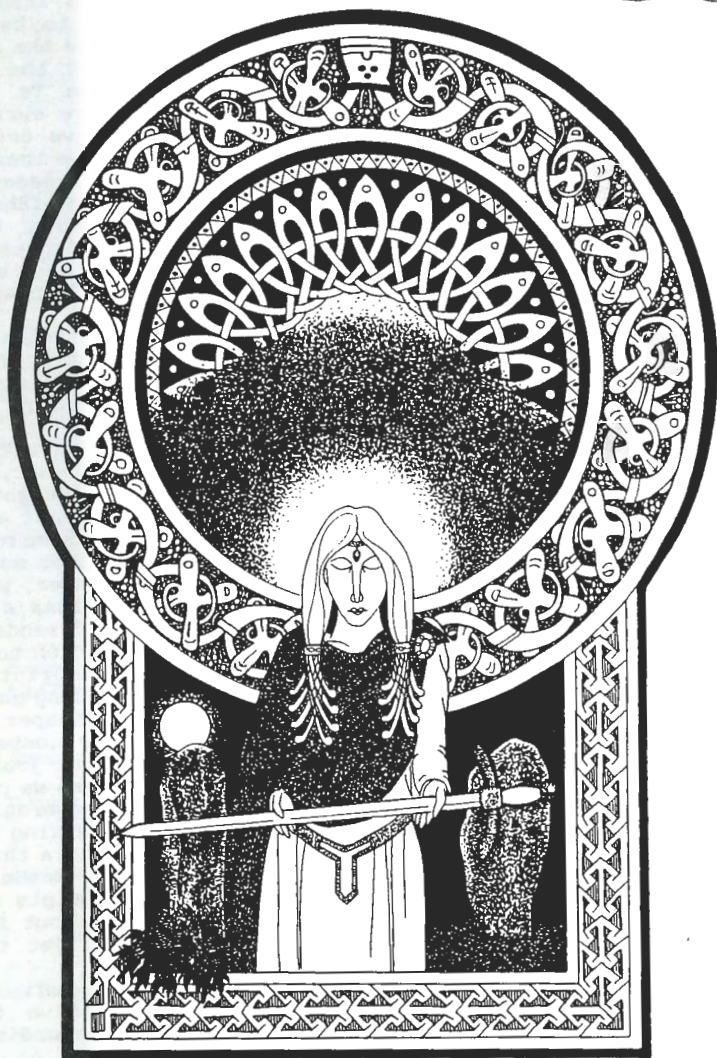


# pendragon



No. xxiii/4

Autumn 1993

# EDITORIAL

Three months have gone by and another *Pendragon* comes to woo you away from housework, gardening, cleaning the car and other distractions and take you on a journey of imagination in the company of a band of fellow Arthurian addicts (or 'freaks' as one member put it in a letter recently).

Our theme is 'Mysteries', a title which suggested itself when a pattern began to emerge in what seemed at first to be a random collection of articles. Some of them obviously fitted the dictionary definitions of 'hidden or inexplicable matter' but the secondary meanings began to make sense, too. My own article is about the 'mystery' of a craft, an old use of the word. We are surrounded by mysteries all our lives and our inquiring minds have developed by trying to answer questions and explain the seemingly inexplicable. We can use computers but how they can present us with Rosemary's vivid game of Arthurian role play is a true mystery, and the Llanelen Group are exercised after twenty years, trying to explain the human activities that took place long ago from the small evidences that they have discovered. Long live mystery: the cryptic, curious, enigmatic, hidden, conjectural, perplexing, veiled, unknown, ... 'Unknown a grave for Arthur.'

And that is our next theme. There has been a good response to our suggested theme: Arthur my Neighbour. We have Arthurs of the West Midlands, of Lancashire, Cornwall, Shropshire and Wales already. Perhaps we shall find that grave yet, then the Glastonians will have something to write about!

Thanks for all your letters, I feel I know so many of you already. We are planning some meetings and activities for next year, starting with a 'Pentecost Moot', I hope - Arthur and his Knights met at Camelot each year, you will recall, at Pentecost, to feast and cement their Fellowship at the Round Table... also to witness some mysterious happening which would lead to some new Quest for one or more of the knights. More news of these plans next time and, remember, your ideas are very welcome, we've had some exciting suggestions already.

Our thanks to several members for recruiting friends, we have credited them with an extra journal on their subscription to show our gratitude. With VAT almost certain to add to our future printing costs after November we shall have to explore ways of continuing our present level of service. The more magazines we print the cheaper the rate becomes, so increased membership is the best way to combat rising costs; otherwise it must be less pages per issue, three journals for the present subs., or a rise in our subscription. Unless we can find a millionaire 'sugar daddy', of course! The annual membership fee to join the Fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur at the Great Halls at Tintagel is £40, by the way, if you are thinking of joining them, but you will get a Certificate of Membership on parchment. Which reminds me, we shall not send out receipts for subs. paid by cheque in future, you'll get the slip with your following magazine. This will enable us to pay for a bubble jet cartridge instead.

Finally, a well-earned compliment from Kate Pollard:

"I think the Society is extremely lucky to have Simon as illustrator. His work is not only very good but it coordinates the magazine most wonderfully"...

Simon is also a good colleague to have around: always friendly, calm, willing and flexible; it's high time someone out there began to take a note of just how good his work is.



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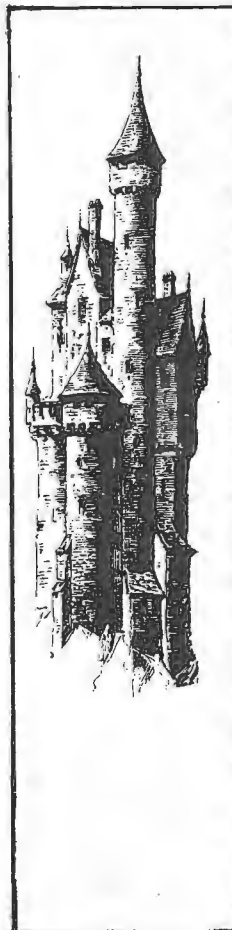
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# The Celtic Goddess of Sovereignty Caitlin Matthews

## SONG OF THE GRAILLESS LANDS

*Attend and hear unto my story,  
Of how the Grailless lands were healed,  
How every hill and every valley  
With joy surpassing pain was filled.*

*Chorus: We'll ask the question, and find  
the answer;  
And all the lands shall be as one!*

*A Knight there came with spear so greivous  
The lands were wasted the waters chained,  
The Grailless lands fell into shadow  
But comes a day when the Grail is gained.*

*Within this land is no tree leafy,  
The meadows withered, the fountains dumb.  
But from the mountains unto the valleys,  
A knight with piercing voice shall come.*

*There is an ever-living lady  
Who guards the deep places of the earth.  
She guards the gates of death and living,  
She guards the gates which give us birth.*

*And where she bides, the wells are empty,  
The birds sing not, the waters hide.  
Yet comes the knight who frees the waters  
Then will she sing and be his bride.*

Caitlin Matthews

## Part One: GRAIL MAIDEN AND LOATHLY LADY.

In an age when the Divine Feminine is coming to the forefront it is perhaps appropriate that two of the primal figures of the Grail legends should be derived from the Celtic Goddess of Sovereignty. I speak of the empowering figures of the Grail Maiden who appears as one of the Grail procession in the earliest of the medieval Grail texts *Le Conte du Graal* and the Hideous Damsel whose function we will speak of presently. First of all let us meet the Grail Maiden:

"A damsel who came with the youths and was fair and attractive and beautifully adorned, held in both hands a grail. Once she had entered with this grail that she held, so great a radiance appeared that the candles lost their brilliance just as the stars do at the rising of the sun or moon." (1)

We note that the Grail Maiden carries 'a grail' not the Grail in this version, and that there is no sense of it being a liturgical vessel.

In contrast to her is the Hideous Damsel who accosts Perceval after he has witnessed the Grail Procession but fails to answer the Grail Question:

"Blacker were her face and her two hands than the blackest iron covered with pitch; and her hue was not more frightful than her form. High cheeks she had, and a face lengthened downwards, and a short nose with distended nostrils. And one eye was of a piercing mottled grey and the other was as black as jet, deepsunk in her head. And her teeth were long and yellow, more yellow were they than the flower of the broom. And her stomach rose from the breastbone, higher

than her chin. And her back was in the shape of a crook, and her legs were large and bony. And her figure was very thin and spare, except her feet and her legs, which were of huge size." (2)

She immediately berates Perceval for not asking the Grail Question and for causing the king to remain wounded when it lay in his power to change things.

These two women, so very different and yet both so dedicated to the service of the Grail, appear in many different forms throughout the texts. Sometimes they are named, as in *Morte D'Arthur* where we learn that the Grail Maiden is Elaine of Carbonek. It is she who becomes the destined mother of Galahad, by Lancelot who disenchant Elaine and lies with her under the impression that he sleeps with Guinevere. The Hideous Damsel is seldom identified, except in *Parzival* where she is called Kundrie. Wolfram makes her ugly beyond measure, yet wise beyond all earthly sages.

Yet whichever version of the story we read, their function is clear: the Grail Maiden presents the vessel of regeneration, manifesting it, making it available for use; the Black Maiden admonishes the Grail knight for not persevering in his quest, compelling and spurring him on to greater feats of achievement.

These twin guardians of the quest are sometimes further subdivided, as is the way with medieval texts, into numerous damsels who carry treasures, guard special weapons or else become women who have been raped, dispossessed or widowed. The quest for the Grail is greatly prolonged as the knights find and win these special treasures which are then wielded to protect or



avenge the dispossessed women they meet along the way. Whence do these women derive? Why are they so particularly associated with the Grail legends? What is their message for us?



There are many Celtic correlatives to the Grail legends. It is therefore not surprising that the Grail Maiden and the Hideous Damsel should find both their derivation within that tradition, since feminine archetypes preponderate in the Celtic world.

#### GODDESS OF SOVEREIGNTY

One of the key figures in Celtic myth is the Goddess of Sovereignty, the Goddess of the Land and its embodiment. She is a pivotal figure to the Grail legends and also the very epicentre of the Arthurian legends themselves. She has been largely overlooked or ignored as peripheral to the main story by many scholars, but I believe hers is a crucial role to our understanding of the Grail.

The Goddess of Sovereignty arises directly out of the Celtic traditions of kingship. She is the empowering goddess in whose gift lies the land. Whoever aspires to rule the land must encounter her and pass her tests. Sovereignty appears in many of the king-making legends of Ireland. In each of these, two factors are consistent: Sovereignty always appears in two guises. She appears as a Mistress of Changing, as well as one who offers the drink of her cup, to the one who champions her. To give us some idea of her functions and appearances, I'll tell you a story:

"Once, back before the times

that were before this time, there lived a king called Eochaid Muigmedon. He was blessed with four sons by his queen Mongfind. Yet he also had a concubine called Cairenn Casdubh, a captive from Alba. Now Cairenn conceived a child by Eochaid and, for fear of the jealousy of the queen, she gave birth to her son beside a secret well. She called him Niall. But Mongfind soon discovered the truth of the matter and she sent Cairenn into slavery. Cairenn had to choose between taking her son into slavery with her, which would not be fitting as he was of royal blood, or of abandoning him. With a full heart, she left him by the well and commended him into the care of the elements.

He was found by a wandering poet, Torna Eces, who fostered the boy until he was nine years old. Torna presented the boy at court and all could see by his long golden hair whose child he was. King Eochaid was glad to acknowledge his son and received him into his embrace. "What should your first deed be?" asked his father. "To bring my mother out of slavery and clothe her in the royal purple," declared Niall and so it was done.

Now the time approached when Eochaid should appoint his tanaiste - his successor. (Now in Ireland, as in Britain at that time, it was not the eldest son of a king who succeeded to the kingdom, but the most suitable member of the king's family.) And so it was decided to send all five boys to the druid and prophet, Sithchenn, who practised smithcraft. He set the boys to work for him, testing them in many subtle ways. And it was not clear to him which boy was the most apt for the kingship. So, by the force of his magical skills, he set his smithy on fire and calling to the boys to fetch out everything that was within, he stood ready. They rushed into the flaming smithy. The eldest, Brian, brought out a chariot that was being repaired, (that one considers only of what others may think, Sithchenn said to himself). The second boy, Fiachra, brought out a vat of beer, (and that one thinks only of his stomach); the third boy, Ailill, brought some weapons (that

one has some sense, but he is no king, said Sithchenn to himself) and the fourth, Fergus, brought out a bunch of kindling, (and that one has no brain whatever) but Niall rushed in and brought out the anvil, the tongs, bellows and hammers. "My son", said Sithchenn, "my judgement falls upon you since you alone have thought to rescue the tools of the smith's craft without which he could make nothing. Go to your father with my judgement."

And so the boys returned to Eochaid, but Mongfind was dissatisfied that none of her sons had brought home the kingship. "Let them be tested again", she said. And off they went to Sithchenn once more. He armed each lad as a man and sent them off hunting to see how they would fare, a day and a night in the wild forest. They killed a boar and set up a fire but they could find no water. They decided to go off and forage for water in turns while the others kept up the fire. Fergus went first and after a while returned, scowling. His brothers could not coax the story from him. Then Brian, Fiachra and Ailill went and returned pale, angry and disconsolate.

