

# pendragon



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Winter 1994





# EDITORIAL

A Happy New Year to all our readers and we thank you for your cards and good wishes.

With this edition we enter our 35th year as a Society and we plan to commemorate our long history with a special number later in the year. In the meantime we invite further articles on our present theme: Rex Ubique; the King who is everywhere (we thought it sounded a bit more upmarket than Arthur my Neighbour!) We have some interesting articles in hand but no one has sent us anything on Arthur in Scotland, nor even in Cumbria: surely good claims can be made for these regions? Members Pykitt and Barber have made an extensive claim for a Welsh Arthur in their new book, see the back cover for details. Articles are always welcome on other themes, of course, and we would be delighted to publish an edition of members' poetry and other creative writing when enough comes in.

The budget came and went, without vat on books and magazines, but costs are rising steadily, nevertheless. Printing charges have gone up by 4% and 40 pages puts us in the 38p bracket for postage. It may be necessary to cut down to 36 pages again to avoid this extra charge, but we hope not. Paying your subs on the first reminder would help us to budget, as we have stressed before. Our thanks to those who do and for the donations some send; it all helps to keep Pendragon going.

There has been a steady rise in membership from home and abroad and we are finding outlets for the magazine in shops around the country. We are busy planning for an AGM around Whitsun, avoiding the holiday itself, of course. Interesting new contacts have been made and full details will appear in our May edition. We hope to have speakers, a book display and an exhibition, workshops and forums; there is even the possibility of our holding the AGM meeting around a twelve foot oak Round Table! This AGM will be a chance to brainstorm new ideas and meet up with other members to plan events, functions and activities.

We would like to remind you of the fight to save Wychbury Hillfort and the surrounding area which member Sue Newland has brought to our attention. Sue would be glad to hear from anyone who would like to know more and we will happily pass on any letters you care to send, but please enclose an sae for her reply. Sue will be writing an article on Operation Excalibur for us, to remind members of environmental threats to Logres, Arthur's Land.

It is with sadness that we report the death of Mrs Anne Faull of Somerset, a long standing member. We offer Mr Faull and his family our deepest sympathies.

And, finally, we are delighted to announce the birth of Benjamin Ciaran Rouse on Christmas Eve at Addenbrooke's hospital, Cambridge to Anne and Simon. Many congratulations, friends. I'm glad to say that Marilyn and I were able to call to see our youngest member over the holiday season. He's a champion and we look forward to seeing him at Pendragon events and to printing his first cover!

I'd better let you read on now: it's a good mix, thanks to our increasing band of contributors. Members will be glad to see Eddie Tooke back in form on page thirty two, I know.

# PENDRAGON

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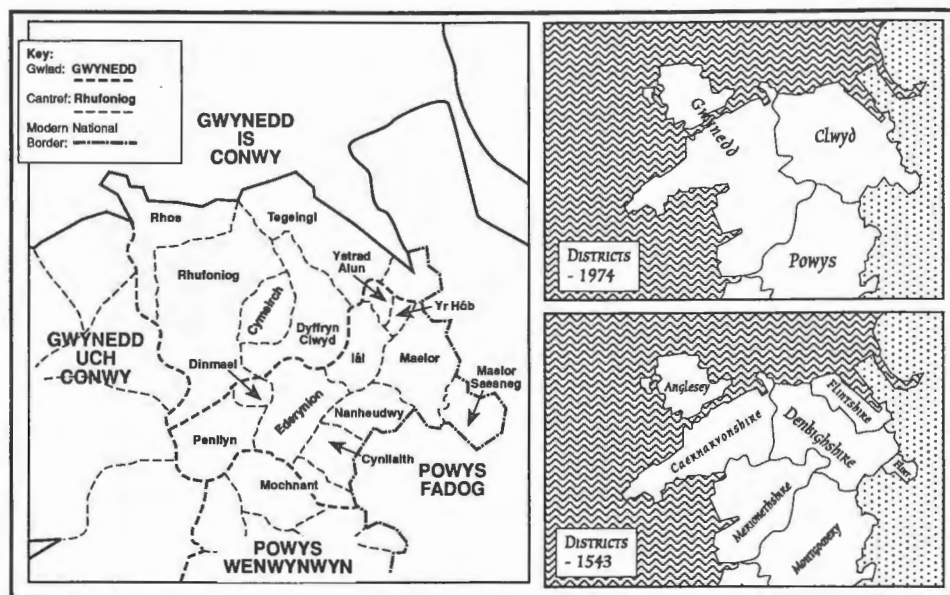
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# Arthur: The Clwyd Connection

