of us in the production team pay subs. too.

What, now, of the future? All being well, my own involvement with Pendragon will continue. So - I am very much afraid - will that of Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury. The old order MAY change, but the old dis-order is likely to remain, judging by a postcard I received from the lady, wishing me a long and happy retirement - preferably on Mars.

Another point: in a discussion with Fred it was suggested by him and agreed that there would be advantages in changing PENDRAGON's date of publication. In future, then, the Journal will appear in late April, July, October and January.

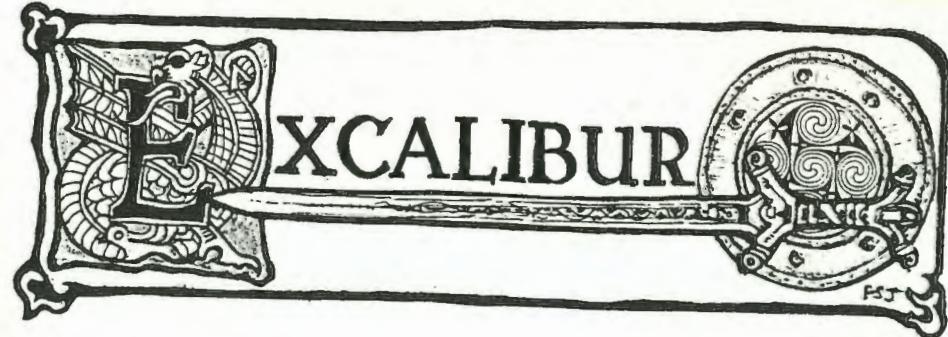
Observant readers will have noticed that (for the first time as far as I know) PENDRAGON has reached 40 pages. (If you hold up both hands and both feet and get a friend to do the same, you should be able to check this). This is not an economic size for the Journal because not only do printing costs go up but postage jumps into the next price-band. 36 pages is the optimum size. It's just that (with Fred's encouragement) it was decided to make this last production of mine a specially big one. Whatever the size of Fred's first issue in July, however, one thing is certain: it will not only be well-produced but beautifully printed too because Fred will be using his new Canon word-processor.

[No, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, this ISN'T the 'Arthurian canon' mentioned earlier. And, no again: neither is it one of those used by Mordred against Guenevere in the Tower of London in T.H.White's 'The Once and Future King'. If you MUST be a pest, DO try to be a literate one!]

So now, friends, having said my piece, I'll invite you for the last time to read on ...



Eddie Yorke



Caliburn his sword  
Hung by his side, that was wrought in Avalon  
With craft that was magic.

(Layoman)

Like other great heroes in the legends of Europe Arthur carries a magical sword with wonderful powers. In the dark ages the sword symbolised its owner's power and was closely linked to his fortunes and his fate. Armed with such a weapon he could challenge terrifying foes, monsters and giants and defeat them.

These swords were often endowed with supernatural personalities and powers of their own. Legend tells of swords inhabited by spirits and the anthropoid-handled swords of the Celts might well represent the spirit inhabiting the weapon. They might bestow invisibility or staunch bleeding, there were swords that sung in battle, caused death once drawn or bled at their owner's death. Arthur's great sword Caliburn/Excalibur belongs to this line of fabulous weapons. Among its attributes it could 'kerve steel even and althing' - just as two other swords could break rocks and lop the tops off mountains.

These weapons were often acquired mysteriously as the gifts of gods or other supernatural beings and were forged on the anvils of wonderful craftsmen like Volund or Wayland the Smith.

Such tales emerged from the heroic cultures of the world when a warrior elite justified their existence by feats of arms and their lives were dedicated to deeds of valour. The pagan Hallstatt warriors carried the sword into our islands and there must have been wonderful tales of their great swords which had performed legendary deeds. These stories were largely lost during the Roman occupation of the mainland but the old ways continued in Ireland and the bards were able to pass on the heroic legends. In the Northern lands, too, the Sagas and Eddas tell of swords that come out of the dark past heavy with symbolism, surrounded by legend.

The history and legends of Arthur display all the attributes of a great Celtic Hero. The stories begin with a pagan hero to parallel Finn MacCool and Cuchulainn, move on to the wars against the Anglo-Saxons and internecine feuding between the Celts, until Arthur becomes the Universal Champion, the hero and conqueror of European renown, the king who waits to be awakened to serve his people again.

And, throughout all this long history, Arthur carries at his side 'Caledfwlch, Caliburn, Excalibur' - The Brand of Fire: The Sword of Light. But how can we know what Excalibur looked like? We can take two approaches to this question: historical and literary.

Let us consider the historical King Arthur first. He was probably a British war leader who adopted Roman cavalry tactics to repel the skirmishing Anglo-Saxon raiders. Patterns of Roman equipment might have been adapted by British armourers, and this seems likely from Geoffrey of Monmouth's description of the arming of Arthur on the Eve of the Battle of Badon. He describes Arthur's equipment as a lorica (leather and mail shirt), a dragon-crested round helmet, and a circular shield bearing the Blessed Mary. This sounds authentic, no Cl2th Hollywood here. But no description of the sword, just... 'the excellent sword made in the Isle of Avalon.' For this period archaeological evidence is scarce: the Christian priests seemed to have actively opposed the old heroic burials.

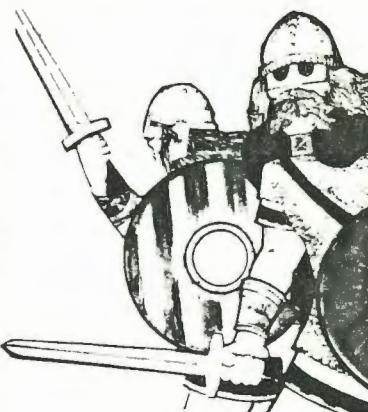
There is a wealth of evidence from the earlier Celtic chieftain burial tombs in Europe and from British votive deposits in sacred rivers, lakes and pools. The Witham Sword from a river in Lincolnshire has a bronze anthropomorphic hilt which provides the pattern for the brass paper knife on my desk, but that is C2nd B.C.

So where shall we turn next? There is a fine description of the Irish hero Cúchulainn in the 'Tain' of the hero displaying himself before the hosts when... 'He wore a golden-hilted ornamental sword at his left side. This sounds like a ceremonial sword, used to display and to impress on tribal occasions. Such a sword may be seen in the British Museum: the Embleton Sword was found near Cockermouth towards the end of the C.18th. It belongs to the C.1st B.C. and is strong, light and beautifully decorated. It has a silver-garnished bronze scabbard, with a hilt decorated with jewels and enamel.

Ironically, the best place to look next may be in the hands of the enemy, for the intricate cross-cultural relations of the period suggest that the weapons of the antagonists were similar. Out of the C.7th ship burial at Sutton Hoo was resurrected an Anglo-Saxon royal cenotaph containing the regalia of a king. 'Beowulf' tells us that the ancient sword is the prime symbol of kingship and the sword of Raedwald is there to see but... NO KING (Unwise to...etc.) From scabbard to pommel the sword is 33", with a 28" blade. The hilt and pommel is gold filigree set with garnets and the scabbard is set with jewelled bosses. Until something else turns up, this is probably the best image for EXCALIBUR we are likely to find among existing British swords; it, too, is in the British Museum.

If we turn to the early Arthurian literature we find ourselves in a mysterious world with its roots in Celtic myth. The Matters of Britain and of Ireland obviously stem from a common source, though less of the primitive survives in the mainland tradition. Finn MacCool and the Fianna, bodyguards of the High King, have striking resemblances to the early Arthur and his warband and there are parallels in the tales told of Cúchulainn.

In mythical times the Tuatha de Danaan invaded Ireland. These



euhemerized gods, demoted to heroes, brought with them the Four Treasures. They were led by Nuada from whose blinding sword no one could escape. The sword of Fergus Mac Roech, legendary King of Ulster, was named Caladbolg ('bolg'=lightning) a version of 'Caledfwlch', Arthur's sword in the Mabinogion. This similarity suggests that the Welsh is either borrowed from the Irish or cognate with it.

In 'Culhwch and Olwen' Caledfwlch is wielded by Goreu (The Best), Arthur's golden-haired cousin who acts as his champion and beheads the tyrant giant Yspaddaden. The sword is not restricted to Arthur, it can be used on his behalf. In the poem 'Preiddu Annwn' the wielder of the Sword of Light is Llwch Llenllawg (Llew, or Lugh transposed from Irish texts) who uses it with great skill to win the Cauldron of Pen Annwn. In 'The Dream of Rhonabwy' that prince sees Arthur as King of Avalon in his full regalia, with all his treasures and bearing the Sword of Light:

'And when the sword was drawn from its scabbard, it seemed as if two flames of fire burst forth from the jaws of the serpents, and then so wonderful was the Sword that it was hard for anyone to look upon it.'

It is the 'brandon de feu' of the later French manuscripts and recalls the prose Edda where Odin's swords are called 'Odin's fires'. The god used them to illuminate his mead hall during the dark evenings.

So, now we have a sword with a bright blade chased with two snakes, a skill known to the smiths of the Rhineland, and, perhaps, a pommel also bearing the rainbow serpents or dragons. The Romans brought the dragon to Britain and the golden dragons in the sky of Uther's vision led him to use them as the symbol of his kingship. A fitting sword for his son, also Pendragon of his people. These motifs from ancient myths run like golden threads through the later Romances.

The story of the Sword in the Stone entered the Romances before the Lake motif. Robert de Boron's account was later paraphrased by Malory, ... 'there was found a great stone four square, like a marble stone, and in the midst thereon, stocke a fair sword.' Arthur... 'handled the sword by the handles and lightly, fiercely he pulled it out of the stone-whereat he was called the only rightful King of Britain.' The act of drawing the sword from the stone is a symbolic one, which establishes the young Arthur, just 15, as the predestined king. In the same way Galahad later draws Balin's sword from a stone and so inaugurates the Grail Quest and his own year long reign at the Holy City.

Arthur's right to the throne is established but he has to demonstrate his power at several great festivals: Candlemas, Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. It seems his leadership was contested several times and the insurrection of the six kings seems to bear this out. This may recall a formal ritual combat where a sword was stuck in the ground or into the swage hole of an anvil and drawn out by the winner. It is known that the Sarmartians had such a custom and there were units of these men in the Roman army of C2nd Britain.

The stone motif reminds us of how rulers were inaugurated on stones of power such as the Lia Fáil (another of the Treasures of the Tuatha). This stone stood on the Hill of Tara and roared its joy when the

rightful king stood upon it. (Doesn't that make your hair stand on end?) The navel stone at Delphi may be a clue and the Turoe Stone of Ireland, carved with snake/dragon patterns was in use for the inauguration of monarchs until the C2nd.B.C. Was it essential for the royal line to be installed upon a sacred stone, as it is still today?

In Mary Stewart's 'The Last Enchantment' Arthur is taken to North Wales by Merlin to gain the sword of Macsen, Maxen Wledig, the British Emperor, from the Chapel Perilous where it lies on a hallowed stone. This ties in with Beram Saklatvala's theory that the tales of Arthur as a European conqueror are transposed to him, as a later national hero, from Maximus's historical exploits.

The Sword from the Stone might be seen, in the light of the later Doctrine of the Two Swords, as the Temporal Sword. It is broken in conflict with King Pellinore. Arthur then receives the Spiritual Sword, which would serve him all his life, from the Isle of Avalon, the Island of Apples, Ynys Avallach, Tir na nÓg, ruled over by women.