Finally, Niall went, hoping for better fortune, for he and his brothers needed water for their very lives, not having drunken since morning. Searching through the wild forest, Niall found a clearing, and in the clearing a well. Standing before it was the most hideous hag he had ever seen. Every joint and limb of her was black as coal. Like the tail of a wild horse was the grey bristly mane that came through the crown of her head. Her smile was a sickle of green teeth, stretching from ear to ear. Her eyes were piggy black points in her head, her nose spread over her face. She was scrawny, crooked and diseased. She went on bony shanks with knotted knees and ankles, her nails were green. It would be true to say this hag was hideous.

"Good woman, may I have water from this well?" asked Niall. That depends whether you are like your brothers or not. All who wish to drink of this well must kiss my cheek", I will do that and more",

said Niall, and he not only kissed her but lay with her also, ugly as she was.

But when he saw what lay in his arms, he was astonished. The most beautiful maiden in the world looked dull beside her. She was white as the last snow in a hollow. Her arms were full and queenly, her fingers long and slender, her legs straight and gleaming. On her feet were shoes of white bronze. A mantle of purple was about her, fastened by a silver morse. Her teeth were pearls, her eyes large and queenly, her lips red as rowan berries.

In some astonishment Niall asked, "Woman you are fair, who are you?"

"King of Tara, I am Sovereignty. Your descendants shall be over every clan because of this day." And she bade him drink of the well and made him promise to give none to his brothers until they had sworn allegiance to him. And so Niall did. For he had seen her, the Goddess of Sovereignty herself, horrible at first and afterwards lovely: for so too is the reign of kings, most often won by war and slaughter but afterwards glorious. Or so the songs tell it... (3)



That story shows Sovereignty's role most clearly: she alone determines who shall be king, who shall rule her land. And yet that the candidate is determined by his own actions - his willingness to embrace the kingdom exactly as it was - warts and all - is implicit in his embracing of the hag. We shall also



see two faces of Sovereignty which are reflected in the Grail Maiden and the Hideous Damsel. The hag-aspect of Sovereignty warns off the unwary and the unprepared while the maiden aspect gives to drink of her well.

But the feature of this story which readers of the Grail legends are not prepared for is the fact that Niall actually sleeps with the hag-aspect of Sovereignty. While this may seem shockingly at odds with the Grail cycle at first glance, in fact, there are direct correlatives in the medieval stories. For we are dealing here with the non-dual Celtic tradition. Just as the Celtic cauldrons not only dispense food as well as spiritual blessings and wisdom, so too the Celtic Grail-Goddess gives one and the same empowerment as the Grail itself. This understanding is crucial to our modern use of the Grail legends for we have been all too used to thinking of the Grail as 'something unattainable out there'. This is a dangerous syndrome which puts our feet upon misleading paths. There is a duality implicit within the later Grail legends which strays away from the earlier holistic story.

One of the most important incidents in Perceval's story is the 'Blood in the Snow' episode. Having searched long in the wilderness and met many adventures, Perceval is transfixed by a strange sight: a wild hawk kills a duck and brings it down in the snow, a raven settles upon the body and starts to scavenge. It is the colours which transfixes him: the blackness of the raven, the whiteness of the snow, the redness of the blood. He falls into a mystical trance from which only the courteous and far-seeing Gawain can lead him. Perceval's vision has been of the 'woman he loves best' - and, as he is a virgin knight, this must betoken the unearthly, interior woman which all men have. This, for Perceval is the Grail vision.

The three colours which he sees are directly linked with the Goddess of Sovereignty herself, who appears in many guises but whose symbolic colours are the white of

maidenliness, the red of queenship and the black of the cailleach. These colours are also symbolic of the three kinds of draught which can be found in Sovereignty's cup. For she offers the white milk of fostering, the red wine of lordship and the black drink of forgetting.

Similarly we find, in Parzival an interesting incident in which Feirefitz, the piebald half-brother of Parzival, beholds the Grail Maiden, Repanse de Schoy for the first time. (Significantly meaning "Fullness of Love".) The company are seated and she enters, bearing the Graal, and serves the company from the holy vessel. Feirefitz is entranced by her beauty and charmed at the mysterious way all the cups on the table are miraculously charged with liquid.

Then said the fair Anfortas who sat by the heathen's side,

Seest thou not the Graal before thee? But Feirefitz replied:

'Naught I see but a green Achmardi (emerald) that my lady now did bear.' (4)

He cannot see the Grail at all but is stricken with love for the Grail-Maiden. He asks what he has to do to win her love. The old Grail guardian, Titurel, judges that Feirefitz's inability to see the Grail stems from his being a pagan and that baptism will rectify matters, as well as making him a suitable suitor for Repanse de Schoy. Feirefitz is baptised from the Grail itself and subsequently marries the Grail-Maiden, becoming the father of Prester John.

It would be simplistic to overstate Wolfram's view: that pagans perceive the Grail-bearer but Christians the Grail itself, yet there is a level at which this is valid. For both Perceval and Feirefitz in these early medieval Grail stories, there is no duality in their quest; they perceive the spiritual benefits of the Grail through a figure who represents Sovereignty: for them her gifts and her love are one and the same.

In the embrace of the Grail Maiden or the transformed Hideous Maiden, the Grail knights remain true to

the purpose of their quest - to bring healing to the world.

The Goddess of Sovereignty very firmly points to the fundamental problem of how to set out on the Grail quest. There is no holy glittering vessel 'out there' - the quest must begin with love. If the quester is personally unbalanced, not whole, then the rest of the quest has got to be spent getting that right. This is one of the paramount problems of the New Age - it is easy to make decisions to help heal the world, it is less easy to fulfill them. Indeed, it is impossible, if a dual vision is pursued: the 'I will heal the world' syndrome which begins in someone else's backyard, never one's own. The Grail-quest means change and that change has first to be a personal metanoia - a change of heart.

This is why the Grail Question lies in the gift of the Goddess of Sovereignty, for she is the Mistress of Changing, and in her vessel is the bountiful love for all creatures who are hurt.

We may aspire to the Grail, but we will not gain it unless we first tackle the causes of our wasteland - a state for which we are all responsible, whether we speak of the pollution of our earth or of that less tractable condition - the wasteland of the spirit, the garden which we have not tended.

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- (1) Chretien de Troyes "Arthurian Romances", transl. D.D.R. Owen, Everyman, 1987.
- (2) "Mabinogion" transl. Lady C. Guest, Ballantyne Press, 1910.
- (3) "Arthur & the Sovereignty of Britain" Caitlin Matthews, Arkana, 1989.
- (4) *ibid.*

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(We are very grateful to Caitlin for allowing us to print this article, which is extracted from her current work, the 'Elucidation.' The second part will be printed in our next edition.

The illustration on page 4 is by Courtney Davis and we thank him for his generosity in allowing us to present the hag aspect of Sovereignty so vividly to accompany Caitlin's

re-telling of the story of Niall.

A cassette by Caitlin is available, titled 'The Waters of Life / The Celtic Goddess,' from The Wrekin Trading Co., Keeper's Cottage, 114 Upton Rd., Clevedon, Worcs, WR13 5PB. Cassette No. W197, price £5.25 + 50p for p.p)

## GUARDIAN OF SOULS



A report in The Independent newspaper (Saturday 28th August, 1993) makes both fascinating reading and gives much food for thought. Archaeologists of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, led by David Miles and Simon Palmer, funded by W.H. Smith, have made some interesting suggestions about the famous White Horse of Uffington in Oxfordshire. A survey has shown that the area was being used for ritual purposes, mainly burials, as far back as 3,500 B.C. But what makes this place even more interesting is that not only does it show evidence of the Early Bronze Age but also Roman-British and Anglo-Saxon burials. It looks as if the White Horse was a sort of guardian of souls. Though it is believed that the horse itself was carved during the Iron Age, there is very little evidence of burials from this period. The dead of the Iron Age seem to have been rarely buried. However, the discovery of 80-100 Romano British graves from the third to fourth century AD and sixth century Anglo-Saxon burials is intriguing. To add to this, it can be shown that a Christian chapel was built in the fourth or fifth century on what is now called Dragon Hill. Since Christianity must have been extremely rare amongst the Anglo-Saxons at this period, it must be surmised that it was a British chapel. Were they trying to Christianise this obviously important pagan ritual centre?

Charles Evans-Günther



# The Twentieth year of Llanelen Kate Polgard

I thought that I would update Pendragon readers on the continuing work of writing the Llanelen Dig Final Reports. The Llanelen project is the Pendragon Society's longest running one so far. Although many members of the Society have been involved in the actual dig, much of the later work which has followed the ending of the excavation itself has had to be carried on 'in the wings'. For this reason some of us who have taken a major role in the Dig split away to concentrate on it. We called ourselves the Llanelen Research Committee for reasons of identification in the world of archaeology. Because of the time scale that has been involved newer members of the Society may not have heard about Llanelen - so I will sketch in some background.

Our investigation of Llanelen, North Gower, began in 1973. All that was then visible to the eye was the scattered remains of a small building which was known to have been a chapel at some time in the past. The owner of the land where it lay, Don Howells, interested the Society in the antiquity of these enigmatic remains, and invited us to carry out an archaeological investigation. Both Llanelen's scanty written history and local tradition pointed to its being a much older site, possibly even Dark Age. The Society had recently conducted several field trips to South Wales and had developed an interest in the perigrinations of Celtic saints, and in particular St Illtud, traditionally cousin to Arthur. The parish church in this chapel's locale had Illtud connections. Pendragon was also committed to the investigation of Dark Age history where it coincided with the Society's aims and interests. That was why several people in the Society with experience in archaeology gathered volunteers and set off in the Summer of '73 to open an archaeological investigation of the site. This investigation continued until 1985, and during this period we spent about three weeks a year - our holidays - camping beside the site on an exposed hillside by night and digging by day in order to do it. The project involved the regular recruitment of volunteers, camp and archaeological equipment and support for which we are most grateful. Hilarity, many adventures and firm friendships also resulted. The core members of the team have remained with it right to this day.

The report of all the work and findings began to be compiled in 1985 when excavation on the site finished. Five of us are involved in its production: Chris Lovegrove, Nik Wright, Alex Schlesinger and myself, all early Pendragon members, and Jon Kissock who was a local schoolboy recruit in the 70's. Now he has three archaeology degrees and is currently working in field archaeology. All that has already appeared in print about Llanelen and aspects of the Gower is his work.

Publishing the various reports for this Dig will be an ongoing process because of course research does not stand still. We intend to begin to appear in print next year in the Gower Magazine, then various reports will appear in academic journals - the order has not yet been finalised, but we will note these in *PENDRAGON* in due course.

The core of the report is now complete. It describes the three phases of past occupation and activity on the Llanelen site and the fourth phase which covers the period since its final abandonment up to the present day. In Phase 1. there was the earliest pre-medieval wooden building which was domestic and early ecclesiastical. It had graves, and a hearth with a flue which has been tentatively interpreted as a bread oven, and two large pits. Phase 2, the subsequent ecclesiastical phase - beginning pre 1214 with the construction of an earth platform as a basis on which to build a stonebuilding, with nave, probably gabled, surrounded by a path and a graveyard. 3. In this phase, about 1240 - 1350, the building became secular; the stone building was shored up, supported and repaired, another domestic building was constructed nearby and the site probably became a farmstead. Most of the pottery remains are from this period. During the fourth and last phase it became derelict and some of the stone was robbed to build a bridge nearby. By the early C20th and possibly even before that the ruin was used as a base for a hayrick.

Much work has been done on the geology and geography of the site and surrounding area, its agriculture, economy, social and documentary history, the derivation of the name Llanelen, and of course on actual 'finds' from the Dig.

These include - and now a long and by no means comprehensive list follows - human and animal bones; grain which was probably carbonised during a cooking accident; two pieces of worked flint which pre-date our period; some glass: pieces from a flask are already known to be late Roman, and

some of better quality are thought to be C5th or C6th; pottery sherds from at least four jugs including Saintonge, Redcliffe, Avon, and Monnow Valley Ware, Gwent; and a minimum of ten cooking or storage vessels all 1200 - 1350, and a few later ones; quernstones and hones (whetstones) of local material, the latter probably 13th - 14th C. We await further information on the following - our little bronze horse's head bridle cheekpiece, said to be of Scandinavian origin; also of our metal slag, to know exactly what was being processed; some metal; some early glass and a fine glass bead with a white trailed pattern which we already know is Saxon and rather special.

All the feature numbers which refer to every aspect of the site are being indexed and cross-referenced and a matrix compiled which will draw together all the features and relate them to the various phases of activity at the site. The indexing and the matrix should be complete later this Autumn. After that we plan to re-inter the human bones and organise the remainder of the necessary backfilling to be carried out.

The National Museum of Wales in Cardiff has agreed to take charge of all the dig records, but some of this Archive itself needs conservation work carried out on it because it is now very old and well worn through use and must be made accessible for other archaeologists and researchers. The site has proved to be an important one, archaeologically speaking, and became a listed Ancient Monument when our work drew attention to this fact. Its antiquity makes it important in the greater context of the Celtic Church in South Wales. Several of the finds - the glass, the bead, and the cheekpiece - have aroused interest amongst archaeologists.