## Charles Evans-Günther

This article must begin with an explanation. Clwyd is roughly made up of the two pre-1974 counties of Flintshire and Denbighshire, but if the present government gets its way changes will take place that will complicate things. Clwyd will be divided into three and a bit counties. Because of these complications I am feel I must use the present county but will also refer to the pre-1974 counties. Clwyd is also made up from two ancient "lands" - those of Gwynedd and Powys. To the west was Gwynedd Is Conwy (east of the River Conwy) and to the east the two districts of Powys Fadog and Powys Wenwynwyn. Often the area covered more-or-less by Clwyd was called Perfeddwlad or the Four Cantrefi. A discussion about the geography of this area is not easy due to so many changes in borders and names.



The earliest reference to Arthur goes back to the "Gododdin" in which a band of warriors march south from Edinburgh to fight the English around Catterick. Amongst these warriors was Gwawrddur who was compared to Arthur. Another hero in the poem was Gorthyn ap Urfai, "of the blood of Cilydd", "seen around the banks of the Aled" and called "defender of Rhufoniog". In the Middle Ages Rhufoniog was one of the cantrefi (a cantref was a division of land) of Gwynedd situated around the River Aled, a tributary of the River Elwy to the west of Denbigh.

In The History of the Britons, attributed to Nennius, Arthur is portrayed as a leader in battles against the Anglo-Saxons. One such battle, situated at a site called *Urbe Legionis* could be the Roman city of Chester. Though actually in England, Chester has always played an important part in the history of North Wales. Despite no concrete evidence for Arthur fighting at Chester, there is archaeological material that shows Chester may have been occupied during the early Post-Roman period. It is possible that Chester became deserted after the famous battle of Chester in the early seventh century and was not again occupied until the ninth century.

Between the writings of Nennius and those of Geoffrey of Monmouth, there were a number of sources for Arthurian information - the Triads, Stanzas of the Graves, poetry and the prose tales such as "Culhwch and Olwen". In the Stanzas of the Graves, a sort of guided tour of the burial sites of heroes,

a number of Arthurian Clwyd connections can be found. Llemenic ap Mawan, who is recorded in the Triads as One of the "Three Unrestricted Guests" and "Three Wanderers of Arthur's Court", is said to be buried in a tumulus at Tyddyn Bleiddyn near St. Asaph. Hennin Henben lies beneath a long cairn near St. George where once stood the hillfort of Dinorben. (Sadly now quarried away, Dinorben has been shown to have archaeological evidence to indicate that it was being used during the Dark Age.) Hennin was the father of Garwen, who was one of Arthur's mistresses, and she is said to be buried at Morfa Rhianedd situated near Llandudno. Arthur's wife also has near Clwyd connections with her father's name being connected with the hillfort, once called *Caer Ogyrfan* - Gogyrfan's fort - Old Oswestry near the town of Oswestry, just over the border in Shropshire.

More allusions to Arthurian sites can be found in "Culhwch and Olwen". In this story there is a very long list of Arthur's warriors. Amongst these are Huail ap Caw, of whom we will hear more of later, and Cynwal Sant, who is said to be one of the few who escaped the battle of Camlan. The actual connection is with the horse he rode from the battle - Hengroen. Near Abergele is a hillfort now called Castell Gawr, but once known as Dinhengroen - the fort, city or refuge of Hengroen. Another character from the story is Mabon son of Modron, a very mysterious being possibly the old Celtic god Maponus son of Matrona, whose name is connected with Ruabon, originally Rhiwabon - the Hill of Mabon, near Wrexham. In the search for Mabon the heroes have to talk to the oldest creatures in the world, one of whom was the Ousel of Cilgwrri, which is the old Welsh name for the Wirral - the peninsula north-west of Chester, opposite Liverpool between the rivers Mersey and Dee. In the story of Culhwch and Olwen there is also mention of King Doged whose wife Cilydd, father of Culhwch, married. Llanddoged was situated a little north-east of Llanrwst in the old county of Denbighshire - now over the border in Gwynedd.