The Vulgate Cycle, version A, tells how Arthur received Excalibur from the mysterious Lady of the Lake and Malory elaborates the story. Archaeological discoveries in the peat bogs of Denmark, once lakes, show that this may be another ritual practice. Swords have been found, some weighted down, obviously intentionally submerged. Ritual deposits of swords in sacred lakes are also known from the Angeln, the homeland of the Angles on the Danish/German frontier.



The motif of the sword in the lake might recall how priestesses of a sacred lake retrieved a hero's sword for a champion, to be returned at his own death. Geoffrey Ashe has suggested that the title of Lady of the Lake might have been an office given to certain Celtic priestesses. The Celtic practice of votive offerings to the spirits of springs, wells, lakes and rivers is well established. These spirits seem always to have been female. If this seems far fetched we should remember that the Narts certainly had a custom of throwing dying warriors' swords into lakes. Myths, far from being seen as untruths, should be seen as the spoken/literary part of ceremonies where rituals are the actions.

It is known also that Celtic heroes were often 'fostered' by women, who trained them in arms. In the Mabinogion tale of 'Math' Arianrhod has to be tricked into giving her son Llew his sword: the right was hers and he could not 'take valour' until she did. An interesting aspect of the Arthurian tales is how Morgan opposes Arthur. She takes briefly holds the sword Excalibur until the Lady of the Lake places an enchantment to rescue Arthur. Once chosen he is under her protection.

Eventually the sword must be returned to the waters, to the underworld, to the subconscious world. Its beauty tempts Bedivere, Giflet, Lukyn, Lancelot, whichever follower the version chooses, but Arthur's wish prevails: the sword is thrown into Dozmary, Loe, Meare pool, Bosherton Lake, Ullswater or the Solway Firth: all waters are one. The king is taken away across the deeps by the queens to Avalon.

In the C12th the sword was adopted to a new symbolism; its hilt became a cross and the Sword of the Spirit was identified with David/Solomon/Josephus. Later in the Romances the Grail Sword of Corbenick still bore the two serpents, however, they are deep-rooted in the tradition of Excalibur. Peredur's sword is broken yet it can be welded together beneath an underground lake.

Relics of Arthur were produced: his crown, his seal, his crystal cross. On his way to the Third Crusade, Richard the Lionheart presented Excalibur to King Tancred of Sicily. Perhaps it was one of the three swords that were carried before him at his coronation. The story of Arthur was sung wherever the Norman influence spread. Arthur sleeps under Etna, where Vulcan has his forge, and Fata Morgana haunts the Straits of Messina. Does Excalibur lie there in her jealous care under the blue waters of the Mediterranean?



## THE SMITH

With the discovery of iron as a workable metal some 3,000 years ago the smith's skill has seemed magical and the blacksmith, who works with iron, fire and water to create fine weapons and implements, was seen as a magician among early societies. He reigned supreme among craftsmen and a variety of gods and superhuman figures are associated with the smith. The ancient tales speak of titanic figures, often lame, who worked at forges in volcanoes and in underground caves. The brothers Grimm tell of a wild man, Grinken the Smith, who lived in a deep cave where he made objects of perfection. Weland (Wieland, Volundr) or Wayland Smith, Lord of the Elves, is well-known in Scandinavian, German and Anglo-Saxon tradition. He has become the archetypal smith in Britain, living on in folk tales, such as his shoeing activities at his 'smithy' on the Ridgeway near the White Horse Hill in Oxfordshire and the swords he forged had magical powers. In some accounts Excalibur is included among his works and as late as the reign of Henry VIII one of his swords was counted among the royal treasures. Wayland's story is told in the 'Volundarkviolet' in the poetic Edda. In Celtic tradition Goibhniu/Govannon is the god of smithcraft and Lugh is a master of all crafts. In Welsh tradition Druidic craftsmen called the Pheryllt worked as metallurgists and alchemists in the City of Emrys in Snowdonia.

### LEGENDARY SWORDS

EXCALIBUR.....	Arthur. Defeated Saxons. Forged in Avalon.
ARONDIGHT.....	Sword of Sir Lancelot of the Lake.
DOLOROUS.....	Balin, Knight with 2 swords. Galahad and Stone.
STRANGE HANGINGS.....	Sword of the Grail.
CALEDFWLCH.....	Arthur: 'Culhwch and Olwen'. Forged in Ynys Avallach.
GWRNACH'S.....	A giant in 'Culhwch'. Kai killed him with it.
CALADBOLG.....	Fergus of Ulster. Rainbow sword. Cut off hills.
RETAILIATOR.....	Manannan MacLir. Never failed to slay.
CONSTANTINE'S.....	Athelstan. Had a spike from the Crucifixion.
BRAINBITER.....	Hereward the Wake, Saxon hero of the Fens.
TAILLIFER.....	Count of Angoulême. Hastings. Made by Welander.
TIZONA.....	Sword of El Cid.
CURTANA.....	Tristan. Emperor Otto gave to King John.
BALMUNG.....	Siegfried. Sword of the Nibelungs. Wieland forged.
GRAM.....	Siegfried. Name means 'Grief'.
ANGUVARDEL.....	Frithiof. 'The Peacemaker'. Its Runes blazed in war.
SKOFNUNG.....	This sword cried out when it saw wounds.
MIMUNG & NAGELRING.....	Swords made by Wayland the Smith.
COURTAINE.....	Ogier the Dane. In Regalia of Saxon Kings
ROSSE.....	Otwit, King of Lombardy. Its cut left no gap.
FLAMBERGE.....	'Flame Cutter'. A sword of Charlemagne.
JOYEUSE.....	Charlemagne. Point of the Holy Lance in pommel.
GURTEIN.....	Ogier the Dane. Gift from Charlemagne.
DURANDAL.....	Roland, said to be Hector's. Indestructible.
GLORIOUS.....	Oliver. Hacked nine Great Swords to pieces.



# Chris Lovegrove ~ Is History Bunk?:

(Specimen question for AS-level Archaeosophy, set for CoBWEB. Co-ordinating British and Welsh Examinations Board by B. Mercer, F. Stedman-Jones and E. Tooke.)

#### Summary

This paper begins by purportedly examining the terms used; continues by seeing how the statement 'History is bunk' can be both true and false at the same time; and concludes by reaching hardly any conclusions at all. In the best pseudo-historiographical tradition, we consult only secondary, not primary, sources, and we use mostly uncorroborated hearsay. Any unattributed quotes are probably the author's, and any mistakes in emphasis or interpretation are certainly somebody else's.

#### Definitions

First, what is bunk? According to Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable, 1985, it is a contraction of 'bunkum', a word itself derived from Buncombe in North Carolina. The story goes: A representative at Washington being asked why he made such a flowery and angry speech, so wholly uncalled for, made answer, 'I was not speaking to the House, but to Buncombe,' which he represented... Thus bunkum has come to mean claptrap.

Now, what is history? For learned answers, I turned to my trusty Collins Gem Dictionary of Quotations. Cynical definitions given there include Gibbons':

'History is little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.'

and Hegel's famous dictum:

'What experience and history teach us is this, that peoples and governments have never learned anything from history.'

is a realistic if pessimistic commentary. Contrast this with Viscount Bolingbroke's recollection,

'I have read somewhere that History is Philosophy teaching by example.'

Hegel might have pointed out that peoples and governments have seldom rated philosophers highly!

Of more questionable worth are Carlyle's belief that 'Universal History is at bottom the History of Great Men'

And Sir John Seeley's assertion that

'History is past politics and politics present history.'

both, for present sensibilities, remarkably limited 19th century views.

C.V. Wedgwood recognised that History, like Beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. (The latter, incidentally, is a felicitous phrase of Lew Wallace.) Noting that 'Truth can neither be apprehended nor communicated,' the corollary is that

'History is an art like all other sciences.'

The implications of this epigram, then, bring me to the main points I wish to make.

#### Truth

History, as an academic '-ology', is essentially a study of

records. These records, whatever the forms they may take, may be matters of fact (as far as we can ascertain) or of opinion (where the facts are in dispute).

To illustrate the gradation from fact to opinion, let me take as example the famous Alfred Jewel, found in Somerset and now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Objectively we may take it as fact that it was manufactured and is not an accident of nature; that it consists of various identifiable materials, namely gold, enamel, rock crystal; and that on balance the pattern observable on one side is not abstract but of a human figure. The inscription in Saxon, 'Alfred had me made,' strongly suggests a link with King Alfred the Great, though this is clearly opinion, not fact. The figure with flowers is unlikely to represent the king, or St. Neot as once thought, but is believed to symbolise Sight. The artefact itself has been interpreted variously as a battle standard, the head of a stylus or pen, or (the current favourite) the terminal or handle of an aestol. This, if you didn't already know (and I certainly didn't!) is apparently a pointer for following a manuscript text.

So, how accurate the total record is must first depend on presentation: the provenance of the evidence, the nature of the background information, what is included, what is omitted. Here we are dependent on abstemious reporting and careful conservation of all that is pertinent. No small task!

A second factor, of equal importance in the evaluation of records, is that of perception. There are those who by viewing through a glass, darkly, or even through rose-tinted spectacles, will suffer from problems of misidentification and misinterpretation. (This is a possible difficulty resulting from empathy, the technique which, denounced by reactionaries, has for some time now been used as a tool for understanding in school history lessons.) The so-called Dark Ages are a suitable case for illumination. Because we continue to know relatively little of the individuals, circumstances and events of the immediate sub- and post-Roman period in Britain it has always been easy to make assumptions, of varying degrees of likelihood, about these obscure times. This is the very aspect C.V. Wedgwood highlighted when she opined that 'History is an art': it is how we flesh out the bare bones of Antiquity that makes this distinction appropriate.

The third factor in this consideration of the worth of History is the use that is made of it. Here, I think, we touch upon the possible origins of Ford's Bunkum Assertion. Without knowing the circumstances of the 1919 court case against the Chicago Tribune that provided the opportunity for that soundbite, I would surmise that Henry Ford demurred when historical context or precedent was referred to. In other words he would be objecting to a particular usage of history rather than history itself. Collins Gem is regrettably silent on the matter.

If my postulation is correct, then what should have been said was 'This use of history is bunk. This is analogous to the belief that 'Money is the root of all evil,' when St. Paul actually referred (in Greek, of course) to 'the love of money,' which puts a different complexion on the matter.

#### Fiction

It was H. Dumpty, Esq. who stated that 'When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean.' This is the ultimate danger

of control of the documentary record by political extremists. the abuse of history which occurs when despots put into practice Francis Bacon's observation that 'Knowledge itself is power.'

But a subtler misuse of history comes about when no distinction is made between two essentially different types of truth. I have been discussing mostly the first type, namely Objective Truth. We have seen how the manner of presentation and of perception make this type of truth almost impossible to be either apprehended or communicated (as Wedgwood put it).

However, the second type of truth must now be considered. Poetic Truth is of a different order. This is a truth that derives from a Greek root meaning to make or to fashion. If, as Browning said, 'God is the perfect poet,' then to be a poet means to be Creator of your own universe. The measure of your success is how well it all hangs together, whether there is internal logic, whether there is room for growth and development. There may be echoes of Objective Truth, but Poetic Truth, like all Art, works when a balance is struck between the strange and the familiar, the new and the old, between tension and release.

A suitable litmus test could be the Arthurian novel. Rooted in what little we know of historical sub- and post-Roman Britain but using a judicious mixture of extrapolation, expressiveness and empathy, it stands or falls on its ability to transport the reader convincingly into a past of the author's creation. Use of anachronisms or magic for example would disqualify it as an historical romance but not as, say, science fiction or fantasy. A Rosemary Sutcliff or Henry Treece tale would fit comfortably into the shoes of the former, a T.H. White, Vera Chapman or Mary Stewart would naturally don the mantle of the latter.