The next year should see exciting progress and the disclosure of interesting information on these finds as it gradually becomes available to us. Aspects of these discoveries are very exciting but I'm afraid all these precious pieces of jigsaw will never fit neatly into an overall picture - rather into fascinating glimpses which will only make sense in conjunction with other similar jigsaws. I will report back to Pendragon as and when the publishing process begins with information on where the reports are appearing. Meanwhile here are the details on Gower and Llanelen related papers already published by Jon, and one by Graham Jones who dug with us for two seasons. You can find them in your local University Library or ask your lending library for them. If members would like copies I will be glad to provide them for the cost of photocopying.

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## "...some they hid in the earth..."

Charles Evans-Günther

*"The Romans gathered all the golden hoards that were in Britain: some they hid in the earth so that no man would find them. And some they took with them to Gaul."*

This is what the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle said of the last days of Roman rule in Britain - as they saw it! Up till recently the largest recorded gold coin hoard discovered in the British Isles was in 1780 and consisted of 650 coins. Eric Lawes, a retired Suffolk gardener, has made one of the finds of the century when, only three miles from the 1780 find, he discovered a collection of 14,570 coins together with gold jewellery and silverware. Of the coins 563 are gold solidi, making this the second largest Roman gold coin hoard. The rest of the collection consists of 14,088 silver coins and a few bronze coins. What makes this discovery interesting is that all the coins were minted between AD337 and AD408. According to the report by David Keys, Archaeology Correspondent for The Independent (4th September 1993), the latest coins were two silver siliquae minted in Trier by the Romano-British usurper Constantine.

It is believed this treasure was buried in the earth near Hoxne, Suffolk, sometime between AD410 and AD440. The people who hid the collection probably lived in fear of the Anglo-Saxon pirates who had been attacking areas of the east and south coast in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. There is a possibility that there was a villa in the area of Hoxne, not far from the River Waveney and the town of Diss, north of Ipswich. The owner of the villa, it would seem from this find, was very wealthy - probably the equivalent of a millionaire.

Having discovered part of the hoard Mr. Lawes contacted the Suffolk Archaeological Unit and a team led by Judith Plouviez excavated the find. The coins, jewellery and silverware were later taken to the British Museum. Mr Lawes, who bought a £300 metal detector as a hobby, will get, according to the report, between one and one and a half million pounds for his discovery. The archaeologists are now hoping to get support from English Heritage and the British Museum to do a survey of the area of where the hoard was discovered in the hope of finding a villa.

# A Tale of Three Cities

## Chris Lovegrove



Two nightmares haunt the field archaeologist. The first is the finds tray without a label; the second is the identity tag minus its artefact. The former is the source, one suspects, of many an 'unstratified' reference in dig reports. The latter represents what one might call the empty treasure chest syndrome. Great is the joy when, like the return of the prodigal son, the two are brought together again!

That is, unless the wrong suspect has been identified. For some time now, three particular finds labels have been kicking around the store. Many attempts have been made to match them up correctly, but since the original authors of the reports are long gone all such efforts have been speculative, many controversial and some spectacularly so. Three recent books have claimed to have found detours round the impasses, and so solved the puzzles. The arguments in each case are stimulating, if no less prone to dispute.

\* \* \*

The first label I pick up reads ATLANTIS. Now, before sceptics throw the nearest coffee table book at my head, please bear with me and consider these assertions found in Plato's works. Following traditions passed on by his ancestor, Solon, he describes a city which:

1. was Successfully defeated by the Achaeans (whom we know as Bronze Age inhabitants of Greece);
2. lay by the pillars of Hercules;
3. was associated with the daughter of Atlas;
4. was destroyed at about the same time as the Achaeans suffered earthquakes and floods;
5. had Poseidon as a patron god;
6. had a complex system of harbours and watercourses in the plains around the city;
7. was especially noted for two springs, one hot and one cold;
8. had a hinterland rich in natural resources, including metal ores (unlike Greece);
9. was notably fond of racing horses;
10. could muster around 1200 ships for its navy

No scientific evidence exists for an advanced civilisation anywhere (let alone one defeated by inhabitants of Greece) 9000 years before Solon (who himself had died about 560 BC). At this time Mesolithic peoples inhabited caves and rock shelters in the mountains of mainland Greece.

However, 9000 *months* before Solon, ie about the 12th century BC, there was a famous opponent of the Achaeans, which lay by those pillars of Hercules known anciently to have led to the Black Sea. This city, it was said, was peopled by the descendants of Electra, Atlas' daughter. After its destruction by the Achaeans, the Bronze Age civilisation of Greece itself collapsed, accompanied coincidentally by very severe localised flooding in parts of the mainland.

All the other facts quoted above, which Plato relates concerning Atlantis, apply equally well and very aptly to Troy, as revealed by archaeology and as described by Homer. Eberhard Zangger, a geo-archaeologist, attempts to treat Plato's text seriously, without having recourse to unsubstantiated continents, rogue comets or wish-fulfillment fantasies (Zangger 1992). There are, admittedly, some difficulties (how does one get round the unambiguous description of an

'island larger than Libya and Asia together?') but I am largely persuaded by his arguments.

Apart from writing a ripping detective yarn, what Zangger has done is to draw attention to the idea that, far from being an insignificant local difficulty blown out of all proportion by some Iron Age Anatolian poet, the seige of Troy represents a piece in a huge political collapse, domino-fashion. The 13th and 12th centuries BC seem a long time ago, but over a century or two so many events happened that still have a certain resonance today. These include the Israelite exodus from Egypt; the ruin of the Hittite empire in Turkey; large-scale nomadic movements of people who not only briefly threatened the military might of Egypt but in the aftermath of defeat probably gave their names to Sicily, Sardinia, Tuscany and Palestine: economic and political disintegration in Bronze Age Greece; and, as literature and archaeology suggest, the fall of Troy (Sandars 1985).

If Troy (and its hinterland, the Troad) was indeed the original of Atlantis, then the fact that Solon's Egyptian hosts regarded it as worthy of detailed mention when he visited them suggests that it had a greater economic importance than is generally recognised. And that when it fell this event had reverberations throughout the Mediterranean.

However, much depends on whether we have got our dates right. Recent research suggests that the so-called Dark Ages, between the end of the Bronze Age (conventionally some time after 1200 BC) and the beginning of the Iron Age (about 800 BC), will need to be recalibrated (James 1991). Nevertheless the broad arguments in this book still merit serious consideration.

\* \* \*

Dating is also critical when we contemplate the next identification. Let us look at that crucial period when the European consciousness was suddenly expanded by the knowledge that it had genuinely discovered a New World.

It is 1492, when Columbus sails the ocean blue. It takes him until 1498, when on his third expedition, to realise that he has touched on the mainland of 'a very great continent, until today unknown.' He explores the Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola (now Haiti) and the Dominican Republic), Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Trinidad and the shores of Venezuela, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama before his death in 1506.

But he is not the only explorer. In 1499, a former captain of Columbus, Alonso de Ojeda, arrives on the Guina coast. Searching for pearls he travels north to Venezuela ('little Venice'), while another member of the same expedition, the Italian Amerigo Vespucci, travels south to discover the mouth of the Amazon.

In 1502, Vespucci follows up earlier Portuguese explorers and explores the coast of Brazil. In 1507 a German geographer suggests that the new continent should be named after Amerigo Vespucci, who has written prolifically about his 'discovery' of what is now South America. Vespucci dies in 1512 and is buried in Florence.

It is now 1516. In England, Sir Thomas More publishes a book in Latin. He writes about a Portuguese who sailed with Vespucci and travelled widely in the New World. In particular, this Portuguese describes a land in which he had lived for more than five years. This land was originally a peninsula, not an island, but a channel was cut through the isthmus. There are 54 towns, regular in plan and sited apart at convenient distances. This civilisation has a distinctive political organisation, and its social customs, (including population control and slavery), trade, warfare and religion are clearly described. Though this account is given sympathetically, it cannot be said (because it is too particular) to be a description of an ideal society, either Platonic or Christian, although contrasts are made.



A recent study claims to have identified this civilisation (Stobbert 1992). The Mayan society, as we know from other scientific disciplines, shares most of the points noted in More's account. We know that the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico was believed to be an island for much of the 16th century, even appearing such on maps. A few Europeans are known to have lived there before Hernan Cortes' marauding expedition passed by in 1519 on its way to gold-rich central Mexico, there to destroy the Aztec Empire. But the Mayas were, for the time being, spared.

Now, UTOPIA, our second finds label, was, the tradition goes, a fiction from Thomas More's mind. In this 'imaginary island ... everything is perfect, and in (it) the evils of existing laws, etc, are shown by contrast' (Brewer). The title page of the first edition of *Utopia* identifies itself as 'a really splendid little book, as entertaining as it is instructive.' Among More's jokes about the Utopians is the Portuguese traveller saying, 'I can't help thinking they must be of Greek extraction, since their language, though otherwise more like Persian, contains some traces of Greek.' This explains the name Utopia, derived from Greek *ou*, not, and *topos*, place. Well, that's clear then. Utopia is Nowhere. The book is an elaborate pun, a successor to Plato's *Republic*, and forerunner of various science fiction scenarios.

But, seen with the innocent eye, it is possible to take 'at face value More's claim in his letters and text that he was writing of an actual society in the New World.' The author of this book 'could see the similarities in some of the more obvious customs, such as the priestly feather-embroidered cloak. The only thing that puzzled me was which of the three advanced societies More was describing: the Inca, Aztec or Maya.' In view of some of the difficulties scholars face in neatly pigeon-holing More's work (as philosophy or early SF, for example) this classically simple theory has much to commend it, and Stobbert offers some ideas on why More might have chosen to hide a mostly factual account under a fictional guise.

\* \* \*

It's high time to examine an issue closer to home. Looking at how two academics, working in relative isolation, can force the interested reader to seriously re-evaluate two very tatty finds tags makes me more disposed to look at a new theory on CAMELOT with a friendly eye (Phillips & Keatman, 1992).

Basically, we are invited first to look at the traditional evidence for the existence of King Arthur. And what a ragbag it is, as any researcher knows. At the centre is a yawning black hole, sucking in the unwary. A sensible approach to the historical problem of who Arthur might have been is to fix, by logical deduction, the time and place in which he might have flourished.

The time suggested is the late 5th/early 6th century. This seems uncontroversial, so no Brythonic god, 1st century Roman, Sutton Hoo warrior or Atlantean avatar here, it would seem. The first half of the book sifts through Romantic preconceptions through to the ghost chronology dimly perceived from the difficult documentary evidence we possess. Thus far, there is little to quibble about.

But now the authors make a leap into the dark, and the possible, the probable, the could be and the surely all rear their several heads. It is possible that Arthur came from the ruling family of Gwynedd; it is probable that he was the 'Bear' who ruled Powys before the 6th century Cuneglasus; Viroconium (Roman predecessor of Wroxeter) could be the capital of Arthur, 'Camelot' if you like; and so surely the likely candidate for Arthur is the father of Cuneglasus, Owain Ddantgwyn.

But, but, but, but! Owain Ddantgwyn (or Owein Danwyn), in an alternative reading) is only known from a 10th century document. This

is a very slender thread on which to hang an identification. Nor would many scholars necessarily agree with the assertion that, despite its present archaeological status, Viroconium in the early 5th century became 'the most important city in Britain.' And, attractive as the theory is, there is no way of proving that the name Arthur is from the Welsh *arth* meaning 'bear.' Finally, it is certainly possible that Arthur, if he really existed, may have been related to a ruling family in Gwynedd, but then again maybe not.

One problem with this book is that there is no clear weighting given to the various possibilities raised by the authors. All considerations are valid provided they support the thesis. For example, they suggest that 'Arthur' derives from Brythonic *arth* and Latin *ursus*, both meaning bear, symbolising a conscious espousal of both 'nationalistic' and 'imperialist' causes. On linguistic grounds this is unlikely. They also resurrect Saklatvala's discredited theory that Arthur's drawing of the sword from the stone was based on a confusion between Latin *saxum*, a stone and *Saxon*. They even seem to propose that the 'name affix *Cun-*' is peculiar to the descendants of Cunedda (news perhaps to dwellers in Lowland Roman Britain such as Cunobelinus, Cunopectus, Cunoarda, Cunobarrus, Cunomaglos...).

Simple solisms like this do not bode well. And yet other circumstantial evidence seems to be disregarded. Would not have Geoffrey Ashe's identification of Riothamus as Arthur (Ashe 1895), together with the tales of the giant Retho on Snowdon, have been good ammunition for their argument? And what about the supposed son of Maximus, Owen, who had a missile fight with a giant near Dinas Emrys, also in Gwynedd? There are also the theories that the growth of Arthurian tales in Cornwall are the result of relocated Cornovians from the Welsh Marches taking their folklore with them to the southwest of the island.