One of the most intriguing stories included in the collection of tales called by Lady Charlotte Guest "The Mabinogion" is "The Dream of Rhonabwy". This is set well and truly on the Clwyd-Cheshire-Shropshire borders and begins in the 14th century. The main character dreams he has gone back to the time of Arthur, who is preparing to fight the battle of Badon having already fought the battle of Camlan. Well, it is a dream and is rather strange! A group of warriors have gone in search of the brother of the lord of Powys Fadog when Rhonabwy has his dream. Amongst the sites mentioned are Allington, an area near Rossett between the River Alun, Pulford Brook and the River Dee. The searchers go south through the Vale of Ceiriog and rest at a place called Dildystan or Nillystan, which could be either Dudleston opposite Chirk or a place near Whittington, both just over the modern border into Shropshire.

Poetry is another source of place names with an Arthurian connection. Amongst the poems of the Middle Ages that mention Arthur a good few are concentrated in the north of Wales. (They often mention the battle of Camlan though very rarely the battle of Badon.) In a number Arthur is connected with various medieval war-bands and in one poem, in particular, by Bleddyn Fardd to the three sons of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, one son is described as carrying a spear of steel like "... Arthur at *Caer Fenlli*. ...". T. Gwyn Jones also mentions a tradition in the Vale of Clwyd that had been a local tradition about Arthur having a fight with a giant called Benlli (or Benlli's son). In the Clwydian range are a number of hillforts including Moel Arthur and Moel Fenlli separated by the range's highest peak of Moel Famau. Benlli is also mentioned in The History of the Britons as having run in with Germanus after the Halleluiah Victory.

"Alle the iles Anglesey on lyft half he haldes  
And fares over the fordes by the forlandes  
Over at the Holy Hede, til he hade elt bank  
In the wyldrenesse of Wyrle . . .".

"The Isles of Anglesey he kept always on his left,  
And fared across the fords by the fore shore  
Over at Holy Head to the other side  
Into the Wilderness of Wirral, where few dwelled . . .".

This is taken from the fourteenth century poem "Gawain and the Green Knight". We find Gawain crossing from Clwyd into Cheshire. The site of the crossing is called Holy Head but it can not be the Holyhead in Anglesey rather it must be north-east of Holywell near the remains of Basingwerk Abbey on the River Dee. Holywell was the place where Gwenfrewi (Winifred) was beheaded by a spurned lover



and healed by Beuno. Where her head had fallen a spring is said to have bubbled up - so the 'spring of the holy head' - and to this day is a place of pilgrimage and 'miracle cures'.

Many folk tales were recorded by John Jones of Gelli Lyfddy, Ysgeifiog, Clwyd, in the early seventeenth century. During his chequered career, which found him on both sides of the law, he collected a number of interesting Arthurian tales. One concerns the rivalry between Arthur and Huail ap Caw for the affection of a local lady and to solve the problem the two hot-heads had a fight. Huail wounded Arthur in the leg and to recompense he swore never to mention the event in public on pain of death. Some years later, Arthur while attempting to get near to a Ruthin lady disguised himself as a woman. Huail noticed Arthur by his limp and unmasked him while making fun of his lameness. Arthur, now in a position of power, had the lampooner beheaded on a stone block in the centre of town. Today this chopping block, now called Maen Huail - Huail's Stone, can still be seen in St. Peter's Square, Ruthin. In this story Arthur, after being wounded, was said to have gone to his hall at Caerwys (a town to the north-east of Ruthin) to recover. Angharad Llwyd (1780-1866), also from Flintshire, tells the same story but adds that Arthur's palace was at Nannerch and that nearby was Arthur's chapel called Capel Gwfail. Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709) records at Nannerch a "Y Capel Gwail yn Rhos". The name of the chapel indicates a wattle building of some kind - a type of structure that was probably common from pre-Roman times to well into the Middle Ages.

