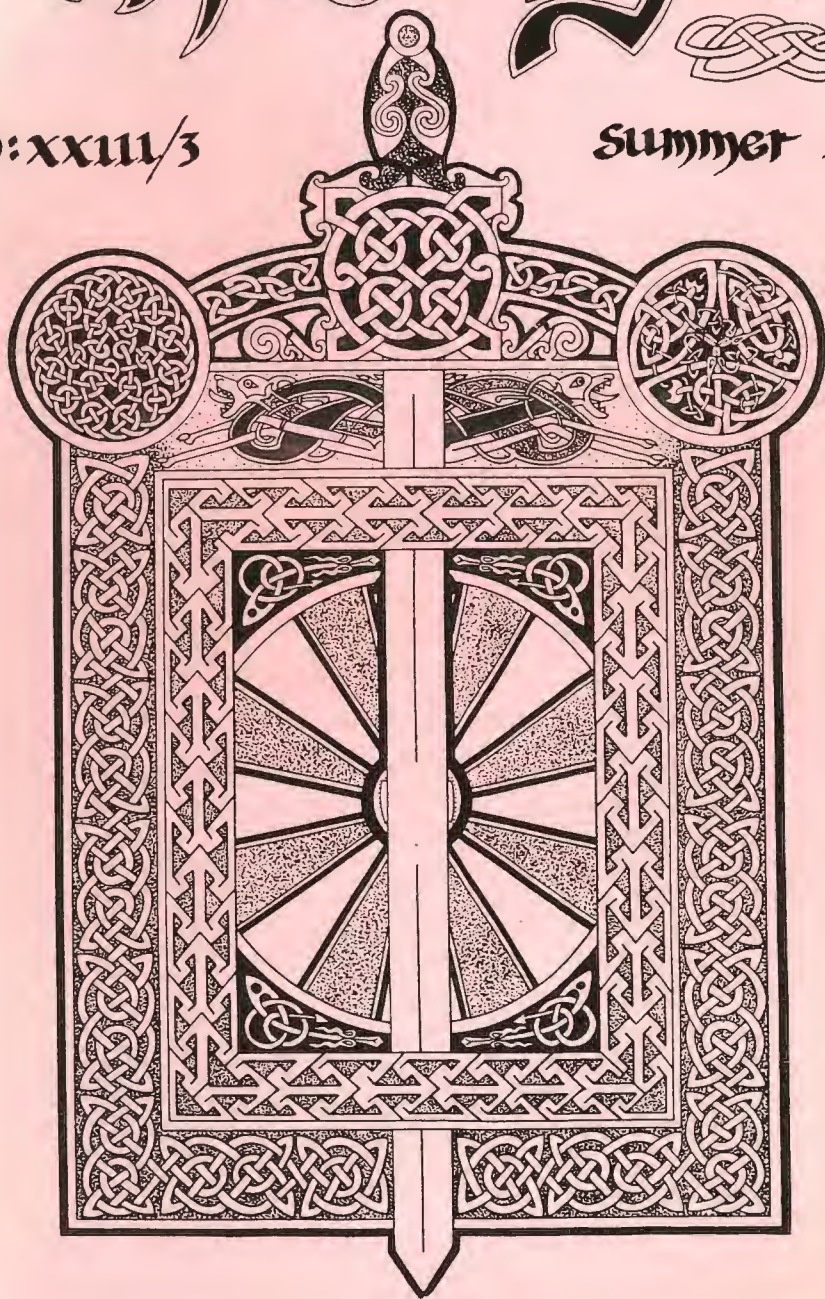


pendragon

no:xxiii/3

Summer 1993



WIZARDCRAFT

With gentle hand he led the eager boy
Through all the early seasons of his
heart,
Disclosed to him the wisdoms of the
sage
And, secretly, the alchemist's high
art;
So when the sword was lodged within the
stone
-Lodged as if welded to the granite's
core-
In his soul the young man
called, "Excalibur!"
And the jewelled blade was easy to
withdraw.

For Merlin knew, when he was yet a
child
That one would come to change earth's
destiny:
So great a fate would hinge upon that
one
All must conspire to fill the
prophecy.
And so it was that Arthur claimed the
throne
And raised to fame the name of
Camelot.
...And Merlin, long since slumbering in
the grave
Smiled in his sleep, although he knew it
not.

Magranne Castle

PENDRAGON

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EDITORIAL

If you watched Mr. Bean pack his holiday case you will have a clear image of what it's like trying to edit this journal. Eddie says in the letters page that it is a hard but rewarding task and, as always, he talks good sense.

In the dark days of 1988/9, when the Society was in danger of closing down, Eddie volunteered to act as a clearing house to keep members in touch and offered to produce an occasional newsletter. He was firmly of the opinion that he could not undertake a magazine. Then, presto! No. XIX/3 fell with a thud on the hall carpet. Together with Simon, I promptly offered to join the carpet-beating team and it is my firm intention to go on wearing out your carpets into the 21st century, if I'm spared and you'll let me..

During April I received two letters containing subs. and short letters of encouragement. The first told me the writer had thought twice before re-subscribing to a magazine about to go under new management but he had been reassured by my statement that there would be no break in continuity. Rest assured about this, our back page is a declaration of our firm intention to continue looking at Arthur & The Matter of Britain from every viewpoint possible.

The second letter said nice things about the journal, adding, 'It's lovely to have the larger format - only transient of course for obvious reasons'. Forty pages makes the postmaster's scale shiver in anticipation at the thought of coming down on the wrong side of our bank balance. After three meetings of the production team since March - we live in Cheshire, Gloucestershire and Cambridge - we have decided to go ahead producing a larger journal with a lighter, glossier cover. This lowers the weight again and shows off Simon's exquisite designs to maximum effect.

It is a fact that 2/3 of our members have joined us since 1988 and we are enrolling briskly this year so far. We are proud of the thirty-four year history of our Society but feel our gaze should now be directed steadily forward. Caitlin's words, quoted in Talking Head, point to the need to believe in ourselves, to wave our banner so that it can be better seen. We were there first and we could expand our membership and our activities enormously with your help. The bigger our membership becomes the better our financial position to consider new ventures. You can help us achieve these aims in a number of ways: by bringing in one new member each, this is by far the most effective way of recruiting; by paying subs. promptly, so that we can cost ahead realistically; and by writing for the magazine, if only a letter or some local information. Several of your letters refer to a wish to contribute: why not screw up your courage and have a go at last?

Thank you for your kind letters and good wishes, many of them express gratitude to Eddie and Anne for their work and hopes for their continuing participation in the Society. They have received many more themselves, I know. It is not my task to write a farewell, thank goodness. You haven't seen the last of the Tookes! Now Eddie will have time to write those fine articles he used to and we can't have another issue without an EAT cartoon can we?

Eddie & Anne, for they must be seen as an indivisible partnership, are great fun to be with: friendly, kind, unpretentious people, they have an inexhaustible zest for living and great style. I would like to express my personal admiration for their achievement in keeping Pendragon alive: they fanned a dying ember and passed on a flaming torch. Their reign has brought enormous credit to this Society. Simon and Anne join Marilyn and myself in saying that it has been a great privilege to share our endeavour with you. Well done friends.

There Really Were Dragons Helen Hollick



(Helen joined us earlier this year. Shortly afterwards I saw her photograph in 'The Sunday Times' and read that she had agreed a publishing deal worth nearly £50,000 for 'PENDRAGON's BANNER', an Arthurian trilogy to be published next year. The first book, 'The Kingmaking', took Helen nine years to write in her spare moments. She has kindly agreed to our printing this article, which first appeared in 'Dragon'. She writes. ... 'Anything I can do for 'Pendragon', just ask'. I hope to have more to tell you about this remarkable lady and her success story in the next edition. Congratulations, Helen, we are delighted for you.)

THE DRAGON. A creature of myth or fact? Myth surely... a beast that was of huge weight, with scaled skin, clawed feet, with wings to fly and belching a breath of fire. We know that such an animal never existed, save in the imagination of storytellers, the fears of the superstitious and in the threats of the scare-mongers.

When man could not explain how or why something happened then he had to fall back on primitive idea, a logical explanation. Dragons were handy creatures that accounted for all sorts of devastations and natural, unexplained phenomenon. No one pooch-pooched the idea of dragons until the coming of modern science. They accepted it as fact along with sea monsters, giants and the fairy folk. Except, I think that modern science has miscalculated - dragons really DID exist. The evidence is there for us all to see if we care to look with the eyes and the little knowledge of men from long ago; men and women and children who had no idea of science and technology, who relied purely on the evidence of their own eyes and ears and touch - and superstitious fear.

Imagine you are walking along a beach. The year is sometime, long, long ago. Last night there was a terrible storm. Lightning flashed and thunder boomed and echoed over the village. The women were huddled all night with their frightened children, screaming now and again as the black sky outside seemed as if it were going to be ripped apart. As if, almost, two great creatures were fighting to the death up there in the blackness of the night. Now it is morning. The sun is smiling on a washed world. You are walking along the beach that is silent, save for the wheeling gulls, the sigh of the wind and the sound of the tide, almost full out now. Your toe kicks against something hard, you curse an oath to whatever god you worship, as the pain jolts up your foot. You stoop to see what the thing was, bending lower in puzzlement. Fascinated, you kneel down in the sea-wet sand, begin to tentatively dig with your fingers, then harder, more frenzied you shovel the sand aside, digging deeper, excited... suddenly you give a cry, you leap up, back away. It is a skull! A gaping jaw, filled with

vicious teeth. Eyeless sockets...you walk backwards a few paces, slowly, your gaze not leaving this huge leering thing. Frightened, you turn and run; shouting for others to come as you near the village. Breathing hard you stammer something like, "a Dragon...dead...on the beach!"

Fantasy? A story?

Then I suggest you walk along a beach at say, Whitby, or Lyme Regis. You will almost always pick up an ammonite or a belemnite, though not many of us are lucky enough nowadays to uncover the bones of a complete dinosaur, but occasionally one does come to light. (Recently, in the U.S.A. an almost complete tyrannosaurus was stumbled upon in a dried-up river bed.) If we are finding them now, is there any reason to suppose that our ancestors did not come across them?

Our person, on that beach all those centuries past, would not think, "Ah, yes, a splendid example of an almost complete ichthyosaur. Must have died in the mud basin a few million years ago!"

It is known that many fossils come to light after a heavy rain storm has washed away the top soil. Some bones are often quite easily identified; the skull, limbs, spine, ribs and tail. It seems to my mind, a perfectly reasonable explanation that the origin of the mythical beast, the Dragon, has its roots in early man's discovery of fossil dinosaurs.

The pattern fits. A storm - a fierce battle in the sky, and then the body of a strange animal, twisted and broken, the bones turned to rock. How did they get there on the beach, or wherever? It was not there yesterday. There are no footprints - how did it get there, fell from the sky? Or perhaps footprints were found on previous occasions. On the

island of Purbeck in Dorset, immense three-toed footprints are sometimes found - what about the footprints found in the U.S.A. - of a meat-eating dinosaur pursuing a plant-eater. We don't know if the prey was caught - the trail disappears under a cliff face. Centuries ago, man would not have realised that the cliffs were thrust up thousands of years after a trail was made. What a ridiculous suggestion! The solution is much more feasible. The creatures must have flown away when they reached the cliffs.

You are at the Hall hearth, an old person now, sitting with your bowl of broth, huddling in your cloak against the chill of approaching winter.

"Hie!" someone calls, "tell us the story of the day you found the bones of that dragon!" You grin. "Ah, that was a day of wonder! There had been a great noise through the night. A roaring of savage temper and a burning of the sky. I was walking along the sand...."

Dragonlore

In the 1870's the Rector of Mordiford, Herefordshire, found two old women trying to drown some newts in the church font. They told him that these were dragon-spawn which, allowed to survive, would grow to be dangerous monsters like the one that had harrowed the village long ago.

We were talking of *Dragons*, Tolkien and I
In a Berkshire bar. The big workman
Who had sat silent and sucked his pipe
All the evening, from his empty mug
With gleaming eye glanced towards us:
'I seen 'em myself!' he said fiercely.
.....C.S. Lewis.



The Enchanted Realms

The magical dimension has been present within the Arthurian tradition from its beginning. This is partly because of the nature of the material itself, with its wizards, sorceresses, knights who possess magical powers, its strange beasts and wandering hermits, and partly because of the kind of people who have been drawn to share their vision of the mythos with us. Poets, playwrights, novelists, film-makers, painters and prophets have looked for, and found, their inspiration in the Arthurian tradition.