The authors have clearly tried their best with some very intractable material, but they were not comfortably at home with the various disciplines needed to sort the wheat from the chaff. In particular, their attempt not only to identify an Arthur-type figure but a whole host of contemporaries is, I feel, over ambitious. So, while there are plenty of intriguing avenues to investigate further, there are not enough hard facts to justify the claims of the book's title.

\* \* \*

Are Troy, the Yucatan and Viroconium really the prototypes of Atlantis, Utopia and Camelot? The authors of all three hypotheses certainly seem convinced, and have regaled friends and colleagues with the arguments before committing themselves to print, but specialists in linguistics, archaeology, ancient and comparative literature, genealogy, palaeography, art history and other disciplines will certainly spot the less obvious weak links in their reasoning. My gut feeling is that the Yucatan case is strongest, and the Troad equation the most attractive. 'Camelot' is of course a 12th century fiction, but to propose Viroconium as the base of Arthur really depends on whether he and Owein Danwyn were one and the same.

All in all, I wouldn't start re-attaching my finds labels yet!

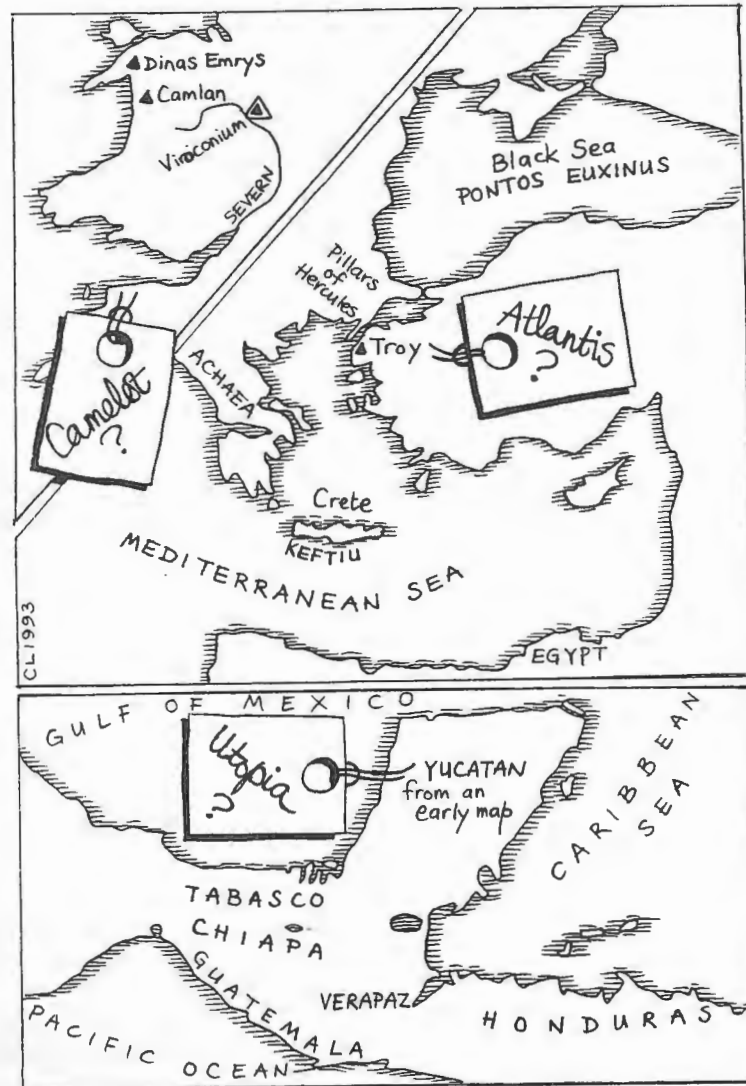
Note: my negative comments on the Phillips and Keatman book, though written before, are to some extent confirmed by the judgements of Nick Grant and Charles Evans-Günther in XXIII/3.

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# BALIN AND BALAN MARY CAINE



HERE FOLOWETH THE SECONDE BOKE  
 OF THAT NOBLE PRYNCE KYNG AR-  
 THUR.

OF A DAMOYSELL WHICHE CAME GYRDE WITH A  
 SWERDE FOR TO FYNDE A MAN OF SUCH VERTUE TO  
 DRAWE IT OUT OF THE SCAUBERDE. CAP'L M PRIMUM.

This doom-laden tale, which occurs early in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, soon after the founding of the Round Table, seems to contain trace-elements of far earlier Mysteries; perhaps even Druidic.

For one thing, the brothers' names derive from the sun-god Bel, Bal or Baal of Middle-Eastern origin; a name also borne by more than one early British king, for example Belinus, Cunobelinus, Cassibelaunus.

For another, Balin appears at Arthur's Court straight from six months in prison, for killing Arthur's cousin - a recurrent fate of sun-kings in Celtic myth.

To recap his story briefly: lean and unkempt from his dungeon, Balin was yet the only man able to withdraw a mysterious sword from a scabbard presented by a damsel, though every knight and even Arthur had tried without avail. She wanted it back, warning him that it would cause his destruction and his best friend's death, but he insisted on keeping it. The Lady of the Lake then appeared, demanding the head

of both Balin and the damsel from Arthur, but Balin without ado cut hers off instead, pleading a blood-feud. He left in disgrace, pursued by the outraged knight Lanceor, but killed him too, whereupon Lanceor's lady also killed herself in despair. Stricken with remorse, he is told by Merlin that by her death he is doomed to strike the Dolorous Stroke and bring about the Waste Land.

To reinstate himself at court, Balin summoned Balan to help capture Arthur's enemy King Ryons; between them they ambushed and slew over forty of his knights and sent Ryons captive to Arthur. They then helped to decimate the forces of Ryons's brother, strangely named Nero. (Another hint at the age of this tale?)

Arthur gratefully reinstated Balin, and sent him to bring back a woeful knight who has just passed by "making great dole" but the reluctant knight would only return and explain if Balin promised him safe-conduct. Alas! Despite Balin's promise he was struck down by an invisible hand as they rode. Dying, he made his guarantor vow to avenge him. But before Balin could find the dark assassin, another knight in his charge was invisibly slain.

He eventually found Garlon, his mysterious enemy, in King Pellam's castle - he no longer invisible but still 'black of visage' - and without ceremony "clave his head from his shoulders". But black Garlon, it transpires, was none other than his royal host's brother; and King Pellam, outraged, chased our fated hero through the castle thirsting for revenge. Weaponless, Balin raced through a rich chamber containing a body lying on cloth of gold. There he saw a spear on a golden table - snatching it up without time for thought or wonder, he ran Pellam,



through with it. At once the whole castle fell in upon them both, and there they lay unconscious for three days. The Dolorous Stroke !

Pellam lay sorely wounded until at last the destined Galahad after many years came to heal him, but Merlin soon roused Balin (whose unlucky lady had incidentally perished in the ruins), bidding him ride forth from that stricken land forthwith, telling him that the spear he has used was the very lance that had pierced the side of Christ on the cross, and that the body on the bed was that of Joseph of Arimathea, king Pellam's ancestor, who had brought Christ's blood (and indeed Christianity) to this country.

Balin, now dubbed le Savage, fled through all the countries his Dolorous Stroke had devastated, cursed by all, and warned that Heaven's vengeance would at last fall upon him. But before his final come-uppance he was the unwitting cause of three more deaths. Trying to help a distraught knight to find his lady, Balin discovered her in another's arms - "the foulest knight he ever saw." Hoping to rid his new friend of his delusions, he told him of this; whereupon the rejected lover killed both lady and paramour - and finally himself, before Balin could prevent him.



His next adventure is his last; he is inveigled by a lady into jousting with an unknown knight. It is of course his brother Balan, but Balin's shield has been switched so that he should not be known.

Both doughty champions, they were all too equally matched, and only in death did they raise their visors and recognise each other - too late.

Merlin, grieving, had them buried in one tomb, and embedded Balin's fateful sword in a stone which "hoved" upon the water for many years, until in the fullness of time it floated down to Camelot, and Galahad himself drew it out, to fulfil its destined purpose and use it for nobler ends.

To interpret this last scene: first, Galahad the peerless Christian knight is an obvious contrast to Balin the failed initiate.

But Balin was not a bad man; he was essentially well-meaning, always willing to help. He had courage and nobility of character and lineage - *le Suite du Merlin* says he was of high estate, which his sun-king name also suggests. It isn't everyone who can extract swords from stones. And if he executed vengeance on his enemies, this was normal behaviour in Arthurian times, after all. Which is another reason for wondering whether this tale has not filtered down to a rougher age from a more ancient Mystery School. For it is undoubtedly a moral one, teaching that 'he who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword.' A sentiment that hardly belongs to an Arthurian setting.

One might suspect the softening influence of Christianity, if it were not for the trace-elements (already cited) from pre-Christian times; and there are others. Pellam, king of Grail Castle, had in various Grail legends a brother called Pelles - so it is startling to find that there actually was a Phoenician King Phelles, assassinated way back in 888 BC. by a rival, Ethelbaal, father of the infamous Jezebel who married the biblical

King Ahab.

These names, to which must be added that of Arthurian King Pellinore who followed the Questing Beast, make an intriguing case for the Phoenician origin of the Druids of Britain, arriving here as missionaries in the wake of the metal-traders. They may well be related to the still-extant Druzes of the Lebanon, who are credited with ancient and mysterious beliefs.

For what was this Questing Beast quested by Pellinore of the Bel-name? We are told in the *Huth Merlin* that this Druidic mage instigated the Quest himself; and as the strange object of this quest is elsewhere called by Malory the 'Glatistant Beast' it is tempting to identify it with the Girt Dog of Langport, whose giant effigy guards the Glastonbury Zodiac from the Bristol Channel seaways. For this ancient Temple of the Stars undoubtedly embodies the Mystery-Teaching common to both East and West in primordial times.

Malory says that the Beast contained 12 pups in her belly gnawing at her, impatient to be born. What could these be but the twelve signs of the zodiac, still recognisable on the map around Glastonbury?

Claimed by their discoverer Katharine Maltwood as the Original Round Table of Arthur, are they not also the object of the Grail-Quest, sought by the knights of Avalon? For there, in a great circle 30 miles round, lie the effigies of Arthur and his chief knights as the zodiac signs - searching for Themselves - as the Ancient Mysteries commanded. "Man, Know Thyself."

For the Zodiacal Mysteries were by no means merely seasonal wish-fulfilment ceremonies for successful seed-times and harvests, though they were that, too. (Arthur and Lancelot, like Balin, suffered seasonal sun-imprisonment.) They contain deep psychological truths (still available to us today) to help us align ourselves with the great laws of Cosmic Evolution, of which we



are an essential if microcosmic part.

I have read somewhere that applicants to these Mysteries who were consistently unfortunate were rejected: which seems on the face of it grossly unfair. Balin himself appears to be one such, as many of his attendant disasters were not his own fault at all. But if we cannot accept the pessimistic theory of Blind Fate (and no-one who has studied these Mysteries should fall into this ever-popular trap) we can see reason in this apparently cruel exclusion.

For Balin's own story shows he lacked certain qualities essential for an initiate; namely, the ability to recognise and feel awe in the presence of the transcendent Otherworld. In Arthur's sacred hall he kills the mysterious Lady of the Lake; worse, totally unaware that he is in the inner sanctum of Grail Castle, he grievously wounds its king. The contrast between him and Galahad, who trembled to death when he saw and achieved the Grail, could hardly be greater.

Sword and Lance are the masculine symbols of the 4 Grail Hallows, being embedded in the 2 feminine receptacles of cup and stone. But Balin le Savage is all macho, believing that all problems can be solved, all Gordian knots cut, by sword or lance.

Druids, whose Mysteries may well have derived from those of



Egypt, Chaldea and Minoan Greece, had better ideas. They were recorded as intervening between tribal war-parties, persuading them to resort to reconciliation whenever they could. Balin's moral tale may well have filtered down through the ages from such a source, preserved by later Celtic monks who inherited much Druidism, and whose primitive Christianity was essentially pacifist.

Another factor hinting at profound Mystery-teachings in this story is Garlon. Balin externalises evil, knowing nothing of his own dark side. But Garlon, evil though he undoubtedly is, turns out to be the Grail-King's brother. Surely this implies an understanding, lacking in our bluff and hasty knight, that good and evil must always co-exist as essential poles in the electromagnetic field of Life, if we are to have freewill to choose and thus develop. Also, that the devils we deplore in others exist in our own selves, and must first be recognised and sublimated into creative channels before we kill our brothers for the same faults. (I suspect the influence of the Cabiric Mysteries here; those of the Zodiac's fighting Gemini Twins. Phoenicians relied on these brothers to save them from storms at sea.)

But one life is surely not enough for self-perfection, as we usually choose wrongly at first, and only learn from the hideous consequences. Like Balin we ignore wise advice (or long-established laws), insisting on our own way, fatal though it may prove. The redeeming figure of Galahad implies, I believe, the doctrine of reincarnation, inherent in all the ancient Mysteries. Though smothered by later Christianity, I see it in the fact that it is Balin's sword that Galahad inherits, to carve his way triumphant to the Grail.

We can of course reject the idea of personal reincarnation and see this myth as a parable of the evolution of mankind from primitive Adam-Balin to the

Christlike Galahad; a development still to be consummated, in the mass. It is certainly a valid alternative reading.