There is another story told by John Jones which tells of Urien Rheged and his encounter with a lady of the Otherworld near Mold in Clwyd. Urien, a historical character from Cumbria, lived a generation later than the accepted dates for Arthur, but he, like his son Owain, has been drawn into the orbit of Arthur. He meets a beautiful woman washing clothes in a stream near the village of Llanferres. He is sent out of his mind by her beauty and rapes her. However, instead of being angry she blesses him telling him that she is the daughter of the king of the Otherworld and that she had been cursed. The spell could only be broken by having a child by a Christian man and she promised to meet him at the same spot in a year's time. On his return he find she has given birth to twins - Owain and Morfudd - a son and a daughter. Though her name is not mentioned in the story, she is known to be Modron daughter of Afallwch from other sources. Interesting, to the north of Llanferres is the hillfort called today Moel y Gaer but once called Caerfallwch - believed to mean Afallwch's Fort. In some Welsh texts the Welsh name for the Isle of Avalon was Ynys Afallwch!

John David Rhys, writing around the same time as John Jones, tells a tale of Arthur from the south of Clwyd. The brothers of Gwenhwyfar, Arthur's wife, had been captured by giants and grieving she asked her husband for help. Our hero attacked the giants, killed them all and released his wife's brothers. The tale told that Arthur having beheaded the tallest of the giants, tossed his head into a nearby river to use as a stepping stone. This river, somewhere between Caer Ogyrfan, near Oswestry, and Castell y Cnwclas, became known as Afon Tyfed-iad.

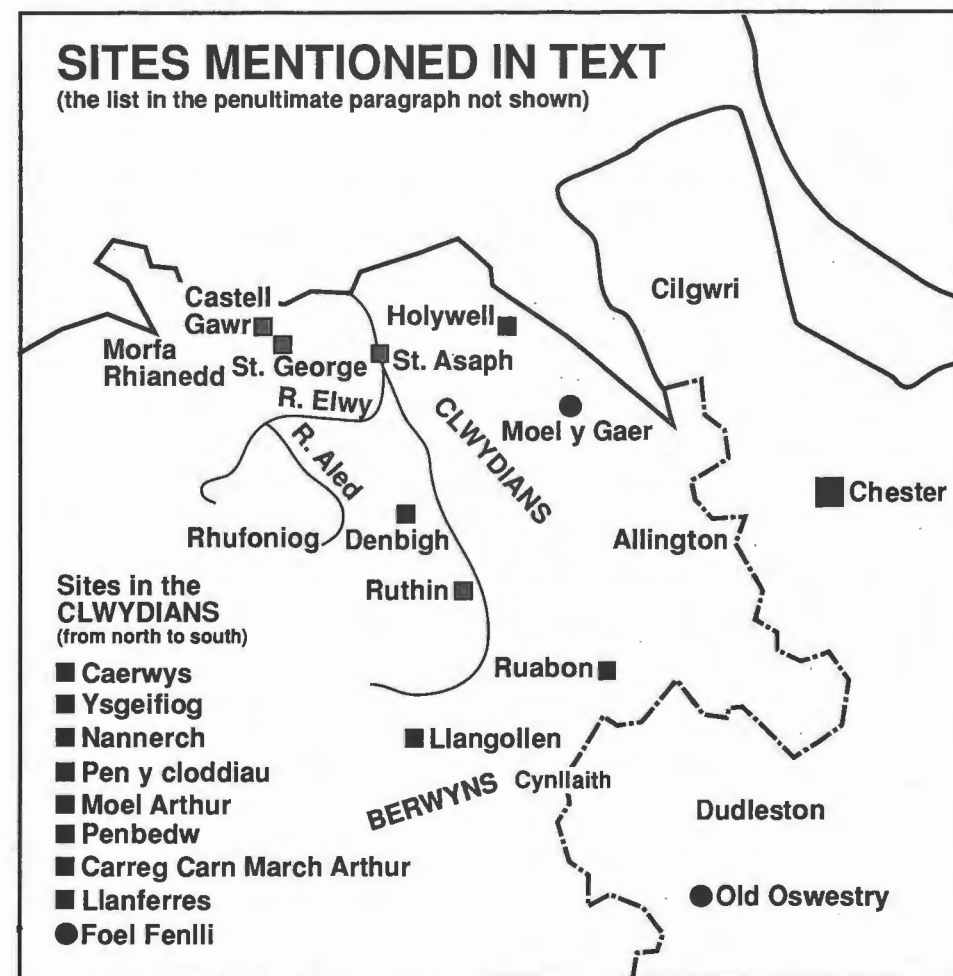
Clwyd has a number of other Arthurian sites which have very short tales connected to them. On the road between Mold and Llanferres is a stone that once was used to mark the border between two parishes but is known as Carreg Carn March Arthur. The story goes that Arthur was on horseback escaping from Saxons and was forced to leap from a cliff. The impact of the landing left a hoof mark in a rock. Further to the east near Llangollen there is a tale of St. Collen fighting a giantess and when she was in trouble she called out to Arthur the Giant for help. But Arthur did not come to her aid and Collen killed her. There is also Craig Arthur, Clogwyn Arthur and Fynnon Arthur on the top of the Eglwyseg Rocks between the Horseshoe Pass and Llangollen. Another story mentioning Arthur is that having fought a battle near Moel Arthur he was forced to rest in a nearby cave which became known as Arthur's Parlour. The cave is now said to be under a lake near Ysgeifiog.