But beneath the glittering facade of these re-tellings, many of them of the highest artistic quality, lies something much older. A collection of mythic stories, told at the hearthside by flickering firelight in the halls of ancient Celtic Kings. Whatever the later destiny of Arthur-as DUX BELLORUM or as King of Britain-to these people he was almost a god, perhaps indeed the incarnation of an ancient deity: Artos the Bear, a figure as old as time itself. Here the first stories were told and grew in the telling into a vast cycle of adventure, passion and magic. Arthur was joined by others whose names have become familiar to all who love the enchanted realms: Merlin, Gawain, Lancelot, Guinevere, Tristan, Isolt.

Looking deeper, behind Malory's mail-clad knights and their silken ladies, we find a whole world of myth and wonder. In collections such as the Welsh MABINOGION, collected and written down in the early Middle Ages, but containing material from a much earlier time, we find many of the seeds which later blossomed into the splendour and panoply of LE MORTE D'ARTHUR or the intricate poems of the French writer Chretien de Troys.

In an even more ancient text, the PREIDDEU ANNWN (Spoils of the Underworld, which dates from the 9th century, Arthur leads a wild band of warriors-among whom one may still detect the presence of Lancelot, though under another name-in a voyage to the Celtic Otherworld, there to find and bring back the magical 'Cauldron of Annwn'. This object, one of several which had the power, among other things to bring the dead back to life, is the earliest version we possess of the Grail. By Malory's time the quest for this magical vessel, now identified with the Cup of the Last Supper, had become the subject of visionary writings of all kinds-an extraordinary pageant mirroring humanity's search for the greatest truths.

The Quest for the Grail by the Fellowship of the Round Table was thus universally recognised as a parallel of the quest for spiritual fulfilment. Literally hundreds of manuscripts poured forth from the pens of the finest writers of Medieval Europe. Their effect was profound. The Arthurian code of chivalry, to protect all women and children and those unable to fend for themselves, to fight always in a good cause and to do no harm to any man who did not deserve it, effected changes on a system which had originated as part of the power-structure of a warrior elite. The Grail Quest influenced the founding of the order of the Knights Templar, warrior monks dedicated to the preservation of pilgrims and the recovery of the Holy Land from pagan hands. Their Rule, written for them by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, founder of the Cistercian religious order, advocated a new kind of Spiritual Knighthood unlike anything seen before that time.

Today, no less than in those far off times, the magic and power of the Arthurian mythos continues to exert a strong fascination, not only for historians and scholars of literature, but also for seekers of another kind. The great psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung recognised, within the elements of the Arthurian tradition, many of the archetypes which he saw

as the foundation stones of human endeavour. Others, less well-known but no less inspired have sought to quarry elements of magic and wonder from within the vast story-cycles of the Middle Ages.

To those who are today searching to find a greater degree of significance in their lives, the stories of Arthur and the Quest for the Grail have become imperishable sign-posts for their own mystical search. The New Age movement, which is really a loose-knit body of people with a single common aim, to find the wisdom and transcendent knowledge of the past and bring it forward into practical use for today - has discovered its own share of vision in the stories of Arthur and his Knights. Pilgrimages to sacred centres such as Glastonbury in Somerset, believed to have been the site of the first Christian church in Britain, and possibly even the shrine of the Grail itself, have brought thousands of people whose avowed aim is to discover their own grail. Tours of Arthurian Britain are patronised by people in search of more than just physical remains.

Drawing upon the themes of Quest and magical adventure, an increasing number of people have begun to teach and write about the Arthurian Mysteries. It is their belief that within the pages of the great epic accounts of his realm, lies a body of native wisdom and spirituality which can still inspire or move us today. That it does so indeed is testified by world-wide interest in the hidden meanings contained within the myths. Even Russia, which has its own Arthur-figure in the person of Vladimir of Kiev - has begun to look at the parallel mythology of the British king. In Japan, Arthurian chivalry is recognised as possessing kinship with the Samurai code.

Thus the great traditions which Arthur embodies - the code of chivalry, the search for the Holy in the world of the mundane, and above all the great and abiding love of life which lies at the heart of the Arthurian mythos - is not only preserved for generations still to come, but provides a shining paradigm for those who seek for meaning and enlightenment in the present age.

John Matthews

(John Matthews is the author of numerous books on the Arthurian myths, including *THE ARTHURIAN TAROT* (written with his wife Caitlin Matthews), *THE GRAIL-SEEKER'S COMPANION*, *WARRIORS OF ARTHUR* (with R.J. Stewart) and *THE GRAIL: QUEST FOR THE ETERNAL*. He teaches widely on both sides of the Atlantic and in Europe. John and Caitlin are members of the *PENDRAGON* Society. Starting with our next edition we shall be serialising an important article by Caitlin, which she has kindly agreed to let us print. Our thanks to these Arthurian scholars for their friendship and support).



Wordlore

Fred Stedman-Jones

The interest shown in my *EXCALIBUR* article has encouraged me to offer readers a few more facts and ideas on the subject of heroes and their swords.

The heroic ethic encountered in early poetry required gift-giving of gold, weapons and land to secure loyalty and services: 'Deserving one's mead' is a frequent theme. In the *Vita Cadoci* we read that the gilded sword *Hipiclaur* was given to Conmogoy by Giengarth 'for the benefit of his soul' and was worth 70 cows. Like an earthly ruler, Odin also handed out weapons to his chosen followers and once they had received them they were bound to give him loyal service till death and beyond it. Thus, Sigmund the Volsung received a splendid sword, *Gram*, which the god himself brought into the hall and thrust into the great tree supporting the roof. The sword was regarded as a family heirloom and a gift from Odin, and when Sigmund's time came to die Odin appeared on the battlefield and shattered the blade with his spear. Sigmund's son Sigurd later went to Reginn for a sword to slay the dragon *Fafnir* but the blade broke twice in the testing. Sigurd's mother, Queen Hiordis, then produced the broken sword and the master smith remade it. It cut through the iron of the anvil proving Odin's favour had passed from father to son. The god sealed his approval of the young hero by giving him a wonderful horse, bred from his own steed, *Sleipnir*.

Behind the magic and legend we can glimpse the ideas that bonded such societies together. Another story tells of the birth of Olaf the Holy, Christian king of Norway. The condition of the mother caused great anxiety because the birth was long delayed, but when a belt taken from the burial mound of Olaf of Geirstad was fastened round the mother, and the sword from it presented to the child who was to be born, all went well and the baby boy was successfully delivered.

To stay with the lore of our Germanic ancestors, the story of Offa illustrates once more the idea of the sword acting as a symbol and not just something to hack off heads. Offa is remembered as the King of Mercia who ordered the building of the great dyke along the Welsh March in the 8th century to separate the English kingdom of Mercia from the lands of the Cymru. There is a strange link between him and his ancestor, also named Offa, who ruled the Angles. This king had also built a dyke in the Saxon homelands along the River Eider and it is recorded in a 7th century poem that... 'he fixed the boundary with the Myrgings with his single sword.' This sword, a symbol of sacred Saxon kingship, was called *Skrep*, and it is claimed that it had passed down to the second Offa. The demarcation of a defensive boundary is linked to this sword twice, does it indicate the need of its use to conquer rival claimants, or is it a ritual action intended to empower the line? Both? If done as a public ceremony it would focus the support and aspirations of the king's followers very effectively - strong rulers are usually skilled in their use of psychology. Hitler, well understood the value of symbolic displays

of a pseudo-religious nature- which, for a time, gave him the status of a deity to his people. The parallelism of the use of this sword by the two Offas is striking, and it seems to have passed down through English kingship, for Edmund Ironside left it to Athelstan in his will in 1015. Might not King Arthur's talismanic sword, *Excalibur*, have acted upon public consciousness in a similar way? There is no doubt that the Nazis, especially Himmler, sought the great talismans of European power, especially the Sacred Lance and the Grail, to ensure the continuity of the Third Reich. This has been the subject of investigation by Nigel Pennick and others, including Charles Günther Evans, who has promised us an article on this fascinating topic.

Honour has always been a touchy subject for the hero caste. At the Siege of Troy, Ajax and Odysseus rescued the body of Achilles after a terrible fight and brought it back to the Greek camp. At the funeral games in honour of the fallen hero his beautiful suit of armour was to be awarded to the warrior who had contributed most to the rescue of the body. Popular opinion decided in favour of Odysseus, including the captured Trojans who had witnessed the action. Unable to endure this slight, Ajax lost his reason. He went apart, buried his sword hilt in the earth, and fell upon the blade.

Similar ideas are to be seen in the legends of the heroes of Japan. They lived by strict codes, those of Bushido and Gin, and they valued the qualities of honour, moral obligation and loyalty which were embodied in their heroic actions. They seemed to have shown a complete disregard for life or death, as long as these qualities were observed. In the earlier legendary period Prince Yamato (c.200) may be compared in some respects with King Arthur: he, too, had a special sword, called *Cloud Cluster*, and I believe that interest is now gaining ground in the Arthurian legends in Japan. The Samurai were the elite warriors of the Edo period and service to the death was their code. They used their swords to uphold their lord's honour and took responsibility when they failed, by committing ritual suicide (*seppuku*). In theory at least, the use of weapons was thought profane unless guided by a pure heart. The Samurai abolished their own special status amid the winds of modernisation that swept through Japan in the 1870's. Swords and armour were declared illegal as everyday dress after 1876, but an old Samurai is quoted as saying, in this century... 'It must be difficult for Westerners to understand Bushido and the Sword since you invented the rifle, which is merely a killing machine. The sword represented life and the Samurai's soul.'

I shall avoid the temptation to moralise beyond this point but there is a difference between facing your enemy with a sword and felling him from over the horizon with a missile, surely? 'He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword'; but innocents, too, have died throughout the ages, by sword and bullet, as they still do every day in our enlightened modern world. The Arthurian Romances are shaped by civilising ideas that were abroad in Europe when they were written and an ideal of chivalrous knighthood was projected by such literature - heaven knows how much the knightly classes needed it! It is significant that certain well-placed civilised ladies played an important part in this process - see the review of *Eleanor of Aquitaine* in the book review pages. The Church cashed in on it and changed the hero of the Holy Grail to a man who never raised his sword in anger and who held it up to cast the shadow of a cross. But, the killings went on. Can art change society? Does it serve as

an opiate, satisfy unfulfilled longings, is it a blueprint for a Platonic world that exists - out there, where no man has boldly gone before?

Swords are potent symbols, their lore tells us much about the people who wield them. In Celtic Ireland the blade of Tethra, king of the Formorians, *Orna*, boasted of its own dreadful deeds, while the spear called *Luin* twisted and writhed when it smelt the blood of an enemy. If no blood was spilt it had to be quenched in a cauldron of venom or it would turn on its owner. This is another world again - it expresses the darker side of the Celtic imagination.

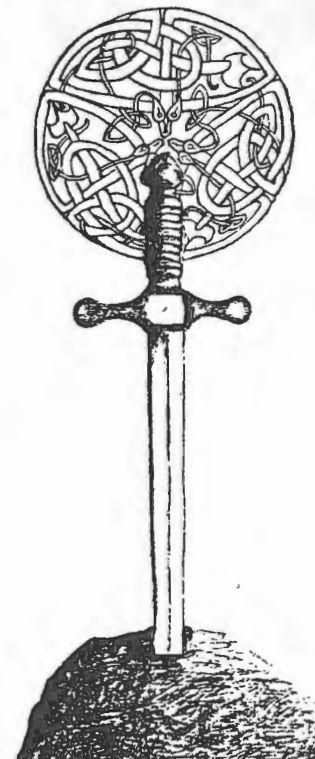
At the Welsh National Eisteddfod, held this week, the six foot Gorsedd Grand Sword is partially unsheathed three times, with the challenge: 'Is it Peace?' and the Bards respond three times with the cry: 'Peace'. The sword must be carried by its point and must never be borne or bared against any human being, 'in testimony that the Bards of Britain are men of peace and bear no naked weapon against anyone.' Only poetry and song accompany the Cleddyf yr Orsedd in Wales today. Whenever a joint Gorsedd of the Bards of Wales and Brittany is held the Half Sword is brought out. This is a short sword divided into two, lengthwise: a half is kept in each country until they are brought together at the ceremony and united:

*To represent the spiritual unity of King Arthur's
Sword over the two nations.*

At her Coronation the Queen was approached by a procession of prelates led by the Archbishop of Canterbury carrying the heavy Sword of State. He placed it in her hands and, with the whole weight of the Church behind him, intoned:

'Receive this kingly sword, brought now from the altar of God, and delivered to you by the hands of us the Bishops and servants of God, though unworthy. With this Sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order.'