As always, we can choose!



THE KNIGHT FROM CARBONEK

I knew a knight from Carbonek  
Could cure the world's distresses,  
Whose armour like a royal rose  
Outshone his raven tresses,  
Whose shield of power was true-designed  
With hearts for pales and tresses.

When all was dim upon the earth  
And monk and maid were sad,  
He travelled down to Camelot  
In blood-red armour clad;  
And none could emulate the knight  
Whose name was Galahad.

His was the heart that beat for Love  
When the sun of life burnt low,  
Who filled the siege of destiny  
With Love's own afterglow;  
But after him, the kingdom fell  
Like the knights to winter snow.

I know a knight from Carbonek  
Who is waiting yet for Man  
To share the glory of the Grail  
In a new and holy span  
And win the final joust for Love  
As only honour can.

His heart is beating in your heart,  
His sword is yours to wield,  
His purity is the strength to which  
All enemies must yield;  
And his the spirit in all men  
By which the world is healed.

Pamela Constantine

# Serpents And Lifestones

## Fred Stedman-Jones



This is the first 'Excalibur' ever produced  
to depict a 5th Century weapon as used at  
the time of Arthur's existence.

Wilkinson Sword, 1993.

This is the proud claim made for the sword issued in conjunction with the launch of Phillips and Keatman's book, *King Arthur - The True Story*. Not surprisingly, having found Arthur, there can be little doubt about the sword. It is a *spatha*, 'a Roman sword of office inherited by Arthur' as the representative of the Romano-British party.

The truth is we do not know as much about the Celtic swords of the C5th as their Saxon counterparts. Geoffrey of Monmouth (Book 6, ch.3) says that when the Romans withdrew from Britain (c.410) they left behind samples of their armour and weapons as models for the Britons to copy for their self-defence, because the British military traditions had dwindled away during the Occupation. This is simplistic, of course, it is known that there was ready communication with the Continent in the early Dark Ages and that cross-cultural relations of the Migration Period were complex.

Geoffrey's 'Caliburnus' probably derives its name from 'Chalybs' (steel) which comes from the Kalybes, a Samartian tribe of smiths in the Caucasus. As with the Gundustrup Cauldron theories, history and archaeology is opening up from the simple ideas we were taught in school in the 'good old days'. Earlier Celtic swords had long slashing blades more like those of the Germanic invaders. These were excellent models for the Celtic smiths, who had never forgotten how to smelt ore and forge iron. The Celts were iron users before the Romans came and their smiths worked in the settlements which grew up around the Roman forts (a smithy has been found in the *vicus* of Alauna (Maryport in Cumbria). It is more likely to me that the sword that dazzled Bedwyr was an elegant Celtic slashing sword than a short Roman stabbing weapon.

The Wilkinson sword publicity tells us that Phillips & Keatman 'have unearthed what they believe to be the oldest description of Excalibur in an ancient Welsh manuscript called 'The Dream of Rhonabwy' - kept in the Oxford Bodleian library. This is pseudo-academic 'hype' of course: we have all read the Mabinogion tale since childhood. I've just 'unearthed' my copy and it tells me that Arthur's sword had the image of two serpents in gold and that when it was drawn from its sheath 'as it were two flames of fire might be seen from the mouths of the serpents'. This source is interesting, nevertheless, because it is quite original to the Welsh stories and has no parallel among the Arthurian tales.

In their book, Martin Keatman claims that the Wilkinson sword is the first 'true likeness seen for 15 centuries'. Later we are told, 'it is historically feasible such a sword would have borne the motif of the double serpents.' They add to this the 'scrollwork found on a Powys monument in the British Museum' and we have a 'true likeness' which has been designer-made on the basis of 'probability' and 'feasibility'. It's a lovely sword, make no mistake, but it is designed to make a handsome profit: the equivalent of a rather upmarket coffee table book: "Where did you get this lovely sword, Sir Arthur?" "Oh, didn't I tell you, my dear, my ancestor was fishing at this mere, when..."

Forgive me, let's look at other possibilities. Warriors have always ornamented and decorated their weapons - to impress others, to make them seem 'worthy'. We have already heard of the boastful tales told of great heroes' swords. Snakes often appear among the names given to them: 'Serpents of the Wound' and 'Battle Snake' etc. The sword of Sigurd the Volsung was forged in fire and water: 'by fire were its outer edges formed, by venom drops was it tinged within'. It may be instructive to link these picturesque motifs to what we know of the science and art of the smith's craft (or *magic*). It must have seemed to others that the smith had magical powers over the four elements: he smelted the ore to bring forth the molten metal; the spongy mass was then reheated and hammered to drive out the slag and from this malleable iron the smith forged his blades. These were then tempered by alternate heating in fire and cooling in water. It is a striking analogy to link the making of the blade to its use: quenching in venom to enhance its sting - the sting of the Serpent.

The smith's ultimate search was to find a way to make the metal hard. *Caladbolg* (hard-belly) was the name of the magic sword, the masterpiece of the Celtic smith's art - it could consume anything!



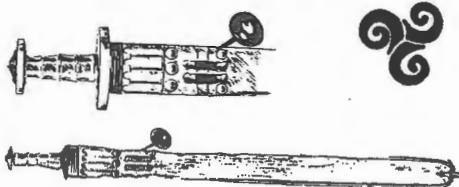
There are numerous accounts of heroes having to tread on their sword blades during battle to straighten them. The smith's greatest skill lay in the quenching process, which gives the metal its extra hardness. Secret formulae (spells?) included the use of honey, oil, urine and, most significantly, water from special streams and rivers whose chemical composition or special resident nymph blessed the smith's endeavours. It is small wonder that a water goddess gave Arthur his sword and received it back again.

The stone, the anvil, the sword and the water spirit form a pattern which reflects the ancient skill and the mystery surrounding the alchemists who combined the power of the elements: earth, air, fire and water, to create a beautiful weapon which became a talisman of victory in the hands of a brave leader.

For most of the first millennium A.D. the best blades were produced by a process known as *pattern welding* and this was certainly known to the Celts as well as to the Northern peoples. These blades were produced by twisting and hammer welding together several strips or rods of iron then beating them flat. This produced a strong blade which was pliant and able to retain a razor-sharp cutting edge. The blade was then etched (using some sort of mild acid such as sour beer, urine or vinegar) then burnished and polished when the differing bands of steel and iron produced an ornamental pattern. You don't need to take my word for this: if you visit the Science Museum at Kensington (Iron & Steel gallery, first floor) you can see the Westminster Sword - a pattern welded sword of the 9th Century recovered from the bed of the Thames at Westminster. You can also see an exhibition which illustrates the stages of the process and several blades made in this way in recent times, each bearing a different pattern in the surface grain of the metal. Some of the earliest blades produced by this method show a simple herring-bone pattern but many have several patterns on one blade. I went to see this for myself last month and I believe that Excalibur's serpents were most probably produced by this method of forging. It is possible to enhance such a design further by punching more detail into the surface, of course, and the etching process slightly coloured the surfaces different tints of brown or pale yellow or blue, according to the acid used. The play of light upon the clearly marked patterns must have produced a remarkable effect. Cassiodorus, secretary to the Emperor Theodoric wrote to his master some 1500 years ago: 'Your fraternity have chosen for us swords capable even of cutting through armour, which I prize more for their iron than for the gold upon them. So replendent is their polished clarity that they reflect with faithful distinctness the faces of those who look upon them. The central part of their blades appear to be grained with tiny snakes, and here such varied shadows play that you would believe the shining metal to be interwoven with many colours. Such swords by their beauty might be deemed the work of Vulcan.' We might say Weland, Wayland or The Unknown Celt.

Merlin asked Arthur: 'Like ye better the sword or the scabbard?' Arthur replied, 'I like better the sword'. 'Ye are the more unwise, for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword, for while ye have the scabbard upon you ye shall lose no blood be ye never so sore wounded. Therefore keep well the scabbard always with you.' In the stories Morgan tries to steal Excalibur while Arthur sleeps, but he keeps it safe in his hand. Instead she steals the scabbard. Arthur pursues her party to a lake where she throws the scabbard into the water so that he will never be able to regain it. So Arthur loses his invincibility. What lies behind this idea? The likely answer is surprising. The picture shows a sword from Klein Hunigen, Switzerland, c450 A.D. A large bead projects from behind the scabbard. Many such beads have been found in graves of the 3rd to 7th centuries. Made of pottery, glass, crystal, sometimes gold with inset garnets; these flat discs only appear in the graves of warriors and always near a sword.

The early poems refer to a kind of charm or amulet which was part of the fittings of a sword. It was called a 'Life-stone' and it brought luck and victory to the sword and its owner. It had other powers of a magical kind, for it was believed to have the power of healing any wound made by the sword to which it belonged. There is a series of stories about a Danish sword called Hofnung which had a life-stone with it: it also had a snake under its hilt which was part of its power, for it crept out onto the blade when its owner breathed upon it. Just a story - but if you brandished a fine pattern welded sword the middle part of the sword would seem snake-like, especially if you breathed on it: warm breath condenses on cold iron, and the mistiness would seem to make the patterns wriggle. Truth may be stranger than fiction.



# Conquests of Camelot

## Rosemary Conqworth



I'm a sixty-two year old female who is a video gamer. Although most of my games are for the Nintendo video machine, I do have a few favourite computer games, and *Conquests of Camelot* ranks with the best. It was written for those who like things Arthurian or for those who like "dragons and dungeons" type of computer games. It has everything that a player could look for: beautiful graphics, intricate plot, pretty good music and, plenty of action.

*Conquests of Camelot* has been out for several years. It is distributed by SIERRA ON-LINE, INC., designed by Christy Marx,

who has done an animated series for American TV "Jem" and also "Sisterhood of Steel" comics and graphic novel. She and her husband, Peter Ledger, researched Arthurian myths and legends for many years before writing this game.

**The Game** requires 512K, 8mhz or faster recommended. My version is for the IBM, Tandy and MS-DOS compatibles. A hard disk is recommended, mouse/joystick optional. It supports Roland MT132, Ad Lib, Game Blaster, IBM Music Cards and other music synthesizers. The game has both 3.5 - inch and 5.25 - inch disks.

My personal computer is from Radio Shack, a division of the Tandy Corporation. It is a Tandy 1000SL, 640K, IBM compatible, Tandy colour monitor. Although the game will play faster in less colour, the graphics are stunning, and the colour is an experience of itself.

I tried loading the game onto my hard drive, but I got stuck (two-thirds through the game) in the streets of Jerusalem. I now play the game from the four 3.5-inch disks and have a fifth blank disk used for saving the game. It is prudent to save the game at intervals, just before a confrontation. That way, if you "wipe out" (as we say in video and computer gameland) you don't have to go back to the beginning every time. As you play, you will learn those danger areas and save accordingly.

My daughter gave me the game three years ago at Christmas. I began playing it on Christmas Day (naturally) and strangely, finished it on Twelfth Night. It was an exciting, absorbing journey, and when I finished it, I felt that I had gone on a quest with Arthur, and although the quest was successful, things were not as they should be

between Arthur and Guinevere, which was sad.

The quest takes Arthur through the castle to prepare for the trip, through the Black Forest, to Glastonbury, thence to Southampton, where he boards the ship for Gaza, through the desert to Jerusalem, and through the murky streets of Old Jerusalem, down into the catacombs. It concludes in some ancient temple ruins of a once popular goddess.

Something like a role-playing game, it has more graphics and action, and requires study and logic. A helpful booklet comes with the game, but I also had to call the hot-line twice for helpful hints (to get out of Glastonbury and to get through the Gaza desert.) For those of you who acquire the game and can't or don't want to call the hot-line (costs money!) drop me a line, and I'll give you hints.

The game is not a game that one plays every night for acquiring skill. It is a once-a-year (perhaps more often) journey after the initial playing. But it is a memorable experience; you can't fail ("wipe-out") and there are ways of playing it differently. Arthur has to answer different riddles to get to Glastonbury each time; The Lady of the Lake does not always ask the same questions, and if the game is played differently, there are different outcomes. Try kissing Fatima and see what happens!

As with role playing games, one has to keep a "diary" of answers to riddles,



directions taken, places visited. Also one needs the book that comes with the game in order to answer questions about the various religions, myths, goddesses, and gods that the European people believed in during the Arthurian period.

Arthur leaves Camelot worshipping two gods: the Christian god and Mithras. He returns (hopefully) with the Grail, and Mithras is worshipped no more. Part of the theme seems to be that all the old gods are being forgotten and are no longer communicative or useful.

In so much Arthurian literature, one reads that Camelot was a Christian court, knightly, with high ideals, quests for the grail, conquests for Christ or honor. It is refreshing to play a game that recognizes that the pagan religions were worshipped along with the Christian religion during the fifth century when Arthur allegedly lived.