In an unsigned manuscript dated 1873 and part of the Penbedw Papers, Clwyd Record Office, can be found some material on Arthurian sites in Flintshire. The material informs us that Arthur's eighth battle - Fort Guinnion - is believed to have been at Pen y cloddiau. It suggests that this sixty acre hillfort, the biggest in North Wales, was Fort Guinnion and that Guinnion is derived from Gwynedd. There is a tradition that women and children watched the battle from the fort's ramparts. Also mentioned is that the battle was fought at Cefn y Gadfa - Ridge of the Battle - near Moel Arthur, just a little further south-east along the range of the Clwydians from Pen y cloddiau. The manuscript goes on to tell of a legend that puts Excalibur buried under a rock near Pen y cloddiau. To the east of the large hillfort is the Penbedw estate containing a number barrows and a circle of stones which tradition says, according to the Papers, is the site where the dead from the battle were buried. This is all very interesting but the archaeological site is definitely Bronze Age, though this is not unusual because many pre-historic

monuments have Arthurian names.

There are numerous places in Clwyd which have Arthurian name connections but with no stories to go with them. Here are some of them: Tremeirchion, Afon Meirchion, Ffynnon Meirchion and Llys Meirchion (March son of Meirchion was one of Arthur's men); Croes Gwenhwyfar (Arthur's wife) and Castell Dinas Bran (which R.S. Loomis has suggested has connections with the Grail legends) near Llangollen; Cae Carreg Arthur and Tyddyn Arthur near St. Asaph; Glyn Arthur and Cist Arthur near Moel Arthur; Graig Arthur and Ffynnon Graig Arthur near Trelawnyd; Bryn Arthur near Corwen; Carreg Arthur and Ffynnon Arthur in the Berwyns; Crochan Arthur near Llanellidan and two Bwrdd Arthurs - one near Llansannan and the other in Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog.

Finally, it must be pointed out that though a place has a name connected with Arthur it does not mean that it refers to the Arthur either of history or legend. For instance it is possible that Moel Arthur was originally Moel Iarddur - the similarity with Arthur is obvious. Other sites may be connected to family names or forenames like Tyddyn Arthur - Arthur's small holding. The study of place names in Flintshire and Denbigh, and throughout Wales is far from being as advanced as that of place name studies in England, however, with the encouragement of men like Bedwyr Lewis Jones, who has sadly passed away, and Hywel Wynn Owen some progress is being made.



# Owain The Red Hand MARCUS CLARIDGE

The interwoven legends and landscapes of Wales are as complex and beautiful as the flowing artwork for which the Celtic peoples are famous. There are few sites for me, however, where the shimmering veil between myth and land draws so thin, like a little valley cupped by a ridge of wooded hills near Llandybie in Dyfed.

The Gwenlais Valley and ancient Carmel Woods are recognised by naturalists as a unique area. Some of the plant species are found virtually nowhere else than in these quiet glades and long, grassy slopes. Rats, barn-owls and badgers alliteratively abound, and the ephemeral lake, or turlough, is only one of two in Europe.