I think that Malory's King Arthur would have heard this out but I'm not so sure about the Arthur of Culhwch and Olwen!





ARTHUR ON STAMPS

ROMAN BRITAIN

For those of you who like anything Arthurian, historical or connected with the aims and objects of the PENDRAGON SOCIETY this series of articles is for you. For the purists amongst you, I hope that you may find something of interest in the coming editions. As I travel around, meeting clients, talking to enthusiasts of every kind, I have discovered a collector who is not, in the purist term, a philatelist but is a fanatic of his specialist subject be it history, cricket, Michael Jackson or whatever. They will collect anything which depicts their interest, and this includes stamps. (Yes, there has been a set of stamps devoted to Michael Jackson!) Thus it was I thought some of you may be interested to learn of any issues, past and present, which have depicted Arthurian and related themes. How long the series will last depends on the amount of material I can 'dig up' and what various post offices around the world decide to issue in the future.

It is, I feel, fitting that I should start this series now, when the British Post Office has just issued a set dealing with ROMAN BRITAIN, as there are many trains of thought and discussions on how much the Roman occupation of Britain influenced the historical Arthur.



The Stamps:

The four stamps on sale from 15th June were issued to commemorate the 1950th anniversary of the Roman occupation of Britain.

They feature spectacular items of Roman Britain discovered at sites in Kent, London, Wales and Dorset.

The 24p stamp (1st class and EC basic rates) shows the head of the Emperor Claudius (ruled AD41-54) on a gold coin found at Bredgar, Kent.

The 28p stamp (Europe, non-EC basic rate) features the head of the Emperor Hadrian (AD117-138). The head shown on the stamp is a bronze of the 2nd century found in the River Thames in London in 1834. It is now in the British Museum.

The 33p stamp (Worldwide postcard rate) shows the goddess Roma shown on a second century gemstone discovered at the legionary fortress of Caerleon (*Isca*) in Wales.

The 38p value (basic airmail rate) depicts a 4th Century mosaic of Christ from a Roman villa at Hinton St Mary in Dorset. It is probably the earliest known representation of Christ.

The stamps were designed by John Gibbs, FCSD, who writes of his Roman stamp designs:

"The designs are the outcome of extensive research which took me to museums and sites in England, Scotland and Wales. The brief was to depict a range of typical Roman items

(such as mosaics, pottery, sculpture, jewellery, coins, etc) that reflect life in Roman Britain. "Consultations with various experts led to the conclusion that the set should definitely include depictions of the Emperors Claudius and Hadrian and this stipulation led to the final selection of the Claudius coin and the bronze head of Hadrian. This choice in turn suggested that the rest of the set should also feature heads, so further research concentrated on mosaics and artefacts that incorporated heads within their designs. The objects chosen were the tiny gemstone of the Goddess Roma and the mosaic of Christ."

Postal Stationery:

Alongside the issue of the stamps were the usual range of postcards (PHQ Cards) depicting the stamps and the post office's own 'Official' First Day Cover showing the corner of an unidentified mosaic floor and the presentation pack containing the four mint stamps and an information sheet about them, also giving a potted history of Roman Britain. The Post Office's special Pictorial First Day of Issue postmark handstamp was applied at Cardiff for Caerleon. Other special covers were produced by A G Bradbury; Sponne School PFA; Benhams and Covercraft.

A.G. Bradbury: produced two special covers

and sponsored two special handstamps:

The first cover shows a full colour picture of the Ermine Street Guard with the Roman eagle in gold-leaf. Ermine Street links London to York, via Lincoln, hence the postmark location *Eboracum* (York). This issue was limited to 1000.

The Second cover features a Victorian engraving of Claudius from a coin now at the British Museum - probably the same coin used for the design of the 24p stamp. Claudius received the surrender of the British Kings at Colchester in AD43 - hence the postmark location *Camulodunum*.

Roman Invasion - Lactodorum: Towcester's Sponne School PFA have produced a first day cover commemorating Towcester's Roman origins as *Lactodorum*, a Roman garrison camp on Watling Street. The cover depicts a Roman soldier of the type who conquered and settled in Lactodorum. Each cover bears a full set of stamps cancelled by a special illustrated handstamp.

In addition the following celebrities agreed to sign a limited number of covers: David Jacobi (Claudius in BBC1's *Claudius*), Magnus Magnusson, Michael Heseltine, Lord Fawley, Lord Hesketh and the Italian Ambassador.

Benhams: have produced a number of covers for the Roman Britain issue.

Fishbourne Roman Palace

Benham worked with Fishbourne Roman Palace for their main cover which features one of the magnificent mosaics found there. Reproduced in full colour on "silk", it is framed in gold. The special Fishbourne pictorial postmark shows a "hippocamp", a fabulous beast with a curly tail pictured on one of the mosaic floors.

Chedworth Roman Villa

This cover features a specially commissioned painting by archaeological artist Wendy Williams which shows a Roman craftsman creating one of the super Chedworth Mosaics. The illustration is printed on "silk" and mounted into a gold foil frame. The special Cirencester pictorial postmark features the same mosaic and the NT (National Trust) logo.

Four 'Small Silk' Covers

Each of these covers carries just one of the stamps and features a painting by Ronald Embleton, renowned for his reconstructions of Roman army life. Each colourful painting is



printed on "silk" and hand-mounted into a gold foil frame. The special pictorial postmarks commemorate some of the most important Roman sites in Britain including Cirencester (featuring the famous hare mosaic), Bath (carved head of Helios from the temple pediment), Caerleon (theatre mask) and Chester (Gladiator, from the large arena).

Hadrian's Wall:

This Special Gold Cover is decorated with an atmospheric painting of Roman soldiers on the Wall by artist Ronald Embleton. This has been printed onto a "silken fabric" and hand-mounted into a real 22-carat frame. This frame incorporates a hallmark confirming the use of real gold. The Roman Britain stamps are cancelled by a special handstamp, featuring the eagle - symbol of imperial Rome.

Postcards:

There are four postcards decorated with a collection of Ronald Embleton's reconstructions of Roman army life. Each painting is printed on "silk" and mounted in a gold foil frame. The four special pictorial postmarks feature important Roman sites: Dover, Newcastle upon Tyne, Canterbury and Walbrook, London EC4.

Covercraft: have produced two first day covers in association with the Museum of London and the Museum of Antiquities in Newcastle upon Tyne. They both bear special handstamps and a full set of the Roman Britain stamps.

(Extracts from *British Philatelic Bulletin*, May 1993 & *Bulletin Supplements*, May and June 1993).



Geoff Dando

CAMELOT on CAMERA

ALBY STONE

— Arthurian Themes in the Cinema

Cinematic treatment of Arthurian legends are rather rare, which is surprising when one considers the dramatic potential of the legends and romances. Indeed, the magic and mayhem associated with Arthur, Merlin, et al ought to have inspired film-makers than has hitherto been the case, and it is nothing short of bewildering that not one of the truly great directors has seen fit to tackle the genre. The nearest Arthurian cinema has come to producing a classic is a film - actually two filmed versions of the same story - that, on the surface, has nothing at all to do with Arthur or his world. Otherwise, there are few that do justice to the tradition. The sad truth is that, apart from a mere handful of celluloid gems, those that do appear on the big screen are often not worth the price of admission.

Of the successful adaptations, the best of the 'costume-drama' type is probably director John Boorman's *Excalibur* (1981), a suitably mystical tale replete with desperate battles, magical transformations, and wonderful performances. Nigel Terry's portrayal of Arthur - from wide-eyed optimistic youth to prematurely-aged and world-weary fatalist - deserves more credit than it has received; but it was bound to suffer from being set alongside Nicol Williamson's curious but compelling Merlin and Helen Mirren's sensuous and sibillant stab at Morgan, the archetypal *femme fatale*. A strong cast also includes Cherie Lunghi as Guinevere, and the dashing Nicholas Clay as Lancelot. Boorman interprets the legend more or less according to the stories told by Wace and Layman, with a hefty slab of Malory thrown in, interpolating a typically idiosyncratic version of the Grail Quest. This owes little to medieval romance but it makes sense within the context of the screenplay, which treats the quest as an allegorical recovery of Arthur's kingship. Instead of Perceval asking the question at the Grail Castle, a mysterious voice puts the question to him and he must give an answer. The film's storyline justifies the change; but it would have been interesting to see what Boorman could have done with the procession episodes from the Grail romances of Chretien de Troyes or Wolfram von Eschenbach.

With its dramatic locations and superb camera-work, *Excalibur* deserves its reputation and popularity among connoisseurs of Arthuriana. Boorman has obviously done his homework, and has coaxed effective performances from his cast. Despite dialogue that occasionally borders on the embarrassing, *Excalibur* works well as a mystical fable, and is a first-rate romantic thriller to boot, just as the medieval authors probably intended. The same cannot be said of most other cinematic attempts to capture the Arthurian magic. *Knights of the Round Table* (1953), starring Robert Taylor, Mel Ferrer, and Ava Gardner - with Anne Crawford and Stanley Baker in support - is a ripping yarn, based on the conflict between Arthur and Mordred, and the return of Lancelot from exile. Unfortunately, it is marred by acting as wooden as the table of the title

- there is plenty of action, lots of romance in the saccharine sense, but overall it is oddly lifeless, with very little in the way of magic, whether of the supernatural or of the Hollywood variety. Bing Crosby, Rhonda Fleming, and Cedric Hardwicke grace an amusing adaptation of Mark Twain's comedy *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1949), a charming movie played strictly for laughs. The plot concerns a man who dreams that he has journeyed back to Arthurian times. The Old Groaner is appropriately bewildered and suitably homespun as the hapless time-traveller, and some eccentric casting does the rest - William Bendix as a medieval knight, anyone? - but the film is probably best known for the song *Busy Doin' Nothin'*, Twain's story was also filmed in 1931 as *A Connecticut Yankee*, with Maureen O'Sullivan and Myrna Loy.

Among the more successful attempts - artistic success, that is, as opposed to that defined by box-office takings - we can include a splendid low-budget British production *Gawain and the Green Knight* (1973), which adheres fairly closely to the Middle English poem on which it is based, and has an excellent Green Knight; journeyman actor Murray Head stars. In a slightly higher league is *Perceval le Gallois* (1978), a beautiful French interpretation of Chretien's *Perceval*, directed by Eric Rohmer. In both of these films the acting and script are stylised but evocative, and the sets and cinematography of both are a visual treat. In a similar vein is *Parsifal* (1982), a German film of Wagner's famous opera by director Hans Jürgen Syberberg. *Parsifal* seems to have been made more as a homage to Wagner - whose death-mask is the film's central image - than a simple record of a performance. Indeed, the singing is dubbed; but it is done almost seamlessly.

Visual delight also characterises the musical *Camelot* (1967), which is otherwise fairly dull, unless of course one appreciates the type of song normally associated with musical theatre and the cinema. *Camelot* is based on T.H.White's *The Once and Future King*, who probably never foresaw musical interruptions from Alan Jay Lerner in his work. Richard Harris, in the role of Arthur, hams it up as much as Nicol Williamson does as Merlin in *Excalibur*, but to much less effect; Vanessa Redgrave and David Hemmings are wasted, as are Lionel Jeffries and Franco Nero. The singing is dreadful.

The style and content of Arthurian literature is lampooned mercilessly and occasionally with deadly accuracy - by John Cleese and the gang in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975). One of the highlights of what is an erratic production - really just a string of typically Pythonesque sketches - is a savage parody of knightly valour, during which a warrior is shorn of arms and legs but still demands that his opponent should come back and fight. Unfortunately, the film loses its way well before the end, and it trails off lamely just as the viewer is expecting to enjoy a finale of epochal silliness - which, with typical Python perversity, does not happen. The film is worth watching for Terry Gilliam's animations, some based on medieval illuminated manuscripts, and for such exotic beasts as the killer rabbit; but it is disappointing as a whole.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) is supposedly Steven Spielberg's last in the series featuring the adventuring archaeologist. All it has in common with the Arthurian tradition is the Holy Grail, here depicted as the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper. A secret brotherhood guards the secret of the Grail's whereabouts; meanwhile the Nazis are determined to get hold of the holy relic. Enter Indiana Jones, and the outcome is certain: Jones will fight his way through anything the

villains can throw in his path, find the treasure, then lose it. Harrison Ford plays Jones with his usual panache, but Sean Connery nearly steals the show as his father. Denholm Elliot and Julian Glover are excellent in support. As is usual for an Indiana Jones adventure, cliffhangers occur at the rate of one every ten minutes, the dialogue is snappy and amusing, the effects and set-pieces are ingenious, and the film's entertainment value is even greater than the sum of such strong parts. A splendid adventure, but the quest for the Grail is, as Hitchcock would have said, a McGuffin.