Although this game does not portray Arthur as the "Big-Bear" that we Pendragon people know him to be, he does encounter boars along the way, and has to hack and slash his way to Jerusalem. He is not entirely courtly, but the costume is more twelfth-century than fifth. I personally would have liked to see the game show an Arthur living in an iron-age hill fort, wearing a Welsh plaid, with mostly leather armor, portrayed as a British warlord, instead of the more sophisticated, crowned, future "king." However, it was an enjoyable, never-to-be-forgotten experience to play this game, and I highly recommend it to Arthurian fans who also like video or computer games.

Your local computer supplier can get more information from SIERRA ON-LINE, INC., POST OFFICE BOX 485, COARSEGOLD, CALIFORNIA 93614, USA. Telephone: (area code: 209)-683-8989. My address is R.J. Longworth, Route "1", Box 424, Simpson, Illinois 62985.

#### THE LAST BATTLE by R.J. Longworth

Seven times they surrounded us,  
and seven times we fought them off.  
Dark was the deed  
that brought them to Camlann.  
Son of a harlot! Mordred his name.  
Camlann...where trees witnessed  
slaughter,  
and rocks drowned in blood,  
Camlann...where I saw The Bear go  
down  
...never to rise again.  
Ever since...trees tell the tale and rocks  
whisper our names.



Sorry, Sir Gawain, but 'All manner of meats and drinks does not include chip butties and Pepsi-Cola.'



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# LETTERS



## STARSTRUCK

There has been a lively response to Alby Stone's article 'Camelot on Camera'. A selection of readers' opinions follows:

† From Chris Lovegrove, Bristol, Avon.  
My favourite article was Alby Stone's cinematographic overview. Having recently seen 'The Natural' on the box I was astonished that I hadn't spotted that the obviously fairytale plot was so indebted to an Arthurian antecedent. My thanks to Alby for pointing this out in a wonderfully written piece. It also occurs to me that much of Terry Gilliam's work, and not just *The Fisher King*, is about the innocent abroad. I am thinking particularly about the very 'noir' film, *Brazil*; don't forget that Hy Brasil was a Celtic Otherworld across the sea before it transmogrified into a South American state.

† From Ian Forrester Roberts, Gloucester.  
Alby Stone's article on American films is well researched and informative. I'd no idea that 'Farewell My Lovely' was Arthurian based - that makes it a must to watch next time around. Thanks for the tip. But Barry Levinson's 'The Natural' was surely not that bad. I found it quite rivetting to watch and didn't feel the need to be 'au fait' with baseball at all. The big point is that it aimed for something beyond and bigger than the simple telling of the tale, and if you don't do that, all you end up with is soap. I take exception to Alby's writing off Richard Harris' performance in 'Camelot'.

Dammit all, Harris and the music were the only good things in it. The film was a mess - full of meaningless stares and missed dialogue - a classic example of how to louse up first class material. But Richard Harris saw the gold seam running through it, went for it and made it sparkle. It was a real cinematic mishmash, but some of the drops sparkled, Pelly, some of them did sparkle - and one of them was Richard Harris.

† From Annette Walker, Cheltenham, Glos.  
I was interested to read Alby Stone's 'Camelot on Camera'. I started to watch the film 'Camelot' with Richard Harris today and found it abysmal. I have often thought that there are no films that do the legends justice. The nearest, in my opinion, is John Borman's 'Excalibur', but I hated Nicol Williamson as Merlin, and did not think Nigel Terry personable enough. The director I would like to do an Arthurian film would be Steven Spielberg, his fantasy films have just that magic and I'm sure he could do the legends justice. .... I did not know about Richard Burton starring in the first production of 'Camelot'. I am sure he did Arthur justice with his commanding but amiable presence and that wonderful voice.

† From Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall.  
I'm afraid I don't agree with Alby Stone's comments about the film 'Excalibur'... I had been looking forward to seeing it, after hearing and seeing many enthusiastic comments - so my disappointment was all the more bitter. I switched it off after less than an hour - in fact, when Lancelot appeared on the scene. I have said before that the 'Christianised, chivalrised Arthur of the medieval stories is not the Arthur who 'speaks' to me across the centuries; 'my' Arthur is the warrior of the Mabinogion, the man so lovingly portrayed by Mary Stewart and Rosemary Sutcliff.  
Alby also remarks that "John Boorman has obviously done his

homework"; if so he deserves a D minus. Even in the short period for which I viewed the video, I spotted several anomalies and I found it impossible to accept Nicol Williamson as Merlin... I do agree that 'the singing is dreadful' in the film version of 'Camelot'. What a pity that the film couldn't have had the Broadway play cast, with Richard Burton as Arthur (who had a glorious Welsh singing voice, according to Alan Jay Lerner in the latter's autobiography, 'The Street Where I Live' - a lovely book). Julie Andrews played Guinevere and the Canadian tenor Robert Goulet played Lancelot. T.H. White attended many rehearsals for the play - the cast members adored him - and was delighted with it. Lerner reports that White's share of the 'takings' from 'Camelot' outstripped all his other royalties put together, and adds: "After 'Camelot' opened in New York, Tim (T.H.) returned to Alderney and I never saw him again".  
However, I was quite fascinated by Alby's comments about Chandler's 'Farewell My Lovely'. I saw the Dick Powell version of this in the 1940's, long before I had become interested in the Arthurian mythos, so I made no such connection - yet the film had a very deep effect on me, and for years I kept recalling facets from it and wishing I could see it again. I didn't know about the Robert Michum version, - must keep an intelligent eye on the Radio Times.

## AUTHOR!

† From Alby Stone, Brockley, London.  
I am really pleased that the 'Camelot on Camera' piece stirred things up and that people found it a good read. It was a bit of a departure from my usual, which makes it all the more satisfying. I don't know when I'll be doing another Arthurian article. At the moment the big thing is a full-length study of Norse creation mythology... rest assured though, I will occasionally return to Arthurian themes, but it won't be for a good six months or so. You never know: Dr. Anne Ross might

decide to contribute something. Now that would indeed be something to savour!

Thanks for stirring things up, Alby, and good luck with the two books. What energy. And he's a good cook!

No one has mentioned Disney's 'The Sword in the Stone' which was described on the original posters as 'a Whiz-bang Whizard of Whimsy!' The film has always received a mixed reception and it has never made a fortune at the box-office, though it did eventually inspire a 'Sword in the Stone Ceremony' at Disneyland in 1984.

## CORONATION RITUALS

† From Chris Lovegrove, Bristol, Avon.  
Re. your follow-up to 'Excalibur' with related material, I noticed that you pointed out Sigmund's sword, which was retrieved from a tree in the same way that Arthur retrieved his sword from a stone. This analogue is repeated in the story of the young Theseus who retrieves his father's sword and sandals from under a stone. Robert Graves noted that "sandals and sword are ancient symbols of royalty; the drawing of a sword from such a rock seems to have formed part of the Bronze Age coronation ritual. Odin, Galahad and Arthur were all in turn required to perform a similar feat..." (*Greek Myths*, \$95).  
Whether that's true or not (and I think Graves believed in a Bronze Age mythic origin for Arthur) the parallels are certainly striking. I certainly think the recognition of paternity and one's coming of age are in the main what are being celebrated in these stories.  
Enclosed are some reviews, under the guise of an article. I think that lumping together Atlantis, Utopia and Camelot is justified as they all represent a kind of Golden Age model that may lurk in our Collective Unconscious (if there is such a beast).  
*Theseus was born in Troezen, son of Aegeus, King of Athens, who had to leave his family to defend his throne. Before leaving Aegeus lifted a great rock and placed under it his sword and sandals,*



commanding that no one must tell the boy who his father was until he could lift the stone. When he was 16 Theseus succeeded and set out for Athens to help his father. A recent book which presents the theory that the Arthurian legends go back to an earlier Bronze Age prototype, linked with the Wessex Culture and Stonehenge is, 'King Arthur's Place in Prehistory' by W.A. Cummings, (Alan Sutton, 1992). This book has not yet been reviewed in Pendragon, any offers? Theseus and the Maze leads us to:

#### MAZES & LABYRINTHS

† From Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall.  
One of the most astonishing things about labyrinths, mazes, spiral or snake dances is their likeness to the human brain. A programme on TV a few nights ago showed a pathologist dissecting a brain and I was struck all over again by the likeness of that oddly convoluted object to (a) a walnut, and (b) a circular maze. In her book 'Pagan Celtic Britain', Anne Ross says that "since man's earliest religious awareness, the human head has been a focus of superstitious interest", and also mentions the primitive practice of ritual trepanning, (p.95 in Cardinal Pbk. Edtn., 1974). This would indicate that man must have been aware of the shape of the human brain in very early times: if his religious beliefs located the human spirit at the centre of the brain, I submit that the creation of labyrinths would have been a natural and inevitable follow-on. Man would have marched or danced his way to the centre of his 'brain' in order to find his true self. (Does this make any sense to you?)  
Makes a lot of sense to me, Beryl. Readers may not be aware of Sig Longren's 'Labyrinths: Ancient Myths & Modern Uses (Gothic Image, 1991) which takes a new look at the ancient and mythic past of this universal symbol and explores its practical uses today. It is a workbook which aims to teach readers how to use mazes as tools for personal growth and as problem solving devices.



#### MAZES, MASQUES & MICROLITHS

† From Kate Pollard, Bristol, Avon.  
Pendragon of August: I'm deeply impressed, congratulations to all concerned.  
I very much like your description of the Society's past aims and their definition of 'holistic'. My portfolios contain much of interest from the early 80's in respect of mazes and the 'Maze Weekend' in Bristol which I organised. Maybe this is one of the ways forward for the Society. The Maze Weekend typifies a theme from which history, archaeology, mythology and art was drawn. You've dropped in tempting invitations re. Games & Role Play and Enactment. I'll be interested to see how that possible aim develops. I feel that the Pendragon/Llanelen Project should be included, as it comprises such a large part of the Society's past interests. While it's extremely difficult to make an update sound interesting I will write something and get it to you soon.  
The Bristol Maze Weekend was held on 13-14 February, 1982. Adrian Fisher of Minotaur Designs participated and the activities included illustrated lectures and the making of a temporary Cretan-design maze on a hill in the middle of Bristol, in brilliant sunshine; all punctuated with civilised visits to a local pub. In Pendragon XV/2, Spring '82, Kate reported the weekend, and said.. 'I can only describe the actual laying-out and subsequent walking of the maze as a powerful experience ending an interesting and happy weekend'. Kate's article on the Llanelen Dig appears in this journal. I'm sure that today's membership would be equally happy

to participate in similar activities. We are considering a programme of events for next year and your suggestions and offers of help will be gratefully received. News will appear in our February journal.

#### ENACTMENT NEWS

† From Anne-Marie Lewis, Mitcheldean, Glos.  
First may I congratulate you on a first class journal. I thought I would take this opportunity to update you on our progress. We are planning to organise a meeting in late November or early December (if it suits all parties) to discuss what happens next and possibly try some story, poetry or music, etc. Hopefully this will take place in Glastonbury. I have sent Anne-Marie some ideas and await further news with great interest. Write if you are interested. Another idea is:

#### ARTHUR & THE CATHARS

† From Ian Forrester Roberts, Gloucester.  
I've just sweated through to finishing my report for the Winston Churchill Trust, which seems to have evolved into an explanation of the link between Arthurian legend and the Cathar faith, and the influence of Eleanor and Wolfram. Why don't we flog together an excursion to the Languedoc, 'do' the Cathar trails and castles, and muse at length on Holy Grails, Excaliburs and kings? Wouldn't that be brilliant? If we organised something like that and fuelled it with an article or two you would be overwhelmed. The sales of Pendragon would jump, and so would membership; you would be rushed off your feet and you would be a happy and harassed man. If Gothic Image can do it, so can we. What Pendragon needs is a daring foray into the present, the past has a habit of taking care of itself!  
How's that for a vision? Do you think we should start with a weekend for members at Glastonbury or go for the Mediterranean package in one go? What about a tour of Brittany? Interested?

#### A CRY FROM THE NORTH

† From Jim Lawrie, Glasgow,

Scotland.

I've immensely enjoyed the first two issues of the journal which I've received and I'm intrigued by the idea of a nationwide web of Arthurian freaks. I see, though, that most of the references to events, publications, etc. seem to refer to the South of England. Is it possible for you to pass on to me any information of relevant groups on the cold and windy side of the border? I'm a member of the Glasgow Lodge of the Theosophical Society where we have a few others of the Arthurian tendency, but it would be great to do a little networking with those we've yet to meet.

Jim has already recruited three Scottish members to our ranks. I'm sure Eddie could do us a fine cartoon of a web of Arthurian freaks for the journal. How about it, you denizens of the frozen North of Britain, what about a gathering of the Clan MacArthur? Let's show these Sassenachs what you're made of!

#### ARTHUR OUR NEIGHBOUR

† From David Bowers, Manchester.  
I've taken up your challenge of writing on Arthur My Neighbour and hope you'll be able to publish my offering on King Arthur in Lancashire. When I researched this I was amazed at how much material there was. It just goes to show how useful it is to have someone suggest themes.  
Thanks David, your article will be in our February journal, together with several other very interesting regional claims for Arthur. This theme promises to be very rich and may well take up two editions. It can also include the Tintagel/Cornwall theme, as Charles Evans-Günther has already submitted an expert article on this topic. It's up to members to present their own areas as Arthur's homeland.

#### THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

† From Gareth Jones, Beaumains, Southampton.  
During my recent holiday in Jersey, I became fascinated with the place, and especially with the fact that I could find absolutely



no Arthurian legends associated with the Channel Islands- despite there being a legend associated with every square inch of the place and Wace being born there. Given that the Islands are directly in the path to Brittany so that the folk with the legends passed through (indeed, many settled during the exodus to Brittany), and that the legends are rife (and claimed as native) at both ends of this journey, how did the Channel Islands escape Arthur? (I thought I was onto something at one time when I discovered Mont de Arthur on the map, but it's named after the local de Arthur family). So, I'm going to use them as a setting for a *Pendragon* game, tying in as many local sites, legends, etc. as possible.

*Beaumains* has included our advert, and a review of the journal, and has also printed my 'Excalibur' article. We have already received applications for membership from this source. Thank you, Gareth, we wish you well with your *Bergerac* based battles.

#### THE SOCIETY

† From Eddie Tooke, Twynning, Glos.

'Pendragon' comes, of course, from the Welsh (or Cornish) 'pen' (head) and 'dragon': thus 'Head Dragon'. A star was seen at Winchester, darting forth a ray. At the end of the ray was a globe of fire shaped like a dragon. King Uther was so impressed that he ordered two golden stars to be made, one for Winchester and one for his royal standard. The title was, of course, handed down to Arthur. 'Dragon' is the Greek 'drakon' (hence 'drake' and 'firedrake') which comes from a verb meaning to see, look at or watch. Watching is a function of many dragons whose duty it is to guard things of value (such as the Golden Apples of the Hesperides). The task of legendary national heroes is to rise up from their watchful slumbers to guard their respective countries at times of urgent need. It may be coincidence or Jungian synchronicity that the watchful leadership of the Elizabethan hero Sir Francis Drake saved Britain from the Armada. Our Society was given its name by

its founder, Jess Foster, in 1959. For many of us - most I hope - it is an organisation which not only investigates the Arthurian saga but seeks, in a modest way, to carry on the noble traditions of the legendary king. Pendragon has had its ups and downs but, currently (under the keen and competent leadership of Fred Stedman-Jones) it is riding ever higher - a process that can only gather momentum.

When a new editor makes kind remarks about the work of the retiring editor and the latter, in his turn, praises his successor's efforts, it is the cue for the cynical to gibe: 'mutual admiration society!' I have just one retort to any such - if indeed they exist: 'read Fred's first issue of the Journal and tell me if one can have anything but admiration for a difficult job magnificently begun.'

Good luck and blessings to our own Head Dragon, then: long may he and the rest of us serve our Society.

*What can I say to that, from one who has served Pendragon so long and so well? Two quotations sum up what I have learned so far as Editor: 'No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else's draft' (H.G. Wells) and, 'Writing is easy, all you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood form on your forehead.' (Gene Fowler). Thank you all for your kind words, they certainly help.*



# BookReviews



## Arthur - Prehistoric Sites & Place-Names

by John Godfrey Williams

ISBN 0 9521891 0 0,

West House Books, 1993, £4.50

A complete study of Arthurian Place-Names is vital and though there have been a number of attempts to produce such a publication (Geoffrey Ashe's contribution being one of the fullest) there is still plenty of work to do. Mr. Williams, we are told in the foreword by Roslie Hayles, has spent thirty years studying the subject of Arthurian Place-Names.

In this little book he lists 290 sites which he connects with Arthur. This you may say is very good, until you read the foreword which tells you that Mr. Williams believes that the name Arthur is derived from Arth Fawr (Great Bear) and that it is connected to the constellation of Ursa Major - the Great Bear. This is quite interesting but it must be pointed out that there is no way that Arth Fawr could become Arthur. It is also not the first time that Arthur has been connected with some heavenly body - there was in the Middle Ages a connection with the star Arcturus, from the Greek "Bear Guard" in the constellation Boötes. Such suggestions may well be worth discussing.

Returning to the place-names this book contains sites from all over the British Isles - from the Scilly Isles to Caithness and from Surrey to Cork. He even points out two sites in Brittany. Unfortunately, there are many more sites that Mr. Williams ignores (he could have filled the two final pages, which are blank, with more Breton sites) and yet he lists places which may have nothing to do with Arthur. However, it must be taken into account that Mr. Williams is interested in stone alignments and dowsing.

This is a nicely put together book and may be of use to more than people interested in stone alignments.

C. Evans-Günther

## Anglo-Saxon England

Martin Welch

B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1992, £25.00



Consisting of 144 pages, 10 colour illustration, over 90 black and white photographs, reconstructions, maps and plans, an appendix, further reading, a four page glossary and five pages of index, Anglo-Saxon England is part of the English Heritage series.

Dr. Welch divides his book into three parts - Communities in life, Communities in death and The Wider context - each with three chapters. Since this book is part of the English Heritage series it concentrates on sites ranging from Doon Hill in the north to Swallowcliffe Down in the south. Considerable space is given to West Stow, Cowdrey's Down and Yeavinger, and some of the reconstructions are quite fascinating (particularly the coloured illustrations). The settlements, discussed in the first part of the book, are from the simple 'grubenhauser' to the larger halls and are compared with similar examples found in different parts of Europe. The second half of the publication takes a trans-social look at types of burial sites from those without artifacts to the great finds like Sutton Hoo and Taplow.

In the final part Dr. Welch looks at aspects of manufacturing (pottery, metalwork and glass) and trade, the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England and late Anglo-Saxon England. Here is included a look at the development of the burh and how some have become



modern day towns and cities while other have almost disappeared. This latter part of the book is of some interest because it looks briefly at what happened after the collapse of Roman authority. It asks was there some kind of continuity from the Roman period into the establishment of Anglo-Saxon dominance. That there was continuity is, of course, very difficult to say but for the area now England it can be shown that there was and there was not at the same time. While Christianity would seem to have disappeared and was not re-established until brought in again from Europe, it is possible that the Romano-British were unlikely to have left their lands and merely accepted new masters. Despite the invasion ideas pushed both by Medieval Celts and Anglo-Saxons the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England may well have been less bloody than recorded.

This is a very interesting book, written in such a way as to be useful for both the lay-person and the archaeologically minded. There are, without doubt, better books on the subject but not many as well illustrated.

C.Evans-Günther

The Art of Celtia  
by Courtney Davis  
ISBN 0 71372309 2  
Blandford, 1993, £15.99.



This beautifully reproduced collection of colour and black and white paintings reinforces Courtney Davis's reputation as our finest interpreter of Celtic art. His 'Celtic Art Sourcebook', published in 1988, has sold over 35,000 copies and this work is certainly going to surpass that total.

Together with new designs, 'The Art of Celtia' gathers together Courtney's illustrations from many books on which he has collaborated with other writers, making it an invaluable compendium of much of his finest work. We have a range of images that cover the great themes of Celtic legend: The Sacred Presence, Rebirth, The Otherworld, The Natural World, Totem Animals, Celtic Gods and Heroes, Taliesin, The Great Magician and the Solar King. To have this rich body of Celtic imagery readily accessible in one volume is very satisfying, especially as the standard of reproduction enhances many of the previous printings.

This is important, because, having seen many of the originals of these paintings, I am aware of their luminosity and subtle colour balance. Courtney is able to use a wide palette, juxtaposing potentially discordant colours even, with a sure instinct for contrast and concord. Courtney's publicity often mentions that he has never received any formal art training and 'that the symbolic conventions he uses are the result of ten years gaining mastery of this ancient art'. What is patently clear is that this artist has a natural genius for his work that he has tempered by self discipline and criticism. The work is bold and instantly appealing but never naive.

A selection of poetic extracts and tightly written notes explain the significance of the designs and help the reader to understand the symbolic reference of the images, for the intention is to make the Celtic archetypes resonant and meaningful today. Like many, I am particularly open to the complex of ideas encompassed in The Green Man, as a re-emergent symbol for our modern world, so the plate of this title on page 51 is particularly haunting to me.

The opening words of the book are by Sir George Trevelyan and I can do no better than to quote that great teacher and visionary: 'The mystery of the Celtic myths is stirring... Courtney Davis has surely made a beautiful contribution to our understanding. It is much needed, since in our time Arthur indeed rides again. Thank you for your vision, artistic skill, painstaking craftsmanship and love of this great and ancient tradition - your work is an inspiration to us all.'

F.Stedman-Jones

( For a special discount offer to members see back page. )

## Constable Publishers: Celtic List:



*This firm has been republishing a list of classical texts on Celtic, Anglo Saxon and Arthurian themes: the following notes are intended to serve as a guide to those wondering about their current usefulness. The date in brackets shows the year of their first publication.*

**Pagan Celtic Britain**, Dr. Anne Ross, 1993; (1967). £10.95.

A revised study of Dr. Ross's truly seminal work, this is an absolute *must* for everyone's library. It examines the evidence for the religion of the pagan Celts: archaeological, anthropological, historical and folklore. The deities and ritual practices are considered and the effects of the Roman Occupation are examined. Packed with illustrations, the book is full of profound insights and fascinating glimpses of the early Celtic world. As useful now as the day it was written.

**The Lost Gods of England**, Brian Branston, 1993; (1957). £12.95.

A lively and absorbing book, it complements the content of the previous title but is a 'popular' survey, in no way as scholarly. It examines the archaeological evidence of Anglo-Saxon worship and relates it to the mythological context. The pantheon of Anglo-Saxon gods is reviewed and the legacy of pagan worship to our folk customs and superstitions is an interesting emphasis of the book. The original edition was copiously illustrated (124, 9 in colour) but this edition lacks many of these; I suppose this is a matter of cost.

Overtaken academically by more recent studies but it is still a fascinating read.

**The Celtic & Scandinavian Religions**, J.A. MacCulloch, 1993; (1948) £12.95.

Written as a general introduction for his students at Edinburgh, the book gives a readable account of the thought, religious beliefs and practices of these peoples in separate halves of the text. It has the feel of well-edited notes which, in an earlier age might have been dictated to a class. In our own more enlightened times they would be duplicated and this is where this book comes in. I do not mean to denigrate the book's usefulness, the fact that it has ten pages of mainly one-word entries in the index - in a text of 180 pages - shows how densely packed it is with easily found references.

Two titles by Roger Sherman Loomis:

**Celtic Myth & Arthurian Romance**: 1993, (1926), £14.95.

Loomis, an American, was one of the most important scholars of the Arthurian legend. His main thesis was concerned with the influence of Celtic legend and literature on Arthurian romance and this book was his first full statement of these theories. The book is a fascinating journey through the Arthurian romances and Celtic mythology to trace the prototypes of the Arthurian themes: gods of sun and storm, nature myths, the vegetation goddess (including the transformed hag), etc. Loomis's theories were attacked by other scholars and he modified and modulated them during his career. Essential reading which provides a platform for current writers working with these ideas.

**The Grail, from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol**, 1993; (1963) £9.95.

Here he concentrates on the origins of the Grail legend, and traces its development from the Celtic vessel of plenty. To read Loomis in these books is to understand the description of the Arthurian romances as 'the bright afterglow of Celtic heathendom.'

F.Stedman-Jones

( The inclusion of extra articles in this issue means we are holding over several reviews of publications received: space is limited. Members are invited to submit reviews of books they think would interest others and to suggest titles for review. )





#### ★ COURSES

Two members have sent in details of some very interesting courses forthcoming next year:

**Celtic Arthur:** A day school on 12th March organised by Dave Weldrake of the Department of Continuing Education, The University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT. Phone: 0532 333222. Member Charles Evans-Günther has been invited to give two lectures: on *The Welsh Romances* (including the *Dream of Rhonabwy*) and the *Discovery of Arthur's Grave at Glastonbury*. Congratulations, Charles, I'm planning on being there.

**The City Lit. London:** London-based members have an enviable choice of courses at the Lit. *Celtic Traditional Culture*, Tutors Fran & Geoff Doel is already running (22nd Sept.-15th Dec.). The syllabus of this and other courses can be obtained from: The City Lit, Stukely Street, Drury Lane, London, WC2B 5LJ (071 430 0542). Starting 12th January-23rd March the talented Doels will be running *In Quest of King Arthur*, on Wednesday evenings-looking at sources and treatments, from Gildas to John Arden. If you can't manage this then a one day course: *Glastonbury Legends* is booked for Saturday, 5th March (10.30-16.30). This I hope to attend. Thanks to member Ceinwen Sanderson for this information. We invite local details of courses & events from all Pendragon members.

#### ★ BATTLE OF CAMLAN

In August Beryl Mercer spotted a newspaper article on the Plymouth Excalibur Combat Society. This enactment society

specialises in fighting Arthurian battles and on the 28th, 29th August they staged their second annual Field of Combat at the National Shire Horse Centre at Yealmpton. They were joined by members of other medieval combat societies in their staging of the Battle of Camlan and more than 120 knights, yeomen, Celts and Saxons armed with swords, axes, maces, flails, spears and bows took part. I don't know who won but it sounds worth looking out for next year.