Harsher critics of Poetical Truth would call it pure Fiction (this word deriving from a Latin root, meaning made-up). Both Truths in reality have their own honourable pedigrees, their own disciplines, their own modi operandi. We should beware of illegitimate offspring masquerading as one or the other, and in so doing debunk Ford's model Untruth.

'Fools make feasts and wise men eat them;  
Wise men make jests and fools repeat them.  
- Traditional rhyme.

(c) Chris Lovegrove 1992

#### Hear Ye

Due credit has been given in our editorial to those responsible for the very satisfying growth in PENDRAGON membership. What was not mentioned is the enthusiasm of Chris Thornborrow of Edinburgh which may also result in new members. Chris has bought 15 copies of PENDRAGON to resell in his shop. He tells us that he is currently attending classes on the Druids and a number of other students there would also be interested in hearing about us. Thanks Chris!

Thanks are also due to Fred's son Richard Steadman-Jones who is giving a great deal of help to Fred with his new word-processor, creating data bases etc. for future editions of PENDRAGON.

Steve Sneyd, the well-known poet and 'wordsmit', has told us that the editor of The Round Table in the States, Alan Lupack, is putting together another issue of writing on Arthurian themes. He is looking for poems, stories, plays ('not too long') and drawings that have some specific link to the Arthurian legends. Alan's address:- 375 Oakdale Drive, Rochester, New York NY 14618 U.S.A.

# Anthony Chamberlain - Brothers The Reality of Merlin

Merlin, the Power behind the Throne; Merlin, the power behind the Plane that helped us win the Battle of Britain [Ed. note: Rolls Royce Merlin engines powered our Spitfires] as did the stretchered Arthur with Merlin's help win the battle for Southern Britain against the forces from the North at St. Albans. The question has been asked 'What does Merlin mean to you?' and I was very interested in reading what Merlin means to Beryl Mercer, Nicola Stevenson and Eddie Tooke, and also what Mankind means to Merlin.

It appears that Power is the word that springs to Beryl's mind when she contemplates this most mystical of FACTitious characters, and I go along with that. I'd also go along with her view that Merlin was in direct contact with his own mighty superconscious, for when we talk of Merlin we talk of a man with extraordinary powers, a man with alchemical and magical capabilities, which enabled him to materialise a sword in a stone. His ability to cast spells, which were used to good effect against Sir Pellinore, was used to such effect against him by Morgan le Fey that he ended up encapsulated in crystal. However, as this was only the physical form that the Entity was using at the time, it mattered very little in Reality.

As to modern-day Egyptians (one must not forget the Gypsies!) being descended from Atlantean survivors, this may be so but in this context we must not forget the Aborigines, who are stuck in time, and now unable as a race to progress; nor could we say that today's Egyptians have made much spiritual progress for that matter. The present day Amerindians seem, of necessity, to be channeling their endeavours along the path of materialism, unfortunately. As to the Druids, we must certainly look back through the mists of millennia to find their origin.

Nicola Stevenson mentions the Atlantean factor and the tie with Egyptians, but she also relates it to Merlin and the probability that he gained his mystical power way back then. This sits comfortably in my mind, and maybe we have to go back even further to Lemuria and Hyperborea, but who knows?! I do know that Eddie Tooke's somewhat druidical image of this man of power, with the aquiline nose and piercing eyes brings vividly to my mind's eye those beautiful sketches by David Anrias of Blavatsky's Masters - El Morya and Koot Hoomi, and others of the White Brotherhood, who, to my mind, are a very real factor in our fight for spiritual survival against the forces of ignorance and darkness that oppress us on all sides at this time.

Eddie's LIMNER anagram of our factitious magician got my undivided attention because one of the pseudonyms I use in writing to the local press, so that new topics may be started and others kept rolling, is Ruth Limner, R.A. - an anagram of Merlin + Arthur.

Yes, he got my attention with this word in particular, as did Beryl with 'his own mighty superconscious' because it was Queen Elizabeth's court limner, Nicholas Hilliard, who was commissioned

by his sovereign to paint the portraits of two children and ONLY two children: Francis (known to history as Bacon, but really Tudor!) and Robert (known to history as Essex). In reality these were her sons, sired by her morganatic husband, the Earl of Leicester - why else should she have the boys painted?

As to that 'mighty superconscious', Alexis Carrel is obviously referring to this in his book 'Man, the Unknown', where he says that 'Man is made up of a procession of phantoms in the midst of which strides an unknowable reality'. It was that Reality that helped to mould Krishnamurti throughout so much of his adult life so that he might be that perfect vessel for the teachings, but more than that: that he could give a body to the Lord Maitreya, as did Jesus the Nazarene, Gautama Buddha and the earlier Krishna.

One sees a little of this Reality in Blavatsky's Masters, the aforementioned El Morya and Koot Hoomi, who have such incredible capabilities as this world goes, the sort of capabilities displayed by the subject of this article: Merlin, who I see not just as the power behind Arthur's throne, and the worker of wonders as WE know him to have been, but as one of the shining facets of the multifaceted Entity known to Rosicrucians as the adept, St. Germain, the power behind other thrones over the millennia.

Then there was the Roman knight, Albanus, born of noble parents, who was made the Grandmaster of Freemasonry by the Emperor Carausius in 287 AD, and after becoming Steward of the Household and Ruler of the Realm, was eventually martyred in 303 AD. Later this same Entity played the part of Roger Bacon, the 13th century English philosopher and experimental scientist, who won the title of 'Doctor Mirabilis' (shades of Merlin!) - an earlier part/role played in tandem with El Morya's Arthur: which takes us back to the other Bacon.

And so we go back to St. Albans and Francis Bacon, the Jacobean Lord Verulam thereof, the Lord Chancellor, who carried the can for his changeling sovereign, James 1st, who had caused his incarceration in the Tower. There, earlier, his brother Robert has etched his name: Robert Tidir [Tudor]. And that greatest of Englishmen has been denigrated by ignorami ever since! (With this in mind, we must not forget that he had edited the King James Bible - no mean task!)

It is fascinating how this Alban word, with its meaning of white, threads its way through virtually two thousand years, whilst that 'unknowable reality' or 'Astral Monad' plays a quite miraculous part in the history of not only Britain but that of France and America. One can relate it to the White Brotherhood and The White Magicianship of Merlin, and although there is no mention of Merlin at St. Albans, there is the name of St. Germain in the present day Abbey, the original Abbey having been built in the 8th century by King Offa, and the ruins used as a quarry by Nicholas Bacon for his Gorhambury mansion, which became his foster son Francis' stately home. This is the place where Ben Jonson spent his time editing Lord Verulam's greatest work: SHAKESPEARE, which contains in Henry VI part 2, Act V, scene 2 a most telling line or two spoken in St. Albans by Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York: 'So lie thou there; for underneath an alehouse' paltry sign, the Castle of St. Albans, Somerset has made the wizard famous in his death.' The Somerset, in this case, refers to the Duke thereof, who Richard had just slain in battle; but how cunningly it also refers to Merlin, and ties in the martyred Albanus and the politically martyred author.

So, out of it all, what does Merlin mean to me? A man of mystery with the quite normal but extraordinary powers of the Rosicrucian adept and member of the White Brotherhood, one of whom, according to the New Testament, was witnessed after that Stone had been

(concluded on page 20)

# ALBY STONE

## Cosmological Imagery

### In Arthurian Romance

This Round Table was ordained of Arthur that when his fair fellowship sat to meat their chairs should be high alike, their service equal, and none before or after his comrade. Thus no man could boast that he was exalted above his fellow, for all alike were gathered round the board, and none was alien at the breaking of Arthur's bread. At this table sat Britons, Frenchmen, Normans, Angevins, Flemings, Burgundians, and Loherins. Knights had their place who held land of the king, from the furthest marches of the west even unto the Hill of St. Bernard. [1]

As described by Robert Wace in the twelfth-century *Roman de Brut*, the purpose of the Round Table is to prevent jealousy and disputes over precedence among the knights of Arthur's court. Around half a century later, Layamon's *Brut* tells how the Round Table is made by a Cornish carpenter who has heard that Arthur's knights have been fighting among themselves:

But I will thee work a board exceeding fair, that thereat may sit sixteen hundred and more, all turn about, so that none be without; without and within, man against man. And when thou wilt ride, with thee thou mightest it carry, and set it where thou wilt, after thy will; and then thou needest never fear, to the world's end, that ever any moody knight at thy board may make fight, for there shall the high be even with the low. [2]

According to the *Queste del Saint Graal* - broadly following the accounts given by Robert de Borron a few years previously - the idea for the Round Table came from the table of fellowship set up by Joseph of Arimathea, which was itself based on the table of the Last Supper. However, its shape makes the Round Table unique among the three, which seem to have been conventionally rectangular. By this time, getting near to the middle of the thirteenth century, the manufacture of the Round Table has become ascribed to Merlin, who made it for a different purpose entirely,

to embody a very subtle meaning. For in its name it mirrors the roundness of the earth, the concentric spheres of the planets and of the elements in the firmament; and in these heavenly spheres we see the stars and many things besides; whence it follows that the Round Table is a true epitome of the universe. [3]

Indeed, this does seem to be the truth of the matter. As the romances tell us, the construction of the Round Table does not put an end to individual rivalries, envy, or favouritism - far from it. Wace's description, however, makes the purpose of the Round Table clear right from the start: around it are seated knights from pretty nearly all over the Celto-Germanic world, a scope increased in the *Queste* to include knights 'from every land, be it Christian or heathen, where chivalry resides.' The Round Table is the symbol of a world order, uniting various nations under a common code. Its shape is simultaneously that of the world - then perceived as a flat disc - and the turning wheel of the heavens. It is also a representation of Arthur's kingdom: the king symbolises the totality of his people and his land, and the land is the world on a smaller scale. Every nation or people has a particular place or object that is thought of as the centre of the world, and which is conceptualised as the world in miniature. The portability of the Round Table of Layamon's *Brut* indicates that it is actually wherever Arthur happens to be - in a sense, it is contained within Arthur himself.

There is one vacant seat at the Round Table, the Siega Perilous, destined to be filled by Galahad, according to the *Queste*, thus beginning the quest for the Grail - the last noble act of the Round Table. Following the completion of the quest, there is only decay, dissolution, and disaster. The knights are virtually wiped out, Arthur is badly wounded and taken to Avalon, and a new world order begins. The coming of Galahad completes the cycle represented by the Round Table, and the attainment of the Grail signals that its best days are over. Even without the quest, the Round Table is doomed. Arthur, the paragon of kingship, holds it together by virtue of his position. He is symbolically married to his realm, in the person of his queen - originally the threefold Gwenhwyfar reported in the *Triceodd Ynyss Prydein*, who corresponds to the goddess of sovereignty in Irish tradition. By the time of the final battle, Arthur has lost her affections to Lancelot, and she has been physically abducted by Mordred. His kingship is effectively finished, and the Round Table is broken.