The Arthurian content of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is, considering it is a film about the Grail, rather negligible. Conversely, there are films that, while not overtly Arthurian, are heavily influenced by Arthurian themes and characterisation. *The Fisher King* (1991), with Robin Williams playing a historian turned tramp and Jeff Bridges as a DJ with problems, is too obviously based on the Grail romances to require much in the way of elucidation. Terry Gilliam's usual nightmarish urban landscapes and obsessions with mechanisation are to the fore, and his set-pieces - the haunting concourse dance-routine, for example - illuminate a shamanistic madness in keeping with the hallucinatory wilderness and episodic insanity inhabited by a number of characters in medieval literature. Gilliam's Red Knight is a wonderful creation: a fiery, ragged, mechanical spectre, a medieval demon ravaging a modern mind in the territory of love and dreams. It would be easy to dismiss *The Fisher King* as director Gilliam's hangover from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, but the content of the later film hints that he has found something in the romances that has stirred him deeply.



Less obvious, but executed more clumsily, is *The Natural* (1984), directed by Barry Levinson from the novel by Robert Malamud. Here, Arthurian legend is superimposed from that great American mythology, the baseball diamond. Robert Redford plays a baseball hitter named Roy who has a bat made from the wood of a lightning-struck tree; his team, the Knights, are coached by Pop Fisher. Aside from the clumsy word-play (Roy translates as French *roi*; the coach is the Fisher King, and so on) and the typical Arthurian theme of the king's rise, fall and rise again, the only

really striking image is the bat, a sporting Excalibur in keeping with the blade's erstwhile epithet *caladbolg*, 'lightning-sword'. Kim Basinger, Glen Close, and Robert Duvall add further gloss and weight to the production, but *The Natural* is really only palatable to baseball fans or all-purpose sporting obsessives. Or indeed, to those whose quest for Arthurian images invariably leads them into dark and dangerous places.

Such places are plentiful in the world of Philip Marlowe, private investigator. Raymond Chandler's down-at-heel gumshoe is not the kind of person one would normally envisage as an Arthurian knight-errant, but in *Farewell My Lovely* that is exactly what he is. Chandler, a literary intellectual, raided Wolfram's *Parzival* for the plot of his detective-novel, which was first filmed in 1944, with singer Dick Powell playing the principled shamus. The 1975 version stars Robert Mitchum as the anachronistically chivalrous Marlowe, with Charlotte Rampling. The story concerns Marlowe's quest for a missing item of jewellery, a jade necklace - an item corresponding to the green stone that is Wolfram's idea of the Grail. The owners of the necklace are a family named Grayle; in Marlowe's way is a malevolent hypnotist and drug-dealer called Amthor, whose name refers to Wolfram's Grail King, but whose activities and role tally with the sinister magician Clinschor. Both films are wonderfully atmospheric, and played and directed superbly, and in each case Chandler's oddly poetic dialogue transfers smoothly and effectively to the screen. In the later version, the heavy eyelids of the languid Mitchum mirror the sterile *ennui* of the decadent rich who provide much of Marlowe's business and hint at the weariness of a man who has spent his entire life on a fruitless quest. Inspired casting, especially that of Los Angeles as the Waste Land. 'A black pool opened at my feet. I dived in. It had no bottom.'

Others who have dared the Arthurian realm include Walt Disney, whose studio were responsible for the *Sword in the Stone* (1963), an emasculated cartoon version of T.H. White's novel of Arthur's boyhood. As usual, Disney refuses to allow the story to make the screen without a liberal peppering of second-rate songs; and even the artwork does not come up to the usual Disney standard. Arthur Askey discovers a sword he thinks is Excalibur in *King Arthur Was a Gentleman* (1942), a suitably patriotic war-time romp. The least said about it the better. Cornel Wilde directed and starred in *Lancelot and Guinevere* (1962), another rendition of the Arthurian eternal triangle, and one that is eminently forgettable, even if it is reasonably well made and acted. *The Siege of the Saxons* (1963), a shallow but fairly entertaining effort, tells how the Saxons try to take advantage when Arthur falls ill, but are thwarted by a young hero, Janette Scott and Ronald Howard lend their talents, but footage recycled from older films gives this one a second-hand, cobbled-together feel that is entirely appropriate. *Prince Valiant* (1958), presents a promising array of talented players, led by Robert Wagner, James Mason, and Janet Leigh, with Sterling Hayden and Debra Paget not far behind - though what boxer Primo Carnera is doing there is anyone's guess. King Arthur is asked to help the king of Scandia recover his kingdom - a lame plot, but it is vigorously directed and competently acted. Ploughing a similar furrow is *The Black Knight* (1954), featuring Alan Ladd, Peter Cushing, and a number of British character actors. Moving away from such comic-strip heroics is *Sword of the Valiant* (1984), a bizarre near-remake of *Gawain and the Green Knight* by the same director, Stephen Weeks, and virtually the same writing team. As entertainment, the film is mildly amusing, but very uneven. The actors - including such screen luminaries

as Peter Cushing, Douglas Wilmer, Sean Connery and Trevor Howard - are like giants wading in a puddle. It does have a certain dislocated charm, though.

For better or worse - and it must be said that it is mostly the latter - these are the major products of Arthurian cinema. There are others, consigned to the various depths of obscurity, but they are too few in number, and for that we should probably thank whatever gods are listening. At the time of writing, there are rumours of a film dealing with the life of Guinevere, supposedly based on a story by a woman who claims to have been Arthur's beloved in a former existence. Whether there is any truth in the rumour remains to be seen; but the track record of Arthurian cinema would probably not be enhanced if it does come to pass. There is enough in medieval Arthurian literature to inspire at least one truly great film, but directors tend to opt for one of the two approaches: the stylised, theatrical art film, or the comic-strip thriller. In both cases, characterisation and detail tend to suffer, and the magic is lost. Audiences are, as a whole, impatient with the religious and mystical content of the tradition, so that aspect is usually jettisoned at the script-writing stage. Producers and backers like some return on their investment, so the box-office is always a consideration. Even so, Boorman and the makers of *Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Perceval le Gallois* have done well to come up with films that retain the episodic style of the medieval tales while remaining coherent as films - they have their faults, it is true, but they are easily forgiven when set against the rest. Still, the definitive Arthurian film has yet to be made. It is doubtful whether the born-again Guinevere will have any lasting impact on the dire state of Arthurian cinema; but we can perhaps pin our hopes on *Lancelot*, currently in production at Pinewood Studios with Mel Gibson in the title role.

It is ironic indeed that what may be the two very best films based on Arthurian themes are not set in Dark Age Britain or the indeterminate otherworld of the literature at all, but are located in twentieth century

Los Angeles; their hero is not an aristocratic, breast-plated horseman, but a down-at-heel private eye in a seedy neighbourhood. But Philip Marlowe is a moral man in a cynical and sleazy world. Marlowe braves Chapel Perilous and the evil magician to track down his Grail and so put one tiny part of the world to rights. *Farewell My Lovely* - either version - refers back to Wolfram von Eschenbach in a number of ways, and spotting them is great fun. Chandler's novel has even more allusions, but is just as subtle as the films. As a writer of Arthurian literature, the name of Raymond Chandler may not come to mind as readily as those of his medieval forerunners - but his work has certainly resulted in better films than theirs has so far done.



book Reviews



KING ARTHUR - THE TRUE STORY

Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman
Century, 1992. £15.99. 196 pages.

King Arthur is an elusive figure in Early Welsh legend, lacking a family, a kingdom, and firm dates. 'King Arthur: The True Story' is an attempt to find a hitherto secret identity for Arthur, to locate him firmly in space and time. Geoffrey Ashe pursued a similar line of enquiry arguing that Arthur was the 5th century continental British leader Riothamus. The authors' candidate for the true identity of Arthur is a certain Owain Ddantgwyn, a man previously unknown outside certain Welsh genealogies. In keeping with this approach, Phillips and Keatman's book is written rather in the style of a historical detective investigation. Thus each chapter considers a particular topic, then at the end of each chapter, the conclusions reached are summarised. The trail is then picked up again in the following chapter. The authors succeed in catching and holding the reader's attention effectively, and the book can be very easily read by a reader unfamiliar with the Arthurian question. How convincing then, is their case?

Before revealing their theory, 11 chapters summarise some of the issues involved in the study of the historical Arthur. Thus the sources - Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury, Nennius, the *Annales Cambriae*, Gildas, Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Welsh legendary material, and so on - are described, and the references to Arthur assessed. These source passages are among the most-analysed in British history, and the authors inevitably simplify the problems and uncertainties involved, but they do give a fair introduction to the subject. The authors reach the position adopted by most Arthurian 'believers', a view which sees Arthur as the foremost British Christian leader against the Angles and Saxons in the late 5th and early 6th centuries, who wins great victories and halts the pagan advance for a generation. By the 9th century, however, so much legendary material has accrued around the historical figure, that little else can be confidently said.

In chapters 12-17, the authors reveal their theory that the heroic figure known as Arthur was identical with an obscure north Welsh king Owain Ddantgwyn ('White-tooth'). In summary, this runs as follows. In the late 5th century, Gwynedd was the most powerful British kingdom and most likely to provide a leader of the power and stature of Arthur. Ambrosius Aurelianus, Arthur's predecessor as British resistance leader, was connected with this area of North Wales, and the name of Arthur's father Uther Pendragon (chief dragon) provides a further link with Gwynedd, as the dragon was the emblem of Gwynedd. The authors then suggest that 'Arthur' need not have been a personal name at all, but a Celtic byname or title, meaning 'bear'. In the attack on five contemporary kings that forms part of Gildas' 'De Excidio', Gildas refers to king Cuneglasus (whom the authors locate not in Gwynedd but in Powys) as a bear himself and also as the 'driver

of the chariot of the bear's stronghold'. This, it is argued, is a reference to Cuneglasus (later Cinglas) being the heir of the bear or Arthur. Genealogies show Cinglas' father was Owain Ddantgwyn. The ruler of Gwynedd at this time, Maglocunus (later Maelgwyn), was another of the kings lambasted by Gildas. Maelgwyn had come to his kingdom by killing and replacing his uncle. Although not named by Gildas, Maelgwyn's uncle was Owain (thus Maelgwyn and the dispossessed Cinglas were cousins). Later legend had Arthur betrayed and killed by his nephew Mordred; this mirrors and may be based on the Maelgwyn - Owain conflict. A Cornish king Marcus Cunomor, who may have been an enemy of Arthur might also have contributed to the later legend.

Owain (and Maelgwyn) were descended from Cunedda who, according to Nennius, led a late 4th or 5th century migration from the people of the Votadini in south-east Scotland to North Wales. Cunedda's descendants founded a number of kingdoms in north Wales. They were Celtic British, but were not regarded as Britons as they originated from outside the former Roman province, which might explain Nennius' statement about Arthur fighting with the kings of the Britons, implying Arthur himself was in some sense apart from these kings. A reference in the Gododdin poem to Arthur as a great warrior confirms he was a hero among the people of the Gododdin, the successor kingdom to the Votadini tribe.

In the late 5th and early 6th centuries, important Roman-style timber-framed buildings were still in use at the former Roman town of Wroxeter, probably by the local ruler. Wroxeter lay within the kingdom of Powys. A late 5th century tombstone from Wroxeter naming a certain Cunorix confirms that Cunedda's family controlled the town, since the element 'Cun' or 'Cyn' (hound) was common among Cunedda's descendants. This is therefore an appropriate headquarters for such an eminent man as Arthur. The Powys connection is confirmed, it is argued, by an early poem which refers to the 7th century king Cynddylan of southern Powys and his family as the 'heirs of Arthur'.

This might all initially appear convincing, since Phillips and Keatman use some of the earliest sources - Gildas, Nennius, early Welsh poetry and genealogy - to develop their arguments. However, on closer inspection, there are powerful arguments that can be put up against their theory, and to my mind it simply does not stand up under scrutiny.