#### ★ ARCHAEOLOGY

**Iron Age Coin Hoard:** Nearly 1,000 Iron Age coins were found in September in a field in South Hereford by a man using a metal detector. The hoard is worth about £10,000 and contained 7 gold and 977 silver coins and is thought to be the biggest Iron Age collection unearthed in Britain.

**Senhouse Museum, Maryport:** Set up in 1990, the Museum cares for the Netherhall Roman-British collection. The collection was started in 1570 by John Senhouse, a local landowner, and the tradition continued for 12 generations of the family, who

preserved the remains found on their land. The collection includes altars, pottery & glass, bronze items, Celtic religious stones and coins etc.

The Museum is situated close to the remains of Alauna, the garrison headquarters of Hadrian's defences, which stretched northwards 26 miles to Bowness-on-Solway. This is Cumbria, the area I wrote about in my reply to Nancy Branch's letter last issue. Information: The Museum, The Battery Maryport, Cumbria, CA15 6JD (0900 816168).

#### ★ ARTHUR'S HERITAGE

We entertained friends from Sicily in the summer. Asked where they would like to go they said, without a moment's hesitation: "Stonehenge." We went in pouring rain and they were not disappointed. I haven't space here to discuss the present threat posed to the protection of our heritage - including our major sites- but I feel this is something we should put on our programme of concerns and activities as a society. Much more on this in our next issue, which will be devoted to the regional claims for King Arthur. We already have four articles for this theme and have made contact with two regional conservation societies who are seeking to protect sites of great natural and historical beauty: *The Warriors of Owain Llawgoch* of the Gwent Valley Carmarthenshire (who are not an aggressive nationalistic group, I assure you) and *Operation Excalibur*, the campaign to save Wychbury hillfort in the West Midlands. Both claim Arthurian associations, but - more importantly - both groups are seeking to prevent Arthur's Logres from becoming the Wasteland. They deserve our support and will be given room to voice their concerns in our next journal. I'm sure this threat would have brought Jess Foster our founder onto the barricades.

#### ★ TYROLEAN ICEMAN

This celebrity from the past has become a symbol of Europe's fading dream of unity, it seems to me. He

is stuck in a freezer at Innsbruck University while Austrian, Italian and German bureaucrats try to design a suitable passport for Europeans trying to cross the time boundary. Launched into stardom at the age of 5,300 years, and sporting a natty haircut and some interesting tattoos, it is hardly suprising that several women have made inquiries about the possibility of having his baby. And this was even before the release of *Jurassic Park*!

#### ★ "IMAGINEERS"



This is the trendy term coined by the magic-makers of Euro Disneyland for the engineers who design their attractions. Fred Benckenstein is their chief man and he makes sure that every detail of the 'antique wearing' of the designs remains just as on the draughtsman's drawings: 5% 'wear' on this and 20% 'discoloration' on that; even the blue of Beauty's Castle moat is colour calibrated to hide the machinery. Mr Benckenstein claims to have learned from 'the more lax cultural custodians' of Europe. He cites King Arthur's Round Table at Winchester as an object lesson in 'bad show'. I shall quote his own words:

"Over the years, the coats of arms on the table have been restored by different artists, using different techniques. Now some of them are legible and some aren't. You see, it has deviated over time from what was originally there, because there was nobody there to keep an eye on it during that whole period of time. That kind of sloppiness simply wouldn't be tolerated by Disney'. I think there's a Phd. in this for



someone!

#### ★ MUSIC & TAPES

**Yew View:** I have mentioned that the Gwenlais Valley and Wychbury Hill guardians have written to us. A strange thematic repetition occurs in the material of the two groups: a special reverence for the Yew tree. Wychbury Hill, an Iron Age hillfort, is crowned by 28 ancient yew trees and member Susan Newland has sent me an article and a plan showing the position of these yews. I intend to publish this material in February. She has also sent me an article in which the yew is described as 'the most sacred thing on earth: the tree of life which can live forever.' Is it mere coincidence that Jan Fry of Gwenlais has written, quite independently: 'Pantilyn and the Gwenlais valley is a magical place, with the ancient woodland, one of only three ancient yews over holy wells left in Britain?' Jan also encloses a page from *Rural Wales* which says, 'At Carreg Gwenlais is an ancient yew, the most revered tree of the Druids... said to be the protector of the valley, it has been dated as being 1,500 years old.' The tape *Yew View* has been produced to support all sites under threat and to contribute to a greener environment and the healing of Mother Nature.



Cassette from Tim Shaw, Pantglas, Hafod Bridge, Llanwrda, Dyfed, SA19 8UG.

**Waters of the Goddess:** Maggie Stewart has produced 2 tapes to help the Springs Foundation to restore the sacred waters of Sulis at Bath: 'Beyond the North Wind'

tells the story of the spring; 'Voice of the Spring' was recorded over the sacred waters. The tapes are £6.95+ £1pp. Cheques: Maggie Stewart, PO Box 1619, Bath, Avon, BA1 3TJ

**Levr di Breizh:** A catalogue of Breton and Celtic music is available from: Coop Breizh, 17 Straed Penhoët, 35036 Roazhon, Rennes, Brittany, France.

**The Spirit of Celtia:** Courtney Davis has included an advertisement block for Pendragon in his splendid new catalogue, for which we thank him. It was good to meet up at the launch of his latest book (see advert on back cover and review). The illustrated catalogue lists an exciting collection of Celtic art and goods by Courtney and other artists (including member Simant Bostock). It includes Inspirational music by Michael Law, Clannad, Cappercaille, Planxty, Wolfstone, Wendy Stewart, Dan Ar Braz, and Alan Stival, as well as the harp music of Hilary Rushmore and pipe music by Seamus Ennis.

**Brigid:** Haunting stories and songs of the Celtic Goddess and Christian Saint, with harp: Ravenna Records, Runic Cross Cottage, Waverley Road, Innerleithen, Peebleshire, Scotland.

#### ★ ARTS & CRAFTS

**Past Times:** have now opened a shop in Chester (57 Bridge St., (321420) so those of us in the North West and North Wales will be able to browse and buy without paying postage costs. New to their Celtic jewellery, notecards, knitwear, etc., is A Celtic Nativity set: flat figures based on panelled High Crosses. Expensive at £65 but you could make your own by using self-hardening Daz. This would make a splendid family hobby before Christmas.

**Celestial Glass:** produce a range of screen-printed and leaded glass roundels to hang in windows. The designs are based on traditional Celtic designs and show up the beauty of the fine interlace work most beautifully. At present no VAT is charged but

you may need to be quick! Celestial Glass, 9 East Terrace, South Queensferry, West Lothian, Scotland.

**Mithril Jewellery:** There is much Celtic jewellery around these days but these pieces are made by hand in silver and gold. Commissions are accepted. Russell Caldwell has been appointed by the Iona Community to manufacture their Wild Goose Logo in silver to mark their 50th Anniversary. Catalogue showing pieces in colour: Mithril Jewellery, 38 Edgemont Street, Glasgow, G41 3EL. (041 632 4786).

**Celtic Giftwrap Paper:** A package of four high quality sheets with matching gift cards, each sheet 18"x 24". Printed in the USA, Dover Publications. distributed in U.K. by Constable Publishers. Very attractive. Try art shops, gift stores, etc.

**Castle Welsh Crafts:** I have mentioned this shop before, but apart from slate carvings, pottery, love spoons, Celtic jewellery, etc., they have a huge range of shirts, T, sweat, polo with Dragons and Celtic designs. If in Cardiff call at: 1 Castle Street, CF1 2BS. (0222 343038).

**Crop Circle Wall Hangings:** The Golden Dawn Collection. Some of the more striking designs, forged in iron and finished in gold and black. Most at £17.00, Golden Tripod £33.35. The Metaphysical Research Group, Archers Court, Stonestile Lane, The Ridge, Hastings, Sussex, TN35 4PG.

#### ★ ARTHURIAN BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

I have been out and about, scouting in the bookshops, to see what is in print so that you can order ahead for Christmas. Good buys:

**Adventures of King Arthur:** Angela Wilkes, Usborne Picture Classics, £2.95. For the less literary child, pictures and text, 32pp.

**Sir Gawain & the Loathly Lady:** Selina Hastings, Walker Books, London, £3.99. Elegant pictures and telling, won the Kate Greenaway Medal. 32pp.

**Sir Gawain & the Green Knight:** Same author and artist also same

publisher and price. Companion book to above.

**The Story of King Arthur:** Robin Lister. Kingfisher Classics, £5.99. Very attractive glossy presentation.

**Tales of King Arthur:** James Riordan, Dean. Hardback, first published by Hamlyn, 1982. Atmospheric illustrations.

**King Arthur & his Knights:** Julek Heller, Dragons World, £18.95. A beautiful book for readers of all ages.

#### ★ JOURNEY TO AVALON

As we go to press I am anticipating the pleasure of attending the launch of member David Pykitt's new book at Newport, Mon. on 13th October, written with Chris Barber and published by Bloreng Press. Holywell Rd, Abergavenny, Gwent, NP7 5LP. at £9.99. I'm sure all our members will wish to read this attractively produced book. The authors present another theory about the identity of King Arthur but with a fascinating amount of ancilliary material and many illustrations. We'll review the book in XXIV/1: the content fits our next theme well.

#### ★ EXCHANGE MAGAZINES

We have added two new Exchange magazines to our list: 'Wisht Maen' and 'The Rennes Observer'. 'Wisht' is an old Devon word for 'eerie, uncanny', *Maen* is Celtic for 'stone'. See Exchange page. The Rennes Group explore the mystery of Rennes le Chateau and its priest Sauniér. Contact: Jonothan Boulter, 4 Huntington House, St. Paul's Ave., Willesden Green, NW2 5SR.





## EXCHANGE JOURNALS

**BEAUMAINS** - Editor Gareth Jones, 69 Atherley Road, Shirley, Southampton SO1 5DT. Magazine for fans of the *PENDRAGON* roleplay game of Chaosium, U.S.A. Intention is to produce 3-4 issues per year. U.K. price £1.75. Editions 1 and 2 published.

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

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

**CELTIC CONNECTIONS** - Editor David James, Tamarisk Farm, West Bexington, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9DF. Quarterly journal dedicated to all aspects of Celtic culture, especially the arts and crafts. Sample copy £1.50, add 60p for overseas. Subscription £5.50 year. Cheques payable to 'David James.'

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE EARTH MYSTERIES** - Editor Danny Sullivan, GEM Magazine, P.O. Box 258, Cheltenham, GL53 1HR. Three issues for £5.75.

**MERCIAN MYSTERIES** - Alternative studies of past and place in the Midlands. Quarterly, A4 format. £6.00 for 4; £1.75 for sample. From 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough, LE12 6UJ

**MEYN MAMVRO** - (Stones of our Motherland), Editor Cheryl Straffon, 51 Carn Bosavern, St. Just., Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX. Earth energies, ancient stones, sacred sites, Cornish prehistory and culture, legend/folklore. Sample copy £1.70; Annual sub. £5

**NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES** - Editor John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorkshire HX7 5NP. 4 issues £3.95.

**SILVER WHEEL MAGAZINE** - Journal of the Native British Tradition, Craft/Shamanism/ Druidry. Articles, poetry, pathworkings, etc. £1.75 sample, £6 for four issues. Published at the fire festivals. Cheques payable to 'Anna Franklin', Windrush, High Tor West, Shilton, Leics.

**THE SOLAR COURIER** - The Sharkti Laureate, Spearhead of the New English Renaissance. Non-profit-making imprint aiming to re-create ageless values of beauty, truth & love associated by many with the Arthurian mythos. Quarterly newsletter: The

Sharkti Laureate, 104 Argyle Gardens, Upminster, Essex RM14 3EU. Cheque (£2) to 'P. Page.'

**TRADITION** - Editor Paul Salmon, Tradition, PO Box 57, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1DU. Quarterly publication devoted to traditional custom and culture. E.g. Arthurian legend, Green Man, Morris dancing. One year's subscription (4 issues) £6.00. Cheques payable to 'Paul Salmon.'

**WISHT MAEN** - Editors Tracey Brown and Phil Roberts. Devon Earth Mysteries, Legends and Folklore, Ancient Sites, Earth Energies, etc. £7 for 3 issues: Condors, Exeter St., North Tawton, Devon, EX20 2HB..



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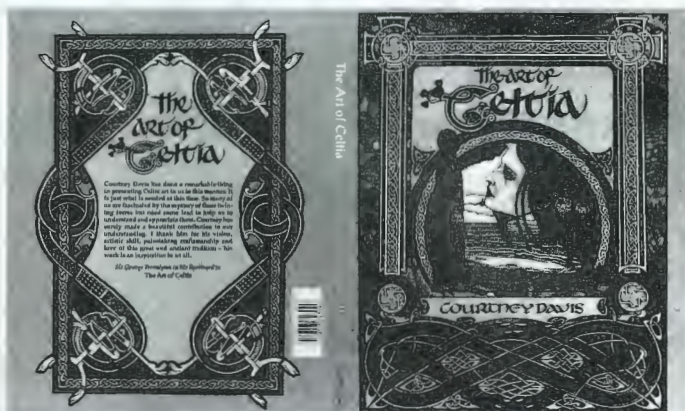
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