It is perhaps fitting that the Grail quest marks the pinnacle of the Round Table's achievement, as it is itself concerned with the ending of one cycle and the beginning of another. The knight who completes the quest is the new king of the Grail realm, succeeding the maimed Fisher King. The Grail Castle is another model of the cosmos, round - and seemingly revolving - in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*; but square or four-cornered elsewhere, corresponding to the four cardinal points. It is also usually surrounded by water, as the terrestrial disc was thought to be. In the centre of the Fisher King's hall is a blazing fire, while the room is lit by candles and the supernatural glow of the Grail and Lance. Indeed, descriptions of the 'Grail Procession' resemble nothing so much as the Copernican model of the solar system. Any resemblance, however, is almost certainly accidental rather than informed or prophetic. The procession described in Chretien de Troyes' *Perceval* suggests something altogether different:

In each candlestick burned ten candles at the very least. A girl who came in...was holding a grail between her hands. When she entered holding the grail, so brilliant a light appeared

that the candles lost their brightness like the stars or the moon when the sun rises. After her came another girl, holding a silver trencher. [4]

Chrétien has virtually spelled it out for us. Here we have a representation of the heavens, the stars represented by candles, the sun by the irail, and the moon by the trencher. The procession itself is an enactment of the diurnal cycle, the physical process that marks the flow of time. This fits in well with the 'timelessness' of the Grail Castle, an otherworldly place where the normal rules of time and space are suspended, so that the Fisher King is kept alive, horribly wounded, without the need for proper sustenance, and where even Joseph of Arimathea still lives, far beyond his natural span, according to some versions of the story. The Grail controls time, and that which time affects.

One of the Grail's mythical analogues is the golden cup of the Sovereignty of Ireland, who is - in the story known as *The Phantom's Frenzy*, at least - placed in the company of Lugh, a god with solar attributes. In medieval thought, kingship was closely associated with the sun, a hangover from the heathen past, when kings were believed to be descended from a solar being. Germanic kings were supposedly the descendants of Odin or Woden; and the Irish ancestral deities - of both tribes and royal lines, but especially the latter - seem to have been similar to, if not identical with, Lugh. Odin and Lugh, many-skilled gods, sprang from the same Indo-European concept, lightning-wielding sky-gods with solar characteristics, guardians of cosmic and social order, and patrons of the poetic and magical arts. Arthur - whose sword Excalibur identifies him as another lightning-wielder, is cast in the same mould. The spear-wounded Fisher King is another, as is his successor, whether the spearman Perceval or the solar hero Gawain.

Images of the cosmos are quite appropriate to the romances. Lugh's otherworld palace is by a tree, a representation of the *axis mundi* like Yggdrasill, the Norse World Tree, beneath which lies Odin's hall. Arthur's Round Table is one representation of the cosmos, the Grail Castle and the procession are another. There are a number of representations of the cosmic centre to be found in the Grail romances, and I have dealt with these elsewhere - but it is important to note that they are, by and large, associated with the quest for the Grail, and with the cosmic order it represents. To the medieval mind, the popular and most potent image of that order - God and Christ aside - was the person of a king, whose authority was symbolised by the orb and sceptre, the world and the lightning-spear. The king's lineage was all-important.

Ancestry and cosmos are combined in the *Queste del Saint Graal* when Lancelot, travelling alone in a forest, has a vision of a golden-crowned man 'set all about with stars', with seven kings and two knights [5]. Later, Lancelot is told that the man surrounded by stars is Celydoine, versed in 'the course of the stars and planets and the laws that govern the firmament' [6]. Celydoine is Lancelot's ancestor, and the seven kings are the founders of his line; while the two knights are Lancelot himself and Galahad, his son. The hermit who explains this refers to the dream of King Evalach in which a lake issues from the loins of

Celydoine, who is Evalach's nephew, and nine rivers flow from the lake, one of them deeper, swifter, and wider than the others. The greater river was cloudy and thick near its source, clear and sparkling in the middle, and even more so near its end.

Like the seven kings and two knights, these waters also represent Lancelot's line, with Galahad - inevitably - allotted the greater and fairer river. The lineage is confused, but several mythical figures can be discerned. R.S. Loomis sees Celydoine as a version of Merlin, another being versed in the ways of the heavens; and the name 'Celydoine' also points in his direction. Lancelot is a watered-down rendering of Lugh; and Galahad may be a rendering of Cú Roi, who in Irish tradition is Cú Chulainn's greatest enemy. Cú Chulainn is actually Lugh's natural son, but it seems probable that this can be resolved by treating the rival 'hounds' as reflexes of the rival twins of Indo-European cosmogonic myth. Traces of this theme can be seen in the rival brothers Beli and Brán - of whom the latter is patently the same as King Ban, Lancelot's father, while the former is possibly cognate with Balor, Lugh's grandfather and victim. The relationships are confused and confusing, but there is an emerging pattern.

According to the Norse creation myth, a number of rivers - probably eleven or twelve, though the exact number is unclear - flowed from the well Hvergelmir, located in the far north, and met with heat and flame from Muspell in the south. From the reaction of the two elements, the primordial giant Ymir ('Twin') was formed, from whom the race of giants were born, the forerunners of the gods. Ymir was killed by Odin (helped by his brothers) who made the cosmos from the corpse:

From Ymir's flesh  
the earth was made  
and from his blood the seas,  
crags from his bones,  
trees from his hair,  
and from his skull the sky.

From his eyebrows  
the blessed gods  
made Miðgarð for the sons of men,  
and from his brains  
were created  
the storm-threatening clouds. [7]

This is a very archaic myth indeed, and versions occur in a number of other Indo-European traditions - in the *Rig Veda*, the story of Romulus and Remus, and so on. The Norse poem has preserved it in a remarkably ancient form. What is interesting in this context is, firstly, that the creation of the primal being is facilitated by a number of rivers emanating from a well in the axial polar region (marked by the seven stars of Ursa Major, a constellation traditionally perceived as a kind of cosmic regulator, with certain links to Odin or Woden in Germanic tradition; perhaps relating to the seven kings of Lancelot's vision); secondly, that this primal being is a twin or dyadic figure. These can be related to the dream of Evalach - the more so when it is remembered

that this mythological framework is the source of Indo-European social and ritual legitimacy: the death and dismemberment of the giant is the original sacrifice, the first ritual. He is the first creature to die, and thus becomes king of the dead, the first king; and his killer is the first priest. [8]

The passage of time has blurred the old relationships, so that Odin, for instance, has both ritual-magical and regal attributes. Originally, the differentiation was much clearer, laying the foundation for the medieval distinction between secular and religious power, and their mutual dependence. The relationship is partly retained in that which exists between Arthur and Merlin - the king and the magician, which may go some way towards explaining Merlin's place, as Celydoine, in the visions of Evalach and Lancelot. On the other hand, Merlin has much in common with Odin. They are not identical, but the quasi-historical Merlin would have been a natural choice to inherit some aspects of the Norse shaman-god.

By an appropriately circuitous route, this brings us back to the Round Table. From the Indo-European cosmogony, we can infer that the king represents the world itself, also symbolised by the Round Table. Perhaps this is what Layamon's Cornish carpenter means when he says to Arthur: 'with thee thou mightest it carry, and set it where thou wilt, after thy will.'

#### REFERENCES

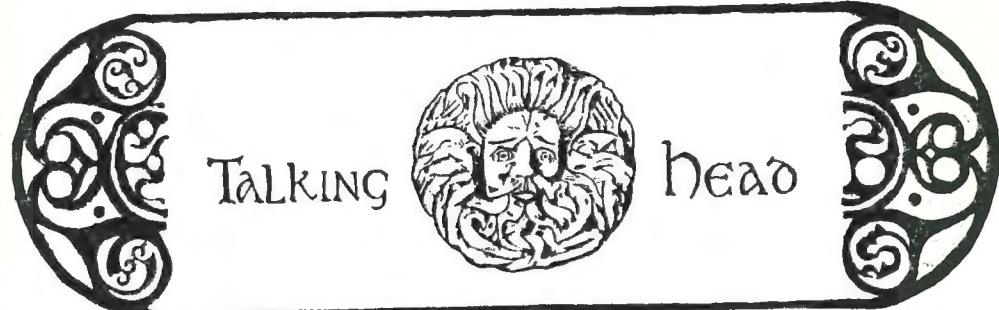
- [1] Wace and Layamon, trans. E. Mason (1962), *Arthurian Chronicles*, 55;
- [2] *Ibid.*, 211; [3] P.M. Matarasso, trans. (1969), *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, 99; [4] Chrétien de Troyes, trans. N. Bryant (1982), *Perceval*, 35; [5] *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, 147; [6] *Ibid.*, 152; [7] Snorri Sturluson, trans. J.I. Young (1954), *The Prose Edda*, 36; [8] See Bruce Lincoln: (1986), *Myth, Cosmos, and Society*; (1991), *Death, War, and Sacrifice*, both *passim*.

(*'The Reality of Merlin'* cont. from page 15)

rolled away from the tomb in which another Brother had been laid after a particularly exacting time! Yes, the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea who, as we know, suffered lengthy imprisonment for his belief in Jesus. He came over to this country in 63 AD and founded the Abbey of Glastonbury (which has been a Thorn in the side of Christianity ever since!)

Thus we have the cradle of Freemasonry in this country at St. Albans, and we have the earliest of the Shakespeare plays: *Love's Labour Lost*, which is a primer of Freemasonry, and the last of the plays: *The Tempest*, being a more comprehensive and in-depth work on the subject - as long as you know the code!

As one can only see the Reality of Shakespeare with the Esoteric eye, so can one only see the Reality of Merlin, a Limner who left us, through Malory and Spenser (said to be one of Bacon's 'Good Pens') with the most magical of pictures.



#### \* YEAR OF ARTHUR

The True Story: Each year, somewhere in the press, someone proclaims it to be the Year of Arthur. An article in the *Sunday Mercury* for January 10th reviewed Keatman & Phillip's book *King Arthur - The True Story* and announced that 'fresh revelations' will be included in the paperback edition due to be published in May (Arrow). Apparently the trail leads to Warwick Castle and will disclose information about 'the magic sword Excalibur.' (I can't wait.)

The review claims it is the Year of Arthur because it is 1,500 years since the Battle of Badon and warns us that the anniversary has already excited the interest of Hollywood. The final words have a ring: "Like Robin Hood, our other great national hero, King Arthur is a good thing...whether he existed or not."

Return of Guinevere: We knew that Arthur would return, whether Guinevere is or was a good thing is more debatable. The *Independent* came up with a long article, 'The legend according to Arthur's Missus,' which revealed that at least 10 films are being made in Hollywood on Arthurian themes. One, called 'Guinevere, Truth of a Legend', stands apart, however, because its script editor - Laura Phelan, a 32 year old Canadian - did no research for her theme. "No. You see, I saw it all, I WAS Guinevere in a previous life." At Glastonbury Laura recognised her own grave and bought a 4' silver-plated, mediaeval

'Excalibur' at the Glastonbury Experience for £200. Her memories of Arthur's lady are very dark indeed: "She was a knife-wielding monomaniac who used her body to gain power and influence over men." (Her screenplay pictures Gwen slicing off a Saxon's private parts to make a refreshing cup of tea and shows her beheading her sister-in-law.)

Ten years ago Laura took past-life regression classes under hypnosis and discovered the truth: Guinevere was raped when young and learnt to use men for her own ends. She also recalled that she had higher cheek bones and bigger breasts then. Universal Studios asked her to 'beef up Arthur' and make less of Gwen so the film is now being made independently.

Laura has had difficulty in persuading Peter O'Toole to play Merlin: she knows he was Lancelot in the good old days but this has made him 'very distant'. She believes that 'he and Guinevere have yet to resolve their difficulties.' Let's hope they do.

I thought of approaching Laura for a walk-on role but I'm afraid she might cast me as a Saxon.