Firstly, let us consider the Powys/Wroxeter connection. The genealogy of Owain and Cinglas links their family to Rhos (part of eastern Gwynedd), not Powys. Families descended from Cunedda ruled over much of North Wales, but not Powys, which was ruled by a family springing from a certain Cadell. Furthermore, three saints whom the genealogies make sons of Owain are linked to Anglesey and the Llyn peninsula, in Western Gwynedd. The name element 'Cun' is common amongst many families, not simply that of Cunedda; the man named on the Wroxeter tombstone is not found on any genealogy linked to Cunedda and the tombstone proves nothing. The link with Wroxeter is so forced that it is almost as if the authors felt that they had found Camelot and that it therefore had to be the most appropriate grandiose site. Finally, the Cynddylan poem seems to simply be holding up Arthur as a paragon of military might, to whom Cynddylan is a worthy successor. Cynddylan himself was descended from Cadell, ancestor of the Powys kings referred to above, and has no known

connection with Cunedda, Owain or Arthur.

Owain was therefore probably a king in north-western Wales. Was he also Arthur? This hangs on the interpretation of the passage in Gildas, in which Cinglas is called a bear and linked to the bear's stronghold. However, Gildas uses similar imagery in his tirades against the other four kings; he calls Constantine 'whelp of the filthy lioness', Aurelius Caninus 'lion whelp', Vortipor 'the leopard', Maelgwyn 'the dragon of the island', and compares the last-named to a raven, a hawk, a wolf and a hound. It is quite clear that Gildas is using these names as terms of abuse, and we must see the bear references in this context. In fact, the 'bear's stronghold' is thought by many scholars to be a punning reference to a place name.

Much of the supporting evidence can now be dismissed. Amrosius' link with Dinas Emrys in Gwynedd is purely legendary. 'Pen dragon' is a poetic term with no specific link to Gwynedd; we have seen above that Gildas calls Maelgwyn of Gwynedd the 'dragon of the isle' as a term of abuse. Maelgwyn killed his uncle, but it might have been an uncle other than Owain. Even if it was Owain, there is no evidence to suggest this incident was the basis for the legendary Arthur-Mordred conflict; Maelgwyn, and indeed Cunemor, are quite separate figures in Welsh legend from Mordred (Medraut in the early tradition). There is no evidence that anyone ever regarded the Votadini people as anything other than Britons, or that they were isolated from political and religious wranglings amongst the Britons, as the authors suggest. Certainly, Cunedda's descendants were in the very thick of these - as we know, Maelgwyn killed his uncle to gain his kingdom.

Thus many objections can be advanced to the authors' interpretation of the documentary sources; difficulties which are not considered in their book. Similar concern must also be expressed about the authors' use of archaeological data. A number of statements made do not take account of recent scholarly opinion or are simply incorrect. The interpretation of Tintagel as a monastic site (p.13) was abandoned by archaeologists in the early 1980s; the site is now regarded as having been a high-status secular settlement. The supposed 6th century occupation phase at Castle Dore (p.36) has recently been dismissed and the site has been convincingly reinterpreted as wholly Iron Age in date. The very coarse pottery from the Berth hillfort (p.171) initially thought to indicate 6th century occupation is now regarded as of Iron Age date. It is not correct that excavations at Little Solsbury have shown that the site was refortified by Britons in the late 5th century (p.88), nor is it correct that Exeter was refortified in the 6th century (p.149). The Britons did not manufacture pottery after the early 5th century, so I am not sure what evidence justifies the statements that Votadini pottery has been found in North Wales (p.123) and that Midlands pottery has been found at Bokerly Dyke (p.149). Finally, the Wroxeter sequence of buildings (Chapter 14) is not firmly dated, due to the scarcity of finds. Archaeologists have tended towards caution, and the buildings need not be any later than the early 5th century - appropriate perhaps for Vortigern, but not anybody later. Interesting although this evidence may be, it does not prove either that the remainder of the city was flourishing during this time.

I have discussed the authors' ideas at some length because this book is a serious attempt to get to grips with the Arthurian problem and

deserves assessment as such. However, ultimately I found the investigation lacking in depth, and the resulting identification theory unconvincingly put across. It is constructed on a series of doubtful arguments and unjustified conclusions. One of the weaknesses of the investigative style adopted is that the end-chapter summaries often give the impression that established facts are being stated, when in fact they are often no more than speculation. By the following chapter, these 'facts' are being used as the basis for further (and weaker) speculation. 'King Arthur: The True Story' is an excitingly written book, and makes a fair attempt to introduce and present Arthurian mystery to a wider public. However, I would suggest to a new student that before you consider the mystery solved, you also read the works of the other writers cited in the useful introductory bibliography.

Nick Grant,

Dictionary of Celtic Mythology

Peter Beresford Ellis

Constable, 1993 (paperback version of hardback, 1992), £9.95

This book claims to be the first ever dictionary on this subject. The author is well qualified to write such a work, he is a Celtic historian and novelist whose many books about the Celtic civilisations are highly regarded. One of Mr. Ellis's virtues is that he writes clear, fluent and vivid English: which seems to be a virtue of many Celtic scholars.

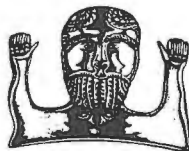
A feature of this author's books is their comprehensive introductory essays: this one is fifteen pages long and, in itself, informative for an understanding of the Celtic peoples: their history, culture, languages and the framework of ideas from which their mythology arose. The scope of the entries is much wider than the title suggests for this introductory material is fed through into the main work and developed in tightly written, well-judged summaries which are much more than 'dictionary' definitions. These include notes on the Arthurian mythos and on the European Celts, besides the British Isles.

From the Picts to polyandry, from the Mabinogi to Macsen. Nennius to Nemeton and Wells to Wales it's all there for immediate reference; this is a book to dip into for pleasure as well as an excellent reference work. There is scholarship in plenty but no dry pedantry. I was fascinated by the appreciation shown for female beauty that led to such names as: Murna of the White Neck, and Plur - The Flower of Women. Just sexist talk?

I was able to find valuable information I had been seeking on Celtic weapons and learnt that Cyfwlch was one of three warriors at Arthur's fortress who possessed the longest and sharpest weapons. Who were the other two? - Mr. Ellis tells you.

Here is a little quiz for you:

1. Who was the 'Big-Bellied Battler'?
2. What was 'The Hero's Portion'?
3. Where was the land of 'Kern-Weahlas'?
4. Who was 'The Lord of Death'?
5. Who had the veil of Illusion thrown upon him'?



How many did you score? But those were the easy ones! You'd better buy a 'Dictionary of Celtic Mythology' don't you think?

F.C.S.-J.

(The remaining book reviews in this issue are by Charles Evans-Günther and I am particularly grateful for them because I know how busy he is at the moment. It is also wonderful to receive copy that is camera-ready and merely needs pasting up. ¶ Thank you Charles.)

King Arthur - The True Story

Graham Phillips & Martin Keatman

Arrow, 1993 (paperback version of hardback, 1992), £5.99



King Arthur - The True Story, the paperback, is exactly the same as the hardback page for page, except for additions at the end of the book. It consists of over 200 pages, a four page bibliography, six page index (which doesn't include entries for the additional material), a six page chronology, 14 black and white photographs plus six new illustrations drawn by Dan Shadrake. The 'Research Update' consists of 11 pages which may or may not add to their theories. I reviewed the original book in DRAGON Vol. 4 No. 3/4, Autumn/Winter 1992, an extended copy of which had been sent to the authors before printing. In this I pointed out what was missed from their book. Therefore, in this short re-review I do not intend to go through the book again but rather to say what the authors have seen fit to ignore despite being told of the existence of this information.

The theory of Phillips and Keatman is that Arthur is Owain Danwyn father of Cynlas - the Cuneglasus of Gildas. In the 'De Excidio Conquestu Britanniae' Gildas tells of Cuneglasus "the driver of the chariot of the bear's stronghold" and the authors connect the "arth-" (meaning bear) element of Arthur's name with the "bear" in Gildas' statement. There exists a number of genealogies connected to Owain Danwyn and Cynlas and they all lead down to the 9th century. If Owain had been the true identity of Arthur I am certain that the bards would have pointed out that important characters like Caradog ap Meirion and Hywel ap Caradog, both descended from Owain for a time held sway over the kingship of North Wales, were Arthur's descendants. They did not do so. The authors also didn't know about Cynlas's kingship of Rhos and his capital believed to be Dinarth, near Llandudno. Dinarth is almost certainly the "bear's stronghold" mentioned by Gildas. (The information on Cynlas and Dinarth is freely available - in English - for example in "Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts" by P. C. Bartrum, University of Wales Press, 1966; "British Dynastic History in the Pre-Viking Period" by D. P. Kirby, Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, No. 27, 1976-1978, and "Varia: II. Gildas and the Names of the British Princes" by Kenneth Jackson in the Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies, No. 3, Summer 1982.)

I find it intriguing that this information was missed from the original hardback but even more so from the paperback when considerably more than you see above was passed to them. What is new about this paperback is the following material: Further information on the possibility of Bath being Badon supported by Tim and Annette Burkitt's article in the 'Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society'; the authors feel they have identified Arthurian connections with Warwick; an interesting piece on "The Dream of Rhonabwy", in which Phillips and Keatman suggest the story could be based on a poem and, finally, Excalibur - The Wilkinson Sword - which is little more than an advertisement.

Despite what Graham Phillips said to me, in a telephone conversation, that what they had written was "not carved in stone" - it would seem that the authors of King Arthur - The True Story are not willing to face up to the truth - in fact, they seem willing to ignore it. Mr. Phillips stated that he was only trying to find the truth behind the myth, and yet...

¶ (Just a short note to those who don't know me I am of Welsh stock, both my parents were Welsh though my grandmother on my mother's side was English and my great grandfather was Swiss while his wife was born in Bristol - her father was Irish. When writing about the emotive subject of nationalism, though I feel strongly Welsh, I hope that, giving deference to my multi-national ancestry, I am objective.)

LETTERS

HEAR YE

† From Eddie Tooke, Twynning, Glos.

The task of editing a magazine, though hard, is rewarding. The sense of achievement when the last page of the master copy has been cut and pasted and the whole package has been sent off to the printer free (one hopes) from typos, split infinitives, plagiarisms, breaches of copyright and actionable comments, needs to be experienced to be appreciated. 'Well, that's that until next time, I like it: let's hope our readers do too.'

One pleasure, however, an editor is never able to enjoy is that of anticipation, an excitement reaching fever-pitch as a quiet thud from inside the front door signals the arrival of the latest offering. Unless his memory is very bad he will probably have some slight knowledge of what his creation contains. Now, for me, after four years, this situation has changed. As I write, I have no idea what treasures lie in store in Issue No. XXIII/3.

Of two things I am completely certain however: whatever standards PENDRAGON has attained, these standards will not only be maintained but enhanced under Fred Stedman-Jones's editorship, and that the catholic policies regarding published material which have always been a major feature of PENDRAGON and ensured its survival where other small journals have collapsed will continue.

It has been Anne's and my great privilege to have known Fred for several years - several very enjoyable years - during which time our friendship with him and Marilyn has become ever warmer and our co-operation in the production of PENDRAGON has gone from strength to strength. I know of no one able to bring greater energy,

scholarship and breadth of vision to the task of editing our very precious Journal than Fred - any more than I can think of a finer and more imaginative illustrator than our other close friend Simon whose excellent workmanship has done so much to make our Journal's appearance so attractive. Thank you Simon and Anne Rouse for your unstinting support! (Yes, Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, I know YOU could have done all these jobs much better. Pity you can't spare the time from running your coven, writing your treatise on Neurosurgery for the Handyman, and producing world-famous artwork under your pseudonym 'Courtney Davis').

And now, lastly, warm thanks to all those members of Pendragon Society who have written saying nice things to Anne and myself. I'm sorry I haven't yet had time to write to you all individually but promise to do so in the fullness of time. The trouble is I can't quite make out some of your addresses: can anyone tell me if there are two 'Rs' or one in 'Balmoral'?

Thank you for your friendship and for all you have done for Pendragon, Eddie.

'He who laughs lasts'. (Mary Pettibone Poole, 'A Glass Eye at the Keyhole'.)

ARTHUR WHITETOOTH?

† From S. Boothroyd, Tranmere, Wirral.

As a keen Arthurian enthusiast I wonder if you could give me your view as to the recent theory of 'Owain Ddantgwyn', ancient king of Gwynedd and Powys being identified as the real King Arthur.

I think that Nick Grant and Charles Günther Evans have carried out a first-rate job of exploring this probability in their book reviews.

A MISSING CASTLE

† From David C. Bovers, Swinton, Manchester.

Somewhere deep in my mind I'm aware that a medieval romance mentions a

castle built between two hills. But I can't recall which writer described this, or even whether the castle was Camelot or the Grail Castle. I'd be grateful if you could refresh my memory on this. Can any reader help with this one?