#### \* THE MEDIA

Christmas Roundup: Over the holiday we had the chance to see several 'Arthurian' films:

A Connecticut Yankee: Ch.4, Dec.25th. The fourth version of the Mark Twain story updated and featuring Cosby Show child-star Keshina Knight Pulliam. A 10 year old schoolgirl is transported back to Camelot. Jean Marsh emerged from below stairs as a real baddie but childish goodness and American guts prevailed. WAS it really a dream though?

Indiana Jones & the Last Crusade: BBC 1, 25th Dec.

Monty Python & the Holy Grail: BBC 2, 31st Dec. The grail quest provides an excuse for some bizarre Python slapstick and absurd comedy. A paperback book is available with pictures and the script.

The Sword in the Stone: ITV, 26th Dec. Walt Disney's cartoon version of T.H. White. The shape-shifting episodes gave the Disney artists great scope for transformations and animal ballets. Best sequence is Merlin's fight with 'Min'. Where Sir Kay wandered in from is anybody's guess.

Entry in the Cambridge University Student's Alternative Prospectus, 1992: 'The main drawback of Queen's is the useless tumble driers and the lack of famous ex-Queen's students - Stephen Fry, Erasmus and somebody called T.H. White who apparently wrote the Sword in the Stone are the only ones anybody has ever heard of.' Fame indeed!

Iceman: Horizon: 8th March. An update on last year's film of the frozen body discovered in an Alpine glacier in 1991, described as one of this century's most significant archaeological events. The latest finds indicate that Iceman has upset the prehistoric applecart for he is over 5000 years old and was carrying metal artefacts when he should have been a stone age man.

Interesting also for its insights into politician's minds!

#### \* ENACTMENT SOCIETIES

English Heritage: The Events Diary for 1993 is now available. Called *Bringing History Alive*, it lists 197 events between April and late October. The anniversary of the Roman Conquest of Britain is being celebrated this year and there are two special events:

1. Richborough Castle, Kent (May 15th, 16th). Over 50 Imperial troops parading and demonstrating, including Dutch enthusiasts and the Ermine Street Guard. (Enquiries: 0304-612013)
2. Maiden Castle, Dorset (Aug. 7th, 8th). The Legio Augusta, led by Vespasianus, captured this enormous hill. Imperial troops plus the Durotriges tribe, including ladies. (Enquiries: 0305-820539)



The Ermine Street Guard will also be appearing at Wroxeter, Shropshire (June 26th, 27th), (Enquiries: 0743-761330); at Corbridge Roman Site, Northumberland (Aug. 29th), (Enquiries: 0430-632349); and Dover Castle, Kent (Sept. 25th, 26th), (Enquiries: 0304-201628).

A very interesting event will be 'The Fury of the Vikings' at Tynemouth Castle, (April 11th, 12th). A Saxon encampment, with the Saxons defending their families and homes from the Viking raiders.

Prytani: Celtica have advertised this Iron Age Celtic

Society for two years now and I have written for information twice, to no avail. I think enactment societies are too busy waving swords and pitching tents to communicate with the C20th! Apparently the Prytani are going from strength to strength and are looking for new recruits because they are in such demand. You can try to contact them via: Orm Scoffin, 8 Long St., Gerlan, Bethesda, Gwynedd, LL57 3SY. (0248-602772)

The English Companions: This is a fellowship which promotes wider interest in all aspects of the Old English or Anglo-Saxon culture and traditions. The fellowship Heawwitha (High Counsellor) has devised a correspondence course in Wessex Old English, or swēgciest, which has 8 lessons and a tape. To buy them you must join the Companions. Membership 'gield' is £10. Write to: The Membership Secretary, Da Engliscan Gesidas, BM Box 4336, London, WC1N 3XX.

Arthurian Enactment: At least one member is interested in contacting others who would like to discuss forming an Arthurian enactment group (see Letters page): why not get in touch; it might be enormous fun.

#### \* ROYAL MAIL SPECIAL STAMPS

The British Philatelic Bureau, a branch of the Royal Mail Service, has announced that it will release a set of special stamps on June 15th, to mark the anniversary of the Roman Occupation of Britain. Leaflet: Special Stamp Calendar, 1993, from main post offices or Customer Enquiry line, (031-550-8989).

#### \* GAMES

Miniature Wargames: I wrote about role-play games last time and readers might like to know that an interesting article on Arthurian games appears in *The Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (ed. Norris Lacy). A much extended version which takes account of the more recent fantasy gamesbooks and computer games

appears in *The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia*. The game 'Excalibur' (Atari Program Exchange) is described as of the war-game variety: "The wealth of detail offers the most complete vicarious experience of all Arthurian games." I have no idea whether this game is available in this country, however.

Miniature wargaming may appeal to those of you who are interested in historical authenticity. Typical terrains and combat situations between Dark Age armies can be created and played out. Research and modelling are interesting aspects in their own right and the painting of the figures is a hobby in itself. The magazine *Miniature Wargames* can be obtained from newsstands and provides addresses for suppliers of miniature scale figures which are sold as armies. These are properly researched and their range is fascinating: Irish, Scots, Picts, Romans (Sub-Roman, Marian and Imperial), Saxons, Vikings and Normans, etc. There are also Wars of the Roses and Crusader figures.

Write to: The Guardroom, 38 West Street, Dunstable, Beds. LU9 1TA (0582-606041). Send 3 stamps for catalogue of figures, rules, research books etc. Ask also for details of table-top games and boardgames by Avalon Hill and Victory from the USA.

According to H.G. Wells who wrote *Little Wars* in 1913, wargames are games 'for boys from 12 years to 150 and for that more intelligent sort of girl who likes boys' games and books.' (Oops!)



Arthurian Chess: Arthurian enthusiasts will probably have an Arthurian or Mediaeval set

already, if not here are some ideas: it is possible to buy resin chess sets in the shops but the moulds are readily available to cast your own. The advantage of doing it yourself is that you can get more interesting finishes with metal powders and antique stains. Write to: Fred Aldous Ltd., P.O. Box 135, 37 Lever Street, Manchester 1. (061-236-2477). They can supply Camelot, Camelot large, Lionheart, Mediaeval and Plantagenet moulds for prices between £7.25 and £13.86. They also supply resin, metal powders, stain, free information leaflets, etc. It is possible to design and make moulds from your own patterns and this was covered in an article in 'Golden Homes', (a Marshall Cavendish Encyclopaedia), Vol. 7, Part 50.

#### ★ ARTHURIAN STORY TELLING

Story telling has enjoyed a great revival in the past 12 years and I have been involved personally in running courses for teachers and students. I am thinking of forming an Arthurian story telling group after visiting John and Caitlin Matthews who gave me some interesting contacts when I visited them in February:

The Crack: this is a brand new magazine (Feb. 93) on story telling and the oral tradition. It aims to become a source of stimulating ideas and material. 3X a year: Feb., June, Oct. Annual sub. is £7.50 including p&p. Cheque to 'Paper Shoe Publications' at Paper Shoe Publications, Crack subscriptions, c/o The Crack Crack Office, Dalby St., London, NW5 3NQ.

Story Telling Centre: the interim name for a new society which is being formed to promote story telling. There will be a formal launch meeting at The Lecture Theatre, Central Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham on Sat. 19th June. Free, open to all. I shall probably be there. To be kept

informed, send 3 stamps to Joan Jones, 8 Bert Allen Drive, Old Leake, Boston, Lincs., PE22 9LE.



Two books to inspire you:

1. *The Craneskin Bag*, by Robin Williamson (P.XXII/2, Spring 92). Robin's book is a model for anyone wishing to become a modern bard. (ISBN 0 86241 218 8. £9.95). His tapes & books are available from: Robin Williamson Productions, BCM 4797, London WC1N 3XX.

2. *Story Telling & the Art of Imagination*, by Nancy Mellon (Element £7.99, ISBN 1 85230 339 5) Cover description: "Story telling is a real and tangible way of sharing our thoughts and feelings. It awakens and nourishes the timeless and archetypal experience, symbols and forces within all of us." A delightful, sensitive and inspirational book.

#### ★ COURSES, LECTURES AND TOURS

Access Archaeology Tours: Each tour includes visits to sites, recent fieldwork and, wherever possible, current excavations. Specialist guides are employed and sites include those not open to the public. 1993 tours include:

Christian Northumbria: (Aug. 9-14), Lindisfarne, Jarrow, Hexham, Ripon, Fountain's Abbey and Durham cathedral. Staying in Durham Castle.

The Lost Kingdom of Rheged: Arthurian sites in Cumbria. (Sept. 12-17). Was Urien Rheged the real King Arthur? Explore the evidence. Visit Caer Luel, Catreath, Lyvannet, etc. on full

day excursions. Staying in the Lake District.

A training course in fieldwork is also offered for a month in July/August by the Chichester Archaeological Unit on a Roman site.

Write for information: Speciality Tours, 69 Glisson Rd., Cambridge, CB1 2HG.

Aberystwyth Celtic Summer School: A reminder, 11th-30th July, 93. Single rooms and all meals. Morning study: 3 seminars from a choice; afternoons: lectures and a chance to learn modern Welsh or palaeography. Two full day excursions. Lecturers and leaders include: Dr. Anne Ross, Dr. Juliette Wood, Dr. Patricia Lysaght and Prof. Brynley Roberts.

School Organiser: Gerald Morgan, MA, 10-11, Laura Place, Aberystwyth, Wales. (0970-622677)



British Museum Tours: These are mostly to exotic foreign sites but the current brochure, which is well worth sending for, includes 'Romans in North Britain': 7 days departing 22nd July. Tour begins at York and visits Durham, South Shields, Hadrian's Wall, Birdoswald, Chester, Homesteads, Vindolanda, Carrawburgh (Temple of Mithras), Edinburgh for Roman Scotland, Antonine Wall, Glasgow Museum, Ardoch and Fendoch. Back via Melrose Abbey, Newstead, Corbridge. Lecturer throughout.

Expensive but tempting. British Museum Tours, 46 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3QQ. (071-323-8895)

#### ★ ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS

Another Druid Prince/Princess? A major research project is being carried out on the Greater Manchester Mosses by the University of Manchester and funded by British Heritage. There are 55 such sites making up a vast area in this part of the North West and these are thought to be rich in prehistoric remains. Investigators have already discovered three skulls: those of Worsley Man, Red Moss Lady and Ashton Man's Head. The University's Archaeological Unit has announced, "We are convinced there is a wealth of fascinating material below the mosses." Robert McNeil, Assistant Director, says, "Damage to the remains suggests that they were willing sacrificial victims." Lindow Moss is 12 miles south of Manchester and it may be only a matter of time before new evidence allows a sequel to be written to *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*. Exciting news.

Verlamio (Pendragon XXII/2): This is believed to be the most important Celtic tomb found in Britain. The wealth of the king, the destruction of valuables and human sacrifices indicate his importance. Archaeologists have dated pottery between AD45 and 50 and conjectured that it is the tomb of Adminius, a son of Cunobelin, who pledged loyalty to Caligula and gained his favour. This meant he took his brother Caractacus' place as ruler of the tribal confederacy led by the Catuvelauni.

A team led by Rosalind Niblett from St. Albans has also unearthed the remains of a great Romano-Celtic temple facing towards the tomb and built about 40 years later. The whole complex was surrounded by a ditch, flanked by human and animal sacrifices. Besides the rich finds, the royal tomb is helping archaeologists to piece together the rituals of a great Celtic state funeral. This is a Celtic Sutton Hoo.

#### ★ ART AND ARTEFACTS

The Celtic Collection: This book, by Alice Starmore, contains 25 knitwear designs for men, women and children based on Celtic colours and patterns. 100 colour photographs, 144pp. £19.99. (Anaya Pubs. 1992) (ISBN: 1 85470-185) Available: Past Times and bookshops.