EXCALIBUR & THE NORTH

† From Nancy Branch, Honolulu, U.S.A.

I've been delving into the legends in a rather eclectic fashion - and find myself with questions reflecting an ignorance which may stem from that. Would you mind very much answering a few questions?

1) You mention both Ullswater and the Solway Firth as locations for Excalibur's resting place. Which literature sends him to those?

2) Even more interesting, you mention that Lancelot has a named sword, Arondight. Where do I find more on this?

Ullswater, in Cumbria, falls within the Old Kingdom of Rheged, home of 'The Men of the North', the archetypal Celtic heroes. The old stories were retained in local folklore in the form of ballads, all of which place Arthur as king at 'Merry Carlisle' (Caer Luel). There is an Arthur's Pike above Ullswater and R.J. Stewart writes, 'the sword Excalibur is said to have been thrown into Lake Ullswater to summon the three queens in their boat', (Merlin & Woman). In my article I wanted to include Northern Arthurian sites in order to cover the land: 'all waters being one.' In the 19th century Stuart Glennie listed 18 Arthurian sites in Cumberland and 160 in the North and Lowland Scotland. If the battle of Camlann was fought at Camboglanna, on The Wall, as some claim, then Glennie's hypothesis - that Arthur was taken to one of the old Roman stations on the coast - makes the Solway Firth 'The Great Western Lake'. The two locations felt poetically right - even if there is no hard evidence. The name 'Arondight' for Lancelot's sword appears in

Brewer's 'Myth & Legend', ed. J. Cooper (London, 1992). I have found no reference to the name elsewhere; can anyone help?

SWORDS

† From Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall.

Your article on Excalibur was very interesting - I hadn't heard about Odin's swords being called Odin's fires and used to illuminate his mead hall. I always associate Odin with the spear (Gungnir) rather than the sword.

I was rather hoping that having made mention of Odin, you might solve a mystery and put a name to the great Sword of Fate in Teutonic myth. Not Gram - the sword wielded by Sigmund and Sigurd - but the one forged by Wayland/Volund "to bring ruin to the gods..." Neither Mackenzie nor Guerber gives this sword a name, nor is one given to the sword of Tyr, "which had been fashioned by the same dwarfs...who had also made Odin's spear." I must admit I have always found it difficult to understand why some weapons are named in Norse mythology (Gram, Gungnir, Miollnir, e.g.) but not these two important swords. I know this is straying a bit from the bounds of Arthurian legendry, but I think it's rather odd that his sword has at least three alternative names, while those of Frey and Tyr apparently have none...Does Alby Stone have any information on this question, perhaps?

I note that you have listed Mimung and Nagelring as "swords made by Wayland the Smith." Mackenzie reports that Mimung was given by Wieland (Wayland) to his son Witege when the latter decided to challenge Dietrich. The sword had been "aforetime forged by compulsion for a tyrant king". Guerber who calls it 'Miming' - also reports that it was made for Wayland's son, but names the latter Heime. As for Nagelring, Guerber doesn't mention it at all - unless under another name, but since his 'Myths of the Norsemen' doesn't

deal with the tales of Siegfried and the Nibelungen, etc., this seems unlikely. Mackenzie, however, attributes the manufacture of Nagelring to Alberich - not Wayland - and tells how Alberich gives the sword to Dietrich.

I understand there are conflicting sources for the Teutonic myths (e.g., Balder's death) but this is not my territory: we have some experts in this field among our members who might like to comment.

ARTHURIAN ENACTMENT

† From Derek Fox, Southampton, Hants.

Flicking through my first ever copy of Pendragon (great stuff), I came across Anne-Marie Lewis's idea for an Arthurian Enactment Society. Whilst I admit to being no 'loyal Lancelot' my knightly conduct may grant me a place at our King's court. I am sure that with enthusiastic members great prospects lie ahead for such a group. I am sure also that with the endless romance, mighty battles, glorious crownings, daily life and magical wizardry a drama could be produced for any audience, be it young or old. Fun for all and, with a few historical facts thrown into the cauldron, who knows, we could all go home having learnt something. I look forward to hearing something more on this subject soon.

Three members, including Derek, have been in touch with each other and I am awaiting news of their deliberations. I'm sure there are others of you out there who would not be averse to joining in. Please let me know if you would like to be put in touch. News of Arthurian story-telling at Tintagel and of an Arthurian theatre group appears elsewhere in this journal.

CLAUDIUS AND THE WLEDIGS

† From David Pykitt, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs.

In response to Chris Lovegrove's letter which appeared in Pendragon XXII/4, I have since read with

interest a passage in 'Mysterious Britain' by Charles Walker (1989), which would seem to confirm Chris's viewpoint:

"A life-size bronze head of the Emperor Claudius was found in the River Alde near to the village of Saxmundham in Suffolk in 1907, and it may well have been taken from Colchester after the sack of the Roman city by Boudica, queen of the Iceni. It has been suggested that the head was hacked from a statue which once stood in the destroyed temple in the city. The Saxmundham bronze head is now preserved in the British Museum". I have written an article entitled 'In the Wake of the Red Dragon', which traces the history of Britain from the rise of Macsen Wledig in 383 to the death of his grandson Emrys Wledig in 497. which you may consider publishing in three parts in Pendragon.

My book entitled 'Journey to Avalon' should, all being well, be published in September. It has been a long wait and I hope that it will be worthwhile.

Thank you, David. I shall look forward to publishing your article in future issues. It would be interesting and instructive to publish a list of our members' books, we have quite a number whose work on the Dark Ages is known and respected. It gives me great pleasure to report Helen Hollick's success in this field in Talking Head in this issue.

NEWS FROM CAMELOT

† From Ken Livingstone, M.P., House of Commons, London.

First of all, my apologies for not having replied to your letter before now but I have been heavily involved in the Maastricht Debates in the House of Commons over recent months and I fear my correspondence has had to wait.

Many thanks for sending me a copy of your journal and I send you and the publication my best wishes, but I am absolutely up to my eyes with work at the moment and could not do the article you suggest. I am so

sorry.

I had approached Mr. Livingstone to write an article on The Mists of Avalon by Marion Bradley, which he had designated as the book he would take with him to his desert island when interviewed by Sue Lawley on Desert Island Disks on the 7th March. His courtesy in answering my opportunistic invitation is much appreciated.

PENDRAGON INSPIRES ARTIST

† From Chesca Potter, London.

Thank you very much for your letter and your interest in my work.

I was suddenly overwhelmed by commissioned work, so I no longer have time to produce any prints for sale.

I am now working on 40 coloured cards for John Matthews's "Celtic Shaman's Pack"; then 78 cards for my Greenwood Tarot for Harper Collins. All the originals of these will be for sale but not until publication, about 2 years time.

I was very influenced by an early issue of Pendragon about Elen/St. Helena/Elaine. It formed the basis of my last ten years work! Good luck with your publication in the future. Thanks again.

Chesca has illustrated many new age works, including 'The Grail Seeker's Companion' by John Matthews, and Caitlin Matthew's 'Mabon and the Mysteries of Britain' and her 'Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain', her two-book study of The Mabinogion. One of Chesca's illustrations appears in 'The Enchanted Realms' in this issue.

The Pendragon issue mentioned was Vol. XVI/3, Summer 1983.

A NEW AGE

† From Pamela Constantine, Upminster, Essex.

Greetings! Many thanks for your kind letter and for giving our poems a caring home. May your editorship prove truly fulfilling. As publisher, editor and writer (and a subscriber to the excellent Pendragon!) I am also

deeply appreciative of all things Arthurian. From whichever angle one perceives him, Arthur is a personal and general enrichment. And I think we lose much if we allow ourselves to be immersed in the merely reductionist attitudes so widespread in our time.

Jess Foster's fascinating and beautifully written booklet is much appreciated, thanks so much. It is lovely to learn more of the Society's beginnings and to come across so many names already met in other areas. The poem in 'A for Arthur' - 'The Return' - might have been written for the Renaissance. We at the Sharkti Laureate identify very much with Jess Foster and her 'Romantics', feeling that our spiritual heritage stems from the troubadours... We still 'wrap our esoteric knowledge in songs and legends! The least confrontational way of touching the public heart. I look forward very much to your next edition.

The poem on our inside front cover is from 'The Celtic Connection', an anthology of poetry published by the Sharkti Laureate, many of these being 'Arthurian' in the broadest sense. Pamela has given us permission to feature these poems in our future journals, for which we would like to express our gratitude.



Your letters are welcome. They reflect an active and interested membership. We are also happy to pass on letters to other members on your behalf. Letters requiring a personal reply should be accompanied by an SAE.

BookReviews

Eleanor of Aquitaine - Queen and Legend

D.D.R. Owen

Blackwell Publishers, 1993, £25



Though rather expensive this is an excellent book for people interested in the development of Arthurian literature. It consists of 250 pages, 6 pages of bibliography, a 13 page index, 11 pages of notes, 8 page chronology, 15 black and white photographs, a map and a genealogical chart.

Prof. Owen discusses Eleanor of Aquitaine, a legend in her own lifetime, in considerable detail with reference to her lineage, life, legend and that not only did she nurture literature but also inspired it. Having been interested in the European impact on Arthurian literature for some years (its not all Dark Age studies with me!) it is fascinating to realise that many aspects of the Arthurian tales come from this period. The Round Table, knights, Lancelot and Guinevere and the Holy Grail may well owe their origins to French authors. However, it is known that Arthurian stories had been known in France even before Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his famous book. It is possible that a certain Welshman, called Bleheris (Bleddri) was telling stories in Poitiers at the court of either William VII, Eleanor's grandfather, or William VIII, who was Eleanor's father and had died in 1137. Bleheris is said to have told of Tristan and knew the secrets of the Grail. Certainly it is known that the story of the Grail was known in Southern France as early as 1160.

During the life of Eleanor - 1122 to 1204 - we see most of the literature that was to lay the bias for the future Arthurian tales written by Malory. There was William of Malmesbury (1122), Henry of Huntingdon (1130), Geoffrey of Monmouth writing his "History of the Kings of Britain" around 1136, Wace introducing the Round Table in 1155, and Chretien de Troyes writing Arthurian stories and the first Grail tale between 1160 and 1190s. Other writers included Marie de France, Thomas of England, Laymon, Beroul, Robert de Boron, Hartmann von Aue, Eilhart von Oberg and Wolfram von Eschenbach. This was certainly a fruitful period and Eleanor played a considerable part.

Wace is said to have dedicated a copy of his Brut to Eleanor, Chretien de Troyes's patron was Henry of Champagne whose wife was Marie, Eleanor's daughter, and Chretien later patron, Philip of Flanders was a friend of Eleanor and Henry II. Eleanor is said to have not only influence Courtly Love but may have played a part in the introduction and popularity of Arthurian literature in France. Prof. Owen believes that certain writing produced at this period were inspired by Eleanor's life, loves and tragedies. Henry II was fascinated by Arthur, and Richard I, son of Henry and Eleanor was inspired by Arthurian tales and is said to have given Excalibur to Tancred of Sicily as part of a treaty.

Eleanor had a fascinating life spanning eight decades seeing the rise and fall of the Plantagenets, from the triumphs of her husband Henry II to the tragedies of her son King John. She was Queen of France, married to Louis VIII, Queen of England, had ten children (five boys and five girls) of whom two became kings, she travelled extensively, even went on a crusade, held varying levels of power, was imprisoned for seven years, had adventures that rivalled fiction of the day and had a considerable influence on medieval literature. Prof. Owen sums her up with the words: "... Eleanor of Aquitaine may not have been one of the greatest makers of history, but she was certainly one of the greatest lives of it".

Celt and Saxon: The Struggle for Britain AD 410-937

Peter Berresford Ellis

Constable Co. Ltd., 1993, £17.95



If you are interested in the period sometimes called the 'Dark Ages' this is very much the book for you. With over 280 pages, a 10 page bibliography, 10 page index, 15 page chronology, 28 black and white photographs and maps on the endpapers, this is a well written, useful and interesting publication.

Mr. Berresford Ellis, author of "The Celtic Empire" and "Celtic Inheritance", delves into the history of the 'Dark Ages' with considerable passion. He obviously knows his stuff and this is a book that everyone interested in the subject should at least read. It brings up some very pertinent points which cannot be ignored and some of the topics deserve a book to themselves. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in this period, but with reservations.