'Rhiannon': Rhiannon Evans's Celtic jewellery is known worldwide. Don't miss her craft centre if you are in West Wales. She has now produced three designs for T-shirts and long sleeved shirts with symbols chosen from the Mabinogi. The illustration shows the 'Rhiannon' design. Also available are: 'Twrch Trwyth', the supernatural boar of Culhwch, and 'Gwydion' the Magician. Contact: Rhiannon, Tregaron, SY25 6JL (0974-298415).



'Myth and Magic': The Tudor Mint: You will have seen these miniatures of Dragons, Wizards, Unicorns, Enchantresses, etc. in many shops. Twelve designs represent the Arthurian legend, including Merlin, Arthur, Guinevere, Camelot, Excalibur. Prices from £12.35 to £19.75. Coloured catalogue from: The Tudor Mint, Vulcan Rd., Solihull, W. Midlands, B91 2JY. (021-705-4624). Send 50p. The range is available from Castle Welsh Crafts, 1 Castle St., Cardiff. (0222-343038) who also stock some striking Celtic jewellery: brooches, pendants, bracelets and necklets. Arthurian Artwork: Edward Org,

who is a member of Pendragon, is a freelance commercial illustrator with a special love of Arthurian legends. His splendid prints look like Victorian mezzotint engravings and Morgan's 'Valley of No Return', which shows the enchanted place where she trapped faithless knights, is a piece of work that ranks with the very best of Arthurian illustration. Ed also has postcards of Ladies of the Lake. Write to: Ed Org, 1a St. Margaret Parade, Bennington St., Cheltenham, Glos. GL50 4EB. (0242-579300). A very impressive talent.

#### ★ IAN FORRESTER ROBERTS

Member Ian, whose fine Arthurian Exhibition I have often mentioned, has been studying the legends for over 30 years. He has recently been following strands which connect Arthur with the Languedoc region of France. I am delighted to report that Ian has won a Churchill travelling fellowship to pursue his studies in France. He is one of 93 people in the UK out of 1600 to be so honoured. Well done, Ian.

#### ★ KEN LIVINGSTONE, ARTHURIAN

What has Ken got to do with Arthurian matters you ask? I was listening to Desert Island Discs on Radio 4 on the 7th March when Sue Lawley asked him which book he would take to the Island. His answer: *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Bradley. He said he was particularly fascinated by the conflict between one system of beliefs (Druidic paganism) with another which sought to displace it (Christianity). I had spent many hours over Christmas reading this book myself. I'll send him a copy of this edition: who knows he may be encouraged to join us and write an article for PENDRAGON. How about it Ken?

#### ★ EXCHANGE MAGAZINES

Dragon: Sadly, Charles Evans-Günther has discontinued his journal after 10 years, owing mainly to the lack of

contributions from his subscribers. He had been keeping things going for some time by his own efforts and those of a few faithfulls. (There's a lesson for us all there!) Unlike Dragon, we are not solely interested in the historical Arthur, but having said this I am pleased to report that Charles is going to give us the benefit of his expertise in the Dark Ages by writing regularly for PENDRAGON. A number of his members have already joined us and we welcome them warmly. We hope they will contribute to our journal also. Meyn Mavro: Winter/Spring, 1993. This attractive journal has been running a two-part article on 'Guide to Inscribed Stones' by Professor Charles Thomas. These articles refer to the Cornish stones mainly, but they should be of great interest to everyone, coming from such a distinguished writer.

Gloucestershire Earth Mysteries: No.14. Ronald Fletcher and Danny Sullivan present a persuasive argument in 'Where lies the Once and Future King?'. Needless to say, the answer is that Arthur was crowned and buried at Woodchester, near Stroud in Gloucestershire. They claim the Roman villa there was the probable site of Arthur's headquarters, Camelot. We'll need Charles to examine the proofs they offer, but it's a fascinating reading.

#### ★ ARTHUR'S ROUND TABLE

The advert for Rougement wine on television has cleared up the mystery of why King Arthur had his Round Table made: in order to turn it so that his favourite wine was always available to him before it could be consumed by his company.

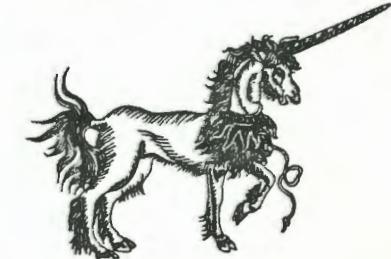
#### ★ PUBLICITY

Geoff's letter has led to several members taking an active part in distributing our publicity leaflets around their own areas, which gained us a modest number of applications. Charles Evans-Günther has kindly passed on inquiries following *Celtica's*

mention of DRAGON, this had led to eight or so joining us, together with some of his own members. We are now waiting for his American members to get in touch. Ian Forrester Robert's Exhibition publicity brought in about eight more. That means about 35 in all, with new members in Italy, Canada and Holland. If you can help do let us know. We've got some new ideas brewing up, but it has been a good year so far.

#### ★ PENDRAGON

As you now know, Eddie and Anne are giving over the editorship to my hands after this journal. I shall have much more to say about PENDRAGON's debt to them in my first editorial. I intend to bring the magazine out on the Celtic cross-quarter days: Aug. 1st, Nov. 1st, Feb. 1st and May 1st in future. This is not for any 'mystical' reasons, it just fits my year better and avoids Christmas! It also gives me till July to produce my first PENDRAGON. I have plans that I think are exciting and I have had offers to write from several new names. My policy will be to honour our aims and present material on ALL aspects of Arthurian matters: archaeological and historical, legendary, mythical and folk, literature and art. This is what PENDRAGON has always stood for and will continue to be: a forum for Everyone interested in King Arthur and the Matter of Britain. Thanks Eddie and Anne for 16 lively, interesting and punctual journals.



'What Merlin means to me'. I'm afraid, is mainly a handy plot-gimmick on which Geoffrey, Malory and others can hang various improbabilities thereby hoping that they will seem less so.

On the other hand, the following may possibly interest you ...

## Archie Mercer - What Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury Means to Me

FIRST OF ALL, the name Deirdre derives from a charming old Irish legend. She was known as 'Deirdre of the Sorrows', on the grounds that she was reckoned to have more than her fair share of same. Her beauty attracted the attention of the notorious King Conchobar, but she preferred her boy-friend Naoise (pronounced 'Noisy' or possibly 'Coolie'). Together with Naoise's two brothers they fled the country, but Conchobar tempted them back. Subsequently Naoise, both his brothers, and various other people lost their lives because of Deirdre's beauty. Some women might have taken this as a boost to their ego but Deirdre, to her everlasting credit, was not that sort of girl. She took things so hard, in fact, that she presently died of grief. (Now don't you think that's a lovely story?)

Next, let's consider the place-name Sodbury. The suffix 'bury' denotes that the Anglo-Saxons had a fortification nearby, while the 'Sod-' element is supposed to derive from a certain Soppa, a one-time lord of those parts. Thus the original 'p' has become a 'd'. They are, in other words, offering us old pence for new, which is a bit - er - soppy. Personally I favour a derivation from Sod, the eponymous enunciator of the well-known Law, the most basic principle of which is that if anything can go wrong, it probably will.

There are three Sodbury-villages in the neighbourhood, prefixed respectively Little, Old and Chipping. Little Sodbury has a traditional parish to itself; the other two share a traditional parish called simply Sodbury. Whilst there is no problem about the meaning of either 'little' or 'old', the 'chipping' element seems to present people with difficulty. Mr. Gillie Potter, for instance, during his well-known researches into the Marshmallow diaries, came on an entry that finished: 'Spent night Chipping Sodbury'. 'I don't', Mr. Potter admitted, 'know who Sodbury was nor why they were chipping him.' In point of fact there is no mystery at all about the word. Scientific tests prove conclusively that 'chipping' is synonymous with 'haggling'.

(No, no, no, Deirdre, haggling does not mean a young crone. Haggling is a recognised commercial process whereby the intending purchaser beats the seller down from a 500% mark-up to 450%, and thinks he has a bargain.)

'Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury' can therefore be rendered as: 'The sorrowful Irishwoman dwelling at the market-place near Sod's (or Soppa's) fortification'.

That, however, is not what Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury means to me... It's simply what she ought to mean, but doesn't.

What, then, does she mean?

It should be recognised at once that there is something of the sexist stereotype about her. Obviously, however, she has to be one sex or the other - and I like her the way she is. She represents the eternal naive, with an absolutely literal mind. If the cooking instructions say to grill for ten minutes turning occasionally, she does precisely that but it's herself, not the food under the grill, that she turns occasionally. If she comes upon a lollipop lady flourishing a notice that says 'STOP CHILDREN', Deirdre instantly rushes to help stop them - even if they happen to be in the middle of the road at the time. She can never understand why there seem to be no such things as Guy knives and Guy spoons. She is the dumb blonde of the 1930s, and the equally mythical Irish simpleton of more recent times.

On top of all this she obviously has a romantic soul - she wouldn't read PENDRAGON otherwise.

That, then, is what Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury means to me. And she's lovely with it.

[No, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, even if Archie Mercer *IS* a Christian to say such nice things about you, he's not head of the Baptist Church. That's 'Arch-Immerser'. And no again: Baptists are *NOT* the same as Jehovah's Witnesses. Ed.]

## BOOK REVIEWS

ENGLISH HERITAGE BOOK OF SHRINES & SACRIFICE by Ann Woodward. (B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1992, £14.99)

Readers with an archaeological bent may have already come across this book, part of a series promoted by English Heritage. However, it really is of interest to all those who are concerned with the development of religious thought, as expressed by the material evidence, over a considerable period of time.

Many Pendragons drawn to the dig sponsored by the Society in the Gower, at Llanelen, will have been curious about the religious traditions which were responsible for the eventual excavation of late Roman glass, an Anglo-Saxon glass bead, a Celtic timber structure possibly of the 8th century, a Viking decorative bronze, and a medieval stone church; and they may have wondered how they all related to each other. This book shows how questions of this sort are asked about other sites and how tentative answers are elicited. The placing and structure of shrines from the pagan Iron Age to the Christian post-Roman periods are discussed and illustrated; and from the evidence of offerings, sacrifice and burials the nature of rituals and beliefs are considered. The possibility of continuity in some sites where different belief systems were in operation in successive periods is also seriously entertained (of interest perhaps to ley-hunters and other earth-mysteries students).

This is a profusely illustrated book (over 100 photographs, plans and drawings in 150-odd pages), closely argued and well-researched, not as dry-as-dust as my review might imply. (In fact, I read it with enjoyment on a French beach between bouts of sun-bathing and swimming!)

Most of the sites discussed are in southern England (for good reasons mentioned in the text) and the author was closely involved in one key site (Uley in Gloucestershire), but the issues raised are of more than merely local concern. A fascinating publication, authoritative and up-to-date.

Chris Lovegrove

THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ARTHURIAN LEGENDS by Ronan Coghlan. (Element Books 1991, paperback edition 1992). £6.99.

The hardback edition of this book was reviewed by Fred Stedman-Jones in *Pendragon* XXII/2 when it was priced at £10.95. Less pricey is the paperback, good value even if not sewn but only glued. I cannot add much to Fred's own recommendation except to say that this is a volume to dip into as much as to consult: like many such works one cross-reference leads to another, and even this most jaded of reviewers found much that was new to excite and enchant. The double-column format was easy on the eye, with a judicious mixture of both terse and detailed entries, and virtually all of them carefully sourced. My only real quibble is with the maps, beautifully clear and well executed but rather curious in what they choose to include and what to omit: 'Arthurian Brittany' indicates sites throughout most of modern France, for example with only Mont-St-Michel and Nantes as genuine Breton locations; and 'Arthurian Wales' lacks several places mentioned in the text (Arthur's Stone, Gower, springs to mind). Such niggles aside, this is definitely a vademecum for any Arthurian enthusiast.