Celt and Saxon looks at the growth of both the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon nations from the time of the withdrawal of Roman authority by Honorius to the ten century. In fact the last chapter goes well beyond this period and brings the reader up to date. You will see how the various Celtic nations came into existence and how they had to deal with the growing Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

Of particular interest is Mr. Berresford Ellis's chapter on Arthur. He follows the general picture of a warrior fighting a series of battles culminating in the defeat of the Anglo-Saxons at Badon and Arthur's death at Camlan in a possible civil war. Thankfully, he doesn't try to find a secret behind the name of Arthur but does suggest the possibility of Arthur being from the kingdom of Elmet. This is a reasonable theory since, if we accept Nennius's famous list, a good number of the battles seem to be in the east. What is a little strange about this chapter is the mistake in the first paragraph. It is believed that first known reference to Arthur is in Aneirin's epic poem "Y Gododdin" where one of the warriors is compared to Arthur. Mr. Berresford Ellis calls that hero Bleiddig ap Eli when, in fact, the warrior was Gwawrddur (note the same name ending as Arthur - both names are at the end of the line and rhyme).

As mentioned above this is a good history of the period but my reservations come from the bias of Mr. Berresford Ellis who is very much pro-Celtic. Patriotism or nationalism can distort one's view of history - who was it that said "the victors write the histories"? Mr. Berresford Ellis is well and truly on the side of the Celtic peoples and seems to consider the Anglo-Saxons more or less 'Nazis'. It must be said that this book is as accurate as you can get without going deeply into the archaeology and it is certainly not an archaeology book. Well worth a book on its own is the discussion taken up in the chapter on "Massacre, Migration or Assimilation". Mr. Berresford Ellis uses emotive words like 'exterminate' and 'annihilate' when talking about the Anglo-Saxon domination of 'England'. As far as he is concerned the Celtic people were either killed or pushed into the western part of the island. It is very difficult to prove that the Anglo-Saxons put into operation a form of 'holocaust' and archaeological evidence can be interpreted in a number of ways. Personally, I am unsure about this scenario and believe the truth may well be somewhere between the extremes. However, this is a discussion well worth continuing.

Another problem with Mr. Berresford Ellis is the way he makes statements without giving the source of the information. Thankfully, this does not happen often. He also put some emphasis on the existence of Cornwall as a kingdom at an early period. I am dubious both of this and the early lordships of Brittany. I feel there is more to learn about both of these areas but I have serious doubts. I am sure that anyone reading this book will find it not only interesting but thought provoking. You may find yourself agreeing with the author's comments or diametrically opposed. The final chapter will certainly be contentious to some people, though what the author says is more or less correct and many of our modern day problems have their roots in the past. However, I feel that we should be looking for the truth in history rather than making a political or nationalistic point. The important question that comes from this publication, if you ignore the anti-English rhetoric, is whether the Anglo-Saxons massacred or assimilated the Romano-British who occupied what is now England.

The Sword and The Grail

Andrew Sinclair

Random House, 1993, £15.99



Here is a fascinating publication written by Andrew Sinclair, who is not only a prolific author of fiction, non-fiction, plays and screenplays but also a direct descendent of characters mentioned in the book. It consists of over 250 pages, more than 80 black and white illustrations and photographs, an appendix, 26 pages of notes (including sources) and an eleven page index.

The Sword and The Grail takes us from Venice to Jerusalem, from northern France to the Orkneys and from Scotland to America. The quest for Andrew Sinclair began at Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh and took him on a voyage of discovery which includes Knights Templar, Freemasons and an expedition across the Atlantic. Most of the events in the book took place in the 13th and 14th centuries culminating in the discovery of America before Columbus.

This book looks at the history of the Templars, their rise to power and their fall from favour. It also chronicles the St. Clair family, which was to take an important part in the establishment of Templars in Scotland after the persecution in France and how Prince Henry St. Clair employed two Venetian traders on a great discovery. In the last decade of the 14th century Henry with Nicolo and Antonio Zeno made trips to western part of the Atlantic and later Antonio was to land in what is today America, more or less one hundred years before Columbus. The evidence seems to be overwhelming.

But what of the Grail? The title of the book is taken from the Templar gravestones which Mr. Sinclair discovered in Scotland, though examples of such stones can be found in many parts of the British Isles (I know of some in my native Wales). The stones often depict an eight armed cross within a disc on the top of a stem leading from a base of steps, accompanied by one of more swords or other symbols. The disc, according to Mr. Sinclair, represents the Grail. He recounts the basic tales written down concerning the Grail and shows the possible relationship between it and the Templars. What is interesting about the origins of the Grail is that, in my opinion, it owes more to France and Spain and, possibly, ultimately the Middle East than it does to Britain. The birth of the Grail stories took place in France - Aquitaine, Champagne, Anjou and Flanders - and concerns the inter-linked families of the nobility. Chretien de Troyes was first patroned by the Duke of Champagne whose wife was Mary daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, possibly one of the most influential women of the 12th century. The link between the Grail and Arthurian tales may owe a lot to Eleanor who had married Henry II of England. But there is even more to the Grail than this - what does the Grail owe to the Templars, the Cathars and Gnostics? Mr. Sinclair goes some way along the trail of the quest for the Grail.

Though this intriguing book is mainly concerned with the St. Clair family and the expedition to the Americas, it does contain some interesting points about the Holy Grail. Despite my own interest being primarily the study of the historical aspects of the Arthurian legend, I found The Sword and The Grail a most fascinating and riveting read.



Gods and Heroes in North Wales: A Mythological Guide

Michael Senior

Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1993, £3.95

Written by Michael Senior, author of a number of fascinating books - Myths of Britain is worth mentioning - Gods and Heroes consists of 92 pages with over 40 black and white photographs and illustrations. This book follows a pattern of looking at the god or hero and then placing the character in the landscape of North Wales.

It begins with Gwydion and friends from the story Math son of Mathonwy in the Mabinogi. Telling the tale of Math, Gwydion, Arianrhod, Lleu, Dylan, Blodeuwedd and Gronw, Mr. Senior looks for sites connected with these characters and a series mostly around the west coast and the Cynfal Valley. Of particular interest is the newly re-discovered Llech Ronw - a slab that Gronw

used as a shield to deflect Lleu's spear. It spear, according to the story, went straight through the slab and Gronw.

From pure legend to Magnus Maximus - the Macsen Wledig of Welsh tradition. Here we see the beginning of the blending of myth and history. Following this Mr. Senior looks at Ambrosius Aurelianus and Vortigern with such sites as Dinas Emrys (Ambrosius's City), the Eliseg's Pillar and Nant Gwytheryn, named after Vortigern. This mixing of fact and fiction continues with Taliesin and Maelgwn, both of whom were real persons but grew into legends. At this point we are taken to Lake Bala, Cardigan Bay, Degannwy and Llanrhos. Moving on Mr. Senior returns to less historical Merlin and, once again, Dinas Emrys.

The final chapter is entitled Brân and the Holy Grail and takes us from Harlech to Anglesey and on to Llangollen in Clwyd. Brân is the giant king of Ynys Prydein and brother of Branwen. He is also, by some, believed to be the origin of the Fisher King in the Grail legends. In the Didot Perceval the Fisher King is called Bron and in certain medieval stories the Holy Grail has connections with 'Chastiel Bran' - Castell Dinas Brân situated overlooking the town of Llangollen. Linked with this same area is St. Collen who also connected with Glastonbury, another Grail site.

Overall this is a nicely written and well illustrated little book - another success for Gwasg Carreg Gwalch. (If you are interested in other books published by this company contact Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Capel Garmon, Llanrwst, Gwynedd, Wales or telephone 0690 710261.)



THEMES: AN INVITATION TO YOU TO WRITE FOR PENDRAGON

It has been our policy over the years to invite articles on specific themes and to publish a journal under that title when enough material comes in. This is a good way to focus ideas and it allows a spectrum of views and approaches to be expressed. We are suggesting three themes and invite all readers to submit material for these. Where no obvious theme runs through material submitted we shall title the magazine in a more arbitrary way - so that our baby has a name. This issue is titled EXCALIBUR in this way.

Suggested themes:

1. TINTAGEL: Arthur's legendary birthplace. Charles Thomas's new book in the *English Heritage* series (Batsford) needs reviewing and surveys the whole field
2. THE WISE FOOL: The hero's growth from innocence through experience: Perceval, Arthur, Lancelot, Merlin.
3. ARTHUR MY NEIGHBOUR: Local sites, folklore, associations, etc.

Copy should be sent by mid September if possible.



Pendragon



★ MEDIA & PERFORMANCE

Guinevere: Bless me if Laurel Phelan didn't turn up on *Clive Anderson Talks Back*, Ch.4, June 4th, which I missed while out on a walk with my Questing Beast. Tony Chamberlaine Brothers tells me she revealed that her hubby was 'Duke' Arthur and she was no 'Queen'. That is probably why she pronounced her name as 'Gunifer'. Sounds a bit like *Guys and Dolls*, which brings me from a Canadian at the court of Duke Arthur to :

A Connecticut Yankee: This musical version of Mark Twain's *A Yank at the Court of King Arthur* opened at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park on July 27th; music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart. (Take a mac., a cushion and a flask of coffee).

Box Office : 071-486 2431/1933.

Beyond the Border: The First Wales International Festival of Storytelling was held on Sat. 26th June at St. Donat's Castle, Llantwit Major. Twelve hours of fables & myths, riddles & jokes, fairy tales, ghost stories and leg-ends. Plus a late-night ceilidh in the Big Top, and...Robin Williamson himself. Sorry, I couldn't let you know in time.

See you there next year?

Glastonbury Zodiac Video: If you missed getting a copy of member Mary Caine's video you can still order it from:

Heritage Films, 32 Elgin Avenue, Harold Park, Romford, Essex RM3 0YT. £16.99 (incl.p&p), cheque to 'Heritage Films'. (An article about the zodiac by Mary appeared in *Pendragon* XXI/2.)

★ TAPES & MUSIC

There is a great richness of recorded sound available by musicians with Celtic backgrounds and sympathies.

Sain Cymru: Wales's major recording company, their A4 catalogue lists solo performers, groups, choirs, folk-music, harp and guitar, hymn-singing, carols: in Welsh and English. Also courses for learning Welsh.

Sain Recordings, Canalfon Sain, Llandwrog, Caernarvon, Gwynedd, Wales, LL54 5TG.

The Music Suite: An 'alternative music company'. A much smaller list but *Celtic Dreaming* is by Mark Robson (described as an Australian Celt) and *Glastonbury Grail Meditations* may be of interest. You can buy a sample tape to get a feel of their work.

The Music Suite Ltd., Cenarth, Newcastle Emlyn, Dyfed, SA38 9JN. Their logo resembles the Nanteos Cup. (*Pendragon* XVIII/3, 1987)

Mary McLaughlin: Singer-songwriter. *Daughter of Lir* (tape), ten lovely songs, £6.99 + 50p.

Mary McLaughlin, 248a Drakefell Rd., London, SE4 2DR.

Med. Goodall: A highly acclaimed series: *Druid*; *Merlin*; *Excalibur*. Instruments include mandolin, fiddles, skin drums, pan pipes and bell trees. Each tape costs £7.50.

Order from: Pilgrim by Post, 48 Culver St., Newent, Glos., GL18 1DA. (0531-821075). Ask for catalogue.

The Spirit of Celtia: This is Courtney Davis's company, they stock tapes by Philip le Breton, including *A Knight's Destiny*

Courtney's artwork on the wrappers. Lists: Spirit of Celtia Ltd., 3 Rodden Row, Abbotsbury, Dorset, DT3 4JL Tel. (0308) 871828.

Network Cassettes: *The Green Man*, by William Anderson (author of the book of that name), *Gaia & the Rebirth of Nature*, by Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. Tapes are £5 each (incl.p&p).

Wrekin Trading Co., Keepers Cottage, 14 Upton Rd., Clevelode, Worcs., WR13 6PB.

Anne Lister: An enchanting CD album, *Spreading Rings*. Songs from Wales to Tintagel, including a setting of *The Lady of Shalott*. Cassette. (incl.p&p) £6.50.

Anne Lister, 34 Nightingale House, Thomas More St., London, E1 9UA (071-481-3619)..

Alan Stivel: Described as 'this unique Celtic troubadour'. *Live in Dublin and Trema'n Inis*. Dreyfus labels, widely available or from: Projection Records, Crewkerne, Somerset.

★ ARTS & CRAFTS

Excalibur - The Wilkinson Sword: Philips & Keatman, in association with Wilkinson Sword, have launched their magnum opus; quote: 'to raise public awareness and interest in the discovery of the historical King Arthur'. Wilkinsons have issued a coloured brochure to advertise the sword, which is based on a Roman *spatha*. It has an etched blade and the handle is plated with 23 carat gold. The issue price is £495 but I was offered a discount to members, to £450, if 5 or more are ordered together. Then Geoff Dando sent me a cutting from the *Birmingham Sunday Mercury*. It offers the sword at £399 to its readers, and contains a cut-out coupon. Wondering why Birmingham should be so favoured, I rang Wilkinson's to question this discrepancy and they now quote me £395.

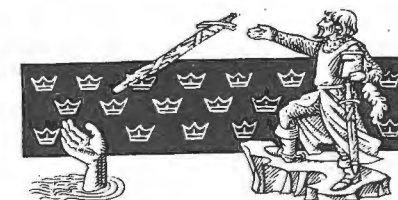
The brochure is interesting, even if the sword is a teeny bit expensive.

Wilkinson's Sword Ltd., 11-13 Brunel Rd., London, W3 7UH. (081-749 1061).

They also do a miniature of the sword, 9" long, at £75 it would make a lovely letter opener!.

Swords of Legend: These are for those people who extend role-play into physical enactment. This firm make 'superior quality replica latex weapons': bows, crossbows, daggers, maces, axes, shields and, of course, *Weaponmaster Swords*. (And I thought they were all supermacho types!). Send an SAE for free catalogue of whole range:

414 Cog Lane, Burnley, Lancs, BB11 5JP: (0282)411104.



Black Dragon Crafts: Hand made leather goods with Celtic designs: pendants, wristbands, keyrings, pouches, clocks and stools. Commissions welcomed.

Bryn Talog, Pencader, Dyfed, Wales, SA39 9BL. (0559) 384624.

Simant Bostock - 'Spirit of the Ancestors': 'Sculpture inspired by our pre-Celtic and Celtic heritage', goddesses, gods, power-animals, crosses, etc. Simant also has a comprehensive photo library of sites 'from Carnac to Callanish'. Slides and prints are available at reasonable prices. Send SAE for catalogues:

24 Northload Street, Glastonbury, BA6 9JJ. (0458)833267.

Robin Hood Chess Set: 'A supreme example of miniature art'. 32 pieces at £4.75 (+75p) each piece. This miniature set is handmade in pewter and is very charming. Not available in shops. Colour booklet:

The Witely Collection, Freepost, Malvern, Worcs., WR14 1BR.

Jarracraft Studio: Produces a range of reconstituted stone sculptures 'inspired by the ancient Pictish culture' and stocked in museums throughout

Scotland. Copies of the Aberlemno, Bullion and Glamis crosses are available. Illustrated lists from:

Garson House, Stromness, Orkney, Scotland, KW16 3JU (0856)851320. Stoneline Designs: Marianna Lines's Edinburgh based workshop 'where Pictish and Celtic art inspires a range of fashion accessories'. T-shirts, jerseys, silk scarves, ties, cushions, tiles, fabrics and wall-hangings. Also greetings cards and postcards.

Catalogue: 8b, St.Vincent St., Edinburgh, EH3 6SH, Scotland.

Heraldic Playing Cards: Gilt-edged with high quality heraldic designs. £12.95 (incl.p&p). Free brochure:

Heraldic Times, 79 Northgate, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1BAOT.

TOURS & VISITS

Bosworth Medieval Fayre: A two-day event, Saturday & Sunday, August 14th, 15th: Sat. 11-6 & Sunday 10-5 p.m. Traditional handmade crafts sold by Medieval-dressed artists. Member Ed.Org (advert on inside back cover) will be there with his fine prints. Also, medieval entertainment: knights in combat, the Bosworth Bowmen and *The Right Royal Revels*, a group who perform Arthurian Theatre (Ed. tells me they are good).

The Great Orme-Llandudno:

Underground tours of Bronze Age Mining Centre. Current Archaeology (Aug.92): 'the most pre-eminent site of its type in the world.' Audio-visual presentation. Not a bad spot to be in to enjoy an educational visit. You can take a tram up onto the Orme and ski down afterwards. March-Oct. 10.0 - 5.0.

Great Orme Mines Ltd., Great Orme, Llandudno, Gwynedd, LL30 2XG. (0492)870447.

Magical Britain Tour: Organised by Gothic Image. 8-24th Sept. Round all the major sites of mainland Britain. High-grade hotels and the company of Geoffrey Ashe, Marian Bradley, Paul Devereux, Caitlin Matthews, John Michell, etc. £1,750.

Details: Gothic Image Tours, 7

High St., Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9DP (0458)831453.

The Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales: This is being held this year at the site of the Royal Welsh Show at Llanellwedd (Builth) during the first week of August. Details: (0222)76777.

Three Pilgrim Routes: The June Celtica leaflet describes three routes, ideal for walking, that give an experience of visiting sites connected with the Welsh saints: To St.Davids, to Bardsey Island and to St.Winefride's Well.

Wales Tourist Board, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd., Cardiff, CF2 1UX (0222)499909.

Martin Randall Travel: High class archaeological, historical, art and musical tours from London, with lecturers. Includes: Lands of the Teutonic Knights; The Road to Santiago; Pilgrimage & Heresy (Languedoc). For 84 page brochure write: 10 Barley Mow Passage, London, W4P 4PH (081)742 3355. At least you can enjoy the pictures!



Robin Hood Country Our other legendary hero seems to deserve our attention, so if you want to seek him out this summer, here's some information: *The Tales of Robin Hood*, 30-38 Maid Marian Way, Nottingham NG1 6GF (0602)483284; *Annual Robin Hood Pageant*, Oct. 28-31. (0602) 470661; *Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre*, Edwinstowe, Notts., NG21 9HN (0623)824490. *Annual Robin Hood*

Festival there: 2-8 Aug.

* GAMES & ROLE PLAY

Beaumains: We now exchange with this Arthurian role-play journal. Gareth Jones, its editor, also runs a postal Games Emporium and he can advise you and obtain games such as *Excalibur* (Wotan) and *Camelot*, as well as the Chaosium *Pendragon* material. For a catalogue write to:

Oberon Mole, 69 Atherley Road, Shirley, Southampton, SO1 5DT (0703) 335950. He had a few *Kingdom* games in stock when I spoke to him recently.

Brittania: In their book Phillips & Keatman include 4 illustrations which they attribute to the research into Arthurian weaponry, clothing & modes of warfare of the Arthurian age by Dan Shadrake of the above-named group. *Brittania* is referred to as an Essex-based re-enactment society. Can any member find out more about them for us?

* EXCHANGE JOURNALS

We have reviewed the magazines on our exchange list and you will find that some have been replaced by new titles. This is not a pejorative judgement about those we have now left off, we are trying to match those that share our defined areas of interest more closely. There seem to be two reasons for exchanging: to share these common interests and to attract new members: otherwise receiving them is merely a perk for the editor and an expense on the membership subscriptions.

Simon Rouse is doing cover illustrations for *Celtic Connections* and *Beaumains* has agreed to swap Arthurian articles. *Tradition* is likely to appeal to anyone who enjoys our folk heritage. All three have memberships that include those with a strong interest in things Arthurian.

To illustrate my point:

1. Extract from a letter in *Beaumains*: 'did you know that there was an Arthurian magazine called "Pendragon". I kid you not. I don't know what it's like, but as I found it in a pagan based

magazine (I'm not) it's likely to be about the pagan sites of Arthurian legend, etc. Might be worth a look.'

This about a Society that has existed for 34 years!

2. Extract from the Matthews's *Newsletter*: 'The *Pendragon Society*, (is) our longest running Arthurian society. We have been members for many years and have enjoyed being part of a broad forum of many interests; its heart is in the right place and its members are enthusiastic and fun to be with.' Which one would you choose as a testimonial?



* NEWS OF MEMBERS

Steve Hounsom: Steve sent us an amusing article from the *Southampton Advertiser*. On April 1st that paper carried news from a local archaeologist claiming that the city was Camelot. The local traders joined in with their adverts, one firm offered low prices on beds for tired knights. The MP for Southampton Itchen, John Denham, entered into the joke and tried to pull *Excalibur* from its stone, without success. The contact name for a bogus Arthurian exhibition was 'Olaf Pilor' (think about it!).

Chris Thornborrow: Chris runs a group in Edinburgh called *Avalon-myth re-creation*. Some of his members have recently re-jigged our publicity leaflet, bringing it up-to-date in print style and layout and they have sent us masters to copy these for distribution. Thank you Avalonians.

Chris also reports that the group have secured an award of £1,000 to make a film this summer about

Arthurian Lore in Scotland. He promises to keep us informed. Congratulations and best wishes, Chris. I for one, can't wait to hear more.

Tony Court: Tony keeps a store at Princetown on Dartmoor. He says the area draws many people with an interest in myth and legend. With the help of the local history club he is setting up a display with a Bronze and Iron age theme along with legends, etc. He also hopes to instal an indoor pool with a Lady of the Lake theme. If you are in the area do call in and tell Tony you belong to Pendragon: he writes: 'perhaps I can offer a free pasty to any member who calls in at the shop!'

No, Deirdre, Tony won't send yours by post so don't ask.

★ A FOR ARTHUR

Members who have joined us recently may not be aware of this publication, referred to by Pamela Constantine in her letter. This 20 page booklet, is an account of the formation of the Pendragon Society in 1959 and its early activities. Written mainly by its founder, Jess Foster, it tells the absorbing story of her efforts in the early days and leads to the famous digs at Cadbury Castle in the late 60's, which would probably never have taken place but for her drive and initiative. *A for Arthur* is a must for new members, and older ones who never had a copy or have lost it. It is available for £1 (including p&p). Another *Pendragon* booklet which is available is a reprint of the first four editions of the Society newsheet in the 1960s, when the Society was centered in Bristol and members looked forward to the summer 'dig' at Cadbury. This, too, is available for £1.

★ MAY DAY

Did you see the eight foot Talking Tree on t.v. on May 1st? He was interviewed in Parliament Square as, bristling with rage, he voiced his disapproval of the Government's intention to do away with our oldest traditional holiday in favour of a day when we whopped the French in battle. *Mad*

Jack's Dancers from Hastings and *The Loose Women* from Maidstone nodded their approval vigorously before leaping high in the air in an attempt to restore vitality to the Houses of Parliament and their occupants.

But Green Jack had the final word... 'remember what happened to Oliver Cromwell? He tried to abolish May Day... and his head ended up on London Bridge!'

★ CROP CIRCLES

The first major conference on crop circles was held in London on June 27th. The two major questions examined were, One-how are the circles and patterns made? Two-what are they communicating to us about the nature of reality and life?

Jim Schnabel has no doubts about the answer to the first question. His book *Physicists, Poltergeists, Pranksters & the Secret History of the Cropwatchers* reviews the theories then he reveals that he has been one of the hoaxers himself. He claims that the garden roller is the moving finger that writes and then moves on through the cornfields of England. It must be fun making dumbbells, phoenixes, whales, insectogrammes and snails in the dark but I think I should warn you about hanging about in cornfields. The illustration shows a Polevik, a Russian corn-spirit who guards the crops by strangling intruders. Better take a shotgun with your lawn mower tonight.



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Publication date for next issue, November 1st. Copy should be submitted by October 1st.

Rates: £12 per page and pro rata, minimum 1/4 page. Copy of journal with advert inserted: £1 extra.

Reduced rates for Society members: £8 page and pro rata. These rates are for camera-ready copy on A4 size paper reducing to A5 format. Line drawings accepted but photographs should be submitted already screened.

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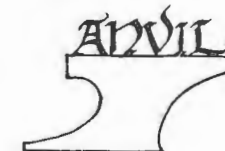
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Journal of the
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THE PENDRAGON SOCIETY WAS FOUNDED AT WINCHESTER IN 1959
TO STIMULATE INTEREST IN KING ARTHUR AND THE MATTER OF
BRITAIN.

The Society has always adopted a holistic view: archaeological, historical, cultural and artistic approaches – past, present and future – are valued as complementary and mutually informing.

Projects sponsored by the Society have included:

Archaeological digs at Cadbury Castle in Somerset and on the Gower Peninsula in Wales; aerial photography, tracing ancient trackways and surveys. Currently we are considering the formation of an Arthurian enactment and story-telling group.

Members have always been free to follow their own lines of research (e.g. Celtic Saints, British mythology, the Holy Grail, earth patterns, local folklore, etc., and the Society Journal, *PENDRAGON*, reflects these wide interests. The work of some of our members is known both nationally and internationally (historians, archaeologists, artists and writers) but all members are encouraged to contribute news, articles, book reviews, letters, artwork, etc to the journal.