Chris Lovegrove.

THE WHITE RAVEN by Diana L. Paxton (New English Library pb £6.95)

Where the re-telling of a tale as well-known as 'Tristan and Isolde' is concerned it is the treatment that is all-important. If the writer can bring a radically new angle to bear then the battle is already half-won. Diana Paxton's book has that new angle, backed up by a powerful imagination and the subtle skills of a story-teller.

The ancient Celtic legend, originally little more than a brutal tale of lust and betrayal, was gradually refined over the centuries by a variety of writers influenced by the code of *amour courtois*, drawn into the orbit of the Arthurian legend in the twelfth century, and has of course been often retold since, notably by Wagner. Leaving opera out of the question, this one is for me the most effective of the many versions I have read, both in English and in French.

The author seeks to place the story firmly in an historical setting and, arguing from the inscription on the well-known 'Tristan Stone' near Fowey in Cornwall, including a line reported by Leland in the 16th century but now indecipherable, places the narrative a generation after the accepted period when Arthur was active, ending the narrative in 560 AD. Her King Mark is Marcus Cunomorus, a historical figure who campaigned widely in Armorica and is recorded in Breton history. Drustanus (Tristan) was his nephew - or accepted as such. Esseilte (Isolde), the Irish princess, is identified as the daughter of Diarmait Mac Cearbhaill, last undisputed High King of Ireland. Other historical characters appearing in the story include the saints Brendan, Columba and Pol of Leon, plus various British, Irish, Breton and

Frankish rulers, less familiar names but authentic historical personages.

In a sense this could be called a demythologised version of the legend, but only to the extent that the same could be said of Mary Stewart's Arthurian novels. Historical or not, there is no lack of magic, pagan ritual and psychic experiences, all of which add enormously to the fascination of the story - and without which, indeed, it would revert to being a stark tale of lust and betrayal.

One original angle is to tell the tale through the words of Branwen, Esseilte's handmaiden, usually a shadowy figure who is little more than a plot device to explain the drinking of the fatal love potion. That scene, incidentally, is given an effective new twist, like so many other elements of the story, such as the necessity of the maid standing (or lying!) in for the mistress on the wedding night owing to Esseilte's loss of virginity.

Branwen is the 'white raven' of the title. She is a strong, not to say dominant, character in her own right, devoted to Drustan and her foster-sister Esseilte, but torn in her loyalties by the love for Marcus that is awakened in her on the wedding night, the night in which she comes into her full power as a psychic and realises her identification, as Beltane Queen, with the goddess of the land. The inherent parallels with the stories of Diarmuid, Grainne and Finn, of Deirdre, Naoise and Conchobar and indeed (though it is not mentioned) with that of Lancelot, Guenevere and Arthur, add extra layers of significance to a story already rich in associations.

Diana Paxton's style is vivid, evocative and often poetic, and the incantations and songs included in the story, often a let-down in this type of heroic fantasy-style re-telling, have great power and lyrical beauty. I could say much more, but that would risk spoiling the grip of the narrative, which can spring surprises despite the familiarity of the story-line.

To sum up: vivid historical background, convincing characterisation, narrative energy, lyrical imagery, all these are here in abundance and much more. Buy it. Read it!

Geoff Roberts.

## PENDRAGON SOCIETY

Member Anne-Marie Lewis writes:- 'Is anyone interested in an Arthurian Enactment Society? Are there any vivacious Vivianes, loyal Lancelets or gorgeous Guineveres waiting in the wings? Does anyone have a burning desire (or even a smouldering ember of mild curiosity) to dress up, act or simply get together and talk to other like-minded individuals in an Arthurian setting?

If you're interested or if there are any other suggestions, write to Fred Stedman-Jones, The Pendragon Society at Smithy House, Newton-by-Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX. It sounds a very nice idea and we'd be happy to put enquirers in touch with Anne-Marie and each other so they may organise events. These, of course, will receive appropriate publicity in PENDRAGON.



# PENDRAGON

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# LETTERS

Once I had recovered from my bitter disappointment upon discovering that I was not the 'certain V.I.P.' referred to in the Editorial, I have to say that I enjoyed said V.I.P.'s contribution very much. I also enjoyed yours, Eddie; you mentioned that '... he languishes forever in a rocky tomb, a crystal cave, a misty, Other-world tower beneath a white-thorn bush, or in an ancient oak in the Forest of Broceliande in Brittany ...' I am now going to risk scorn and contumely by reporting that, some years ago while I was engaged in Celtic-type path-working and meditation. I was informed that Merlin actually sleeps in the environs of the tiny church which stands in that mysterious village which we drove through in 1969 and have never been able to find since, despite numerous forays in the area. Our Cornish 'Brigadoon' ...

I was also reminded of a passage in a story by Keith Roberts - 'The Mayday', which is included in a delightful collection called 'Anita' (who is a young and sexy witch ...) In 'The Mayday', Anita travels from her Northamptonshire home to Dorset on a mission of mercy, to rescue a captured mermaid. She books into a small hotel and, after unpacking, lies down on her bed and 'opened her mind, cautiously. At once the bed seemed to reel; the West Country was thick with magic. .... She sensed the power of the Great Henge away to the north; the dumb stone anger of Corfe; and from far in the west, where the place-names clashed and tinkled

like ancient weapons, came the blue shouting of the Great One, the Thing men sometimes call Merlin.'

I've often wondered just what Keith Roberts had in mind when he wrote that; do you think he knows something that we don't?

('Anita', by Keith Roberts. Published 1970 by Ace Books. N.Y. - pb.)

Reverting to Fred S-J.'s comments about my historical studies being based on fiction: I would like to borrow a line from page 11 of the current edition of 'Dragon'. The line occurs in an article by the late Professor Bedwyr Lewis Jones, entitled 'The Arthur of the Welsh', and says:

'But history is as much about what people believed to have happened in the past as about what actually took place.'

And as one of Josephine Tey's characters says in 'The Daughter of Time': 'Truth isn't in accounts but in account books. ... The truth of anything at all doesn't lie in someone's account of it. It lies in all the small facts of the time. An advertisement in a paper. The sale of a house. The price of a ring.'

(And in one particular account book of the 15th century is a signed order from Richard III for coronation robes for his nephew, Edward V ...)

However, that doesn't help us much with the so-called Dark Ages, I agree. I've often wondered why there is such a dearth of written material from that period; possibly the Romans went on a jolly book-burning spree ... They've got a helluva lot to answer for in any case (that's my opinion, anyway), so we might as well add that particular type of vandalism to their tally of sins!

All good wishes.  
(Beryl Mercer, Truro.)

I refer to Caitlin Matthews' letter in our Autumn 1992 issue which appeared only two pages from my own. She will therefore have noticed that I am not the proper addressee, but naturally read the account of OBOD with considerable interest, particularly since I have been very impressed by Philip Carr-Gomm's book recently, also with his tolerance of other groups and ideas. As Mrs. Matthews says too, our human quest for responsible living must be pursued in harmony and justice.

Not being a mason, I am unable to decide whether The Ancient Order of Druids is shaped on the masonic model; if so I hope that it is a good and constructive thing.

The International Grand Lodge of Druidism also contains lady members, whilst Scandinavian ladies in growing numbers have established Brigitte Lodges with considerable encouragement and help from our brethren and are co-existing happily and successfully. Wives who elect not to join take active part in our many social functions and a number of ladies groups support external Lodge drives and provide equipment for our Druid Houses.

Scandinavian churches have had female clergy for decades, as Mrs. Matthews says, 'making a closely linked family'. Having lived here very long, I cannot tell whether joint meetings in our lodges have ever been suggested or considered, but I know that it is not disrespect for the ladies but respect for the traditions which is a cornerstone amongst us. And I am sure we would be most unhappy to see any disagreement arise based on sexes.

Whilst writing let me also say that a personal knowledge of the OBOD has been my ambition ever since I read Carr-Gomm's book. I feel that one cannot afford to rival or ignore any genuine attempt at self-betterment. And that is the Scandinavian ultimate goal.

(Knut Sjovorr, Orpington.)

Thanks very much for the copy of PENDRAGON you sent recently at my request; I was very impressed both by the presentation and the standard of the articles and artwork. I enclose a cheque for membership.

Yes, in answer to your query, I think it would be a good idea to reprint interesting articles from past issues, such as the pieces about Merlin. To me, as an Arthurian enthusiast who has not seen more than the odd copy of the magazine over the past few years, such reprints would be both interesting and potentially useful in my research and work as a writer.

I read David Pykitt's article The Quest for the Historical King Arthur with great interest; it was convincingly argued and backed up by an impressive array of authorities and sources. I don't say I agree with its conclusions, mind you, but it compelled my respect. Having abandoned the academic life with all its opportunities for research, library facilities, etc., I can't counter David Pykitt's thesis with any specific references, but there remains one big doubt in my mind about his identification of Arthur with the Saint Arthmael revered in Brittany. This is the fact that much of the semi-legendary material, such as the lives of Celtic saints and traditional stories, gives a clear impression that despite his heroic stand against the heathen Arthur was regarded with suspicion and even hostility by the contemporary church. Yes I know about Arthur at Badon carrying the image of the Virgin and so on, and I admit I can't quote chapter and verse, but I think it's undeniable that this climate of disapproval or even stronger feelings existed, despite later descriptions of Arthur as 'most Christian King'. It seems unlikely, to say the least, that this would have been so if the 'real' King Arthur

was the 'soldier saint Arthmael' as David Pykitt maintains.

This may not be felt to be a material objection and I should be interested to hear other people's reactions; no doubt there are experts among your subscribers who can confirm my suggestion or, more likely, wither it in a storm of contrary evidence!

A second reason for my finding this article so interesting is that it reached me at the time when I was immersed in Diana L. Paxson's fascinating novel on the Tristan and Iseult theme. White Raven (see Geoff's review in this issue. Ed.) which includes Paul Aurelian, St. Samson, Riwal Mawr and especially Marcus Cunomorus among its characters, with Childebert looming off-stage and contains much material about King Mark's campaigns in Armorica; the novel and the article illuminated each other for me very usefully, helping me to pick my way more surefootedly through a complex historical period full of names difficult for a non-Celtic scholar such as myself.

(Geoff Roberts, France.)



I'm enclosing \$20.00 for my renewal of PENDRAGON.

Could you let me know how Leslie Alcock is keeping? I read his 'By South Cadbury Is That Camelot' book (titled: 'Was This Camelot?' in the U.S.) many years ago and thoroughly enjoyed it. I have his book 'Arthur's Britain' and a couple of books by Geoffrey Ashe. Jean Markale has a fascinating book about Arthur: 'King Arthur, King of Kings'. Of course Markale is from Brittany, I believe, and views Arthur from that perspective.

I hope that some day I can come to G.B. and meet Pendragon people and WALK WHERE ARTHUR WALKED (Well, where I think he walked!): Glastonbury, Tintagel, and Dinas Powys. But you have so many things I want to see - Yorkshire, because of the Herriot books, the Cotswolds, because of Miss Read's books, Shrewsbury, because of the Brother Cadfael books - that's going to be a lot of walking, isn't it!

(Rosemary Longworth, U.S.A.)

[Any time you can make it, Rosemary, you will be very welcome.

Yes, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury. I suppose if Arthur did go on a walking tour of his domains it could be called a 'High-king' holiday. How about you taking a nice long hiking holiday? You could follow in Arthur's footsteps across Wales, for instance, as he hunted the boar, *Twrch Trwyth*. True, Arthur stopped when he reached Cornwall, but you needn't ... Ed.]

*Misce stultitiam consiliis brevem:  
Dulce est desipere in loco.*

'Mix a little foolishness with your serious plans: it's lovely to be silly at the right moment.' Horace.

Did Bacon write Shakespeare? Did Shakespeare write Bacon? Did Lamb write them both? Forget anachronisms: 'The time is out of joint', said the Bard in Hamlet.

Continuing the 'Is History Bunk?' debate, what do we REALLY know about past events? Could our temporal concepts be all wrong? Perhaps time, the 'ever-flowing stream', has its backwaters, where past and future, cause and effect, before and after, merge into one: where certain masters of literature, ostensibly from different historical eras, may become contemporaries, or perhaps, alta egos of just one person. Look at the evidence. The essayist Charles Lamb was responsible, with his sister Mary, for the children's classic 'Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare'. Lamb had relatives living in Canterbury, New Zealand, and was thus known to his peers as one of the Canterbury Lambs. Consequently his book was originally called 'Canterbury Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare' or just 'Canterbury Tales'. So Chaucer may be tentatively added to the Lamb-Bacon-Shakespeare literary triumvirate, or multiple personality, or whatever.

A slender connection, perhaps? But wait: there's more. The American writer Artemus Ward wrote a book 'Artemus Ward in London'. In Chapter 4, 'At the Tomb of Shakespeare', he discusses Chaucer (or Chawser, as he spells the name), criticizing the latter's atrocious English. But why mention Chaucer at all at Shakespeare's tomb unless he knew of a connection between them? Rather significant, no?

The strongest evidence of all, however, of such a connection is to be found in the name of the inn where Chaucer's pilgrims

started their journey. In a 14th century Salvation Army beer-cellar in Southwark, faded manuscripts have recently come to light in which Chaucer refers (with his characteristic clumsiness) to 'The Thank-you-Shakespeare Inn' - almost certainly named thus out of gratitude to the man who tried to teach him to spell. The name was quickly shortened by his publishers to 'Ta, Bard' and 'The Tabard Inn' it remained until it was demolished.

I'm sorry if this prosaic derivation of 'tabard' offends those Pendragon pundits who imagined it to be an Old French word referring to emblazoned surcoats or jerkins such as those worn by Arthur and his Round Table knights over their armour, but facts are facts and must be respected whatever the cost.

(Some so-called scholars, incidentally, claim to see here a further connection with the Bard of Avon, inasmuch as the word 'jerkins' - or 'jerkins' - means 'shakes'; the latter-day medieval nobility who wore them being known as 'shakes peers'. Personally I refuse to countenance such patently distorted etymology.)

(Eddie Tooke, Tewkesbury.)

[No, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury: although the Tabard Inn's landlord WAS named Baily, he didn't design nearby London Bridge. Time was out of joint, remember? Bailey bridges had already been invented in World War 2 ... Ed.]





(Reprint of a 1978 PENDRAGON article)

The story of the Cheshire Enchanter has often been told. A farmer from Mobberley was taking a horse to sell at Macclesfield Fair on a misty autumn morning. As he passed by the heath near Alderley Edge, he met a stranger who predicted that no one would buy the horse, and that they would meet again that night. So it happened. He led the farmer and his horse to a pair of iron gates in a rock. Inside was a cave piled with treasure, in which warriors and horses slept. One horse was missing. The Enchanter took coins from a chest, bought the farmer's horse, and led him out. Nevermore was the cavern found.

Sleeping-warrior legends are not uncommon. Often, their leader is named as King Arthur, though not invariably. In Germany, it is Barbarossa and his knights who sleep under the mountain until the day when ravens cease to fly about it. At Alderley, the feature of a guardian is unusual. He is not named, nor is a sleeping King mentioned, but we shall see that Merlin and Arthur are implicit in the tale. By unpeeling several layers we may learn how myths arise.

The scene is a wooded ridge 1.5 miles East of the decayed hamlet of Nether Alderley where there is now little but a church, a watermill and a closed inn. At about the same distance NW of the ridge is the modern village of Alderley Edge, which was developed as a wealthy commuter satellite of Manchester in Victorian times.

All the district was owned by the Lords Stanley for centuries until the 1930's, and they were able to preserve or change whatever they wished. The Legend of the Wizard was thought to be worth recording in a book by the Hon. Miss Stanley in 1843. An earlier anonymous account appeared in 1820, allegedly drawn from a tale 'long told by the firesides' and often told by Parson Shrigley in the previous century.

There is no reason to doubt that folklore made much of the Edge. Copper-bearing sandstone was mined from it, perhaps as early as the Bronze Age. The remains of blocked adits and tunnels crumble away in the woods, lending an air of mystery reminiscent of the Roman gold mines of Pumpsaint. Round barrows, standing stones and holy wells are marked on the maps of the district.

Analysis of the earliest written account of 1820 shows its basis of fact. The Fair that the farmer journeyed to was probably Macclesfield Wakes Fair, held at Michaelmas. Fairs differed from the weekly markets, being usually annual events for such purposes as hiring labour or selling horses, rather than for selling produce. So a farmer with a horse to sell would go to the Michaelmas Fair.

The route described is also correct, when one follows it along the old lanes and bridle-paths. For instance we read that when the farmer returned at moonrise he saw the Enchanter 'reclining on a rock beneath the seven firs' at a certain point. The rock, although not the trees, can still be seen by the roadside. It is an L-shaped glacial boulder, very much like a seat with a back, on which one can recline. Old maps show it as a parish boundary, and other boundary markers lie on the route to the Fair or to the Cave.

Here are two layers of the myth: the old route from Mobberley to the Fair, before modern roads were built, and a memory of Beating the Bounds. As to the first, the earliest accounts clearly show that the village of Mobberley, about 5 miles West, is being glorified, rather than Nether Alderley. The farmer comes from there, and later he returns with some neighbours to look for the

cavern. Mobberley men rule, OK.

Beating the Bounds was once an important annual occasion, when territory was patrolled to assert ownership, much as birds and other animals do. In March 1822, the Mayor of Macclesfield led the procession. On private estates the bailiff went round periodically and made a report called a Terrier. This happened on the Stanley estate in 1841 in order to assess Tithe Awards due to the Church.

The Merlin/Arthur layer takes us back to Mobberley. In 1621 the living of its church, ie, the right to appoint its clergy, was bought by Thomas Mallory, a Yorkshireman who became Dean of Chester and founded the Cheshire branch of his family. Whether or not he claimed Sir Thomas Malory (with one 'l') as his ancestor, we cannot say, but it is highly probable. The family origins of the author of 'Morte d'Arthur' are debatable, but Yorkshire has one claim.

Dean Thomas certainly had literary interests. He borrowed more than 50 books from the Holcroft library, and 14 were still booked out to him when the collection was sold in 1616. This library was assembled by Sir Thomas Holcroft, who bought the Abbey of Vale Royal in Cheshire, at the Dissolution, and perhaps its monastic books also. At all events he began to collect books and lend them to scholars. In 1601 he visited the aged Dr. John Dee in Manchester, possibly book-hunting. The 1616 inventory records such esoteric works as 'Brute of England' and a Life of Merlin. There is no proof that Dean Thomas borrowed these, but if we are looking for someone who may have re-written a folk-tale 'told round the firesides' in Arthurian style, he has Motive, Means and Opportunity.

Whether or not his ancestor did write 'Morte d'Arthur' is immaterial. He may have thought so. Therefore we see how rural traditions may be influenced by sophisticated literary notions. If we find folk-tales resembling legends told in wider contexts, we need not assume independent origins. Ideas passed about quickly even in those days.

Merlin stands for something that keeps nagging at us. The analysis of legends, by peeling away their layers, is a way to enlightenment. Possibly he stands for a counterpart of the Old Wise Woman. The earliest form of the place-name Alderley means the wood of the Wise Man, and a wizard was more of a counsellor than a magician. Merlin gave advice more than he worked magic. So did the Anglo-Saxon magician Woden, who was also usually encountered in the form of an old man sitting on a mound by the roadside, like the Enchanter.

The special Alderley contribution to our understanding is that Merlin guards the sleeping warriors against the day when England shall be in peril. What will happen then is described in another Cheshire folk-tradition, the prophecies of Robert Nixon, the Cheshire Seer. They are a set of gnomic utterances, ascribed to a 17th century village idiot, but very much more than that, describing a Ragnarok of confused grandeur and epic proportions that intimates what Arthur will have to face when he and his knights awaken.

Alderley shows us a Merlin with a responsibility to the Future, and a conscience. It may, of course, be a 'Dean Thomas' layer to the myth. Do allegories grow as our consciences sharpen?

#### EXHORTATION

*Not unlike Arthur, we have slept  
Awaiting a battle yet to be,  
Contentedly nodding in the cave  
With our twelve virtues for company;  
For the nature is only galvanized  
When crisis enters our destiny.*

*Now on the battlefield of the soul  
Comes the conflict for every knight,  
And surely the spirit of mankind  
Is worth the final, mighty fight  
Whence we may emerge, bearing aloft  
The fabled sword of showering light!*

(Pamela Constantine)

# A toast to Pendragon oo Eddie Cooke oo

(Revised version of my first contribution  
to PENDRAGON, when the world was young....)

A toast to the sobriety  
Of most in our Society  
Who spurn all fairy Swords and Tables Round.  
Evading views of Merlin's birth,  
You trade in clues of sterling worth  
And earn your rare rewards on stable ground.

No splendid Cup from holy days  
Has ended up on lowly trays;  
Judicious sense alone decides your stance;  
A stance that's not too merciful  
To Lancelot and Perceval -  
Fictitious gents unknown outside romance!

You thrive on etymology;  
Derive from archaeology  
New theories to demist much ancient murk;  
And lift the veil from Arthur's acts  
By sifting shale for artefacts -  
Few queries can resist such patient work!

From Cadbury rode Arthur's chaps  
To Badbury - or Bath perhaps:  
(Round Twelve has been assigned to Badon's heights.)  
To scatter Saxon foemen he  
Used cataphracts and yeomanry:  
You delve and seem to find few maiden knights!

You lay into Tom Malory  
For playing to the gallery:  
(Inordinate mendacity you curse!).  
On Nennius - a benison!  
But any trust in Tennyson  
Subordinates veracity to verse!

Yet, emphasizing history  
And minimizing mystery -  
So Century Fifteen gives way to Fifth -  
Makes perish a wee part of us  
We cherish in the heart of us -

So Hail, King Arthur -  
Once and Future Myth!

That's all folks!

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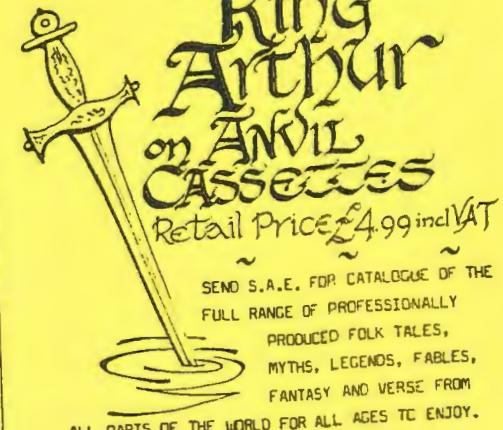
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