Dominating overall in this magical kingdom though is the imposing Craig Derwyddon (Druid's Crag), beneath which is said to sleep a band of warriors led by Owain Llawgoch (the Red Hand) himself. There they wait for the blast of horn, or clash of arms, to summon them to defend Wales in its hour of deadliest peril. 'When the black eagle rises to war with the golden eagle' they will take up their shining swords and sally forth.

Owain Llawgoch, or to give his full name, Owain ap Tomas ap Rhodri, brother of Llewellyn, the last true Prince of Wales, is the subject of many a local tale and lived in the area around 1360. He was thought to be the Owain mentioned in prophetic verses attributed to Merlin as 'the once and future saviour of Wales'. This obvious link to the Arthurian sleeping-king archetype is emphasised by others who attest that it is Arthur himself who rests in Ogof - Craig - Derwyddon.

There seem to be many Owains rolled into this one figure (Owain Ddantgwyn?!). A local lake - Llyn Llech Owen is supposedly named after an Owain, Knight of Arthur, who stopped to drink at a well and neglected to replace the covering stone, thus flooding the area. More recently, in 1539, one of the Lords Dynevor was executed for consorting with wizards. He was in league with James V of Scotland and was expected to become Henry IX, another of Merlin's prophecies about the Owain 'that was to come'.

The historical Owain Llawgoch was assassinated by John Lamb, an English agent, in France in 1378 while fighting for the King of France in a war against England. He is buried in St. Leger church. There is however another legend of his death, that he did indeed try to fulfil Merlin's prophecies and returned to unite the warriors of Wales. After sustaining terrible injuries at Dinefwr Castle, however, he escaped on his horse which was found three days later outside a cave wherein lay his body...

History, however, had another curious twist to add to this tale. In 1813, quarrymen working below the crag broke through into a cave and found 13 unusually large human skeletons laid out on the floor. Indeed, the cap of the largest workman would not fit the smallest skull. Although the bones have since been lost, archaeologists dated them to as early as 5,500 years old. From recent finds they are also sure that much material of great archaeological value waits to be discovered in the limestone caves and bronze age burial grounds of the ridge. Folk memory works in curious ways.

But, down from this breezy outcrop to the gentler Gwenlais valley itself where we find one of only three surviving ancient yew trees over holy wells in Britain. The healing well is in fact a double spring, reputed to be where a virgin princess, the Celtic St. Tybie, was slain by raiders. The twin springs are said to be her eyes and her tears. The obvious Christianization cannot conceal the ancient sacred nature of this place of the Lady of the Fountain. The parallels incidentally with that story from the Mabinogion in which Owain becomes the lady's champion don't stop there - but I'll leave you to pick them up for yourselves if you ever visit the place.

The huge bole of the Yew tree dates from the Fifth century, and the Gwenlais river bursts literally from among its roots. To locals, this tree was always said to be the 'plug' of the valley. As long as it stood, no harm could come to the area. In the early 1980's a farmer new to the land was ordered by Ministry officials to destroy this tree in order to keep livestock in the field. To his later relief, he was physically prevented from this task by a passer-by. Sadly, the tree had been badly lopped, but has slowly recovered to flourish once more. Within days of the damage however, the McAlpines company announced their plans to quarry out the entire ridge and valley for roadstone. The battle against them, on which rests a test case that could effect hundreds of other sites in Britain, has been going on ever since and is now at a crucial stage. The small but determined group of locals who lead this campaign call themselves "Warriors of Owain Llawgoch". And so our legends live on...

*(If you would like to help save the valley and woods please contact The Campaign for the Protection of the Gwenlais Valley, Bryn Llinos, Carmel, Llanelli, Dyfed SA14 7TP. They also publish a booklet entitled "The Legends and Archaeology of the Gwenlais Valley" by Jan Fry, on which much of this article was sourced.)*





# King Arthur in Lancashire

## DAVID BOWERS

Twelve battles were fought against the Saxons by the Britons under the command of the renowned King Arthur. Four of these sanguinary engagements took place on the banks of the Douglas near to the town of Wigan.

Well - that's what Baines thought in 1824. He named Blackrod as one battle site, claiming this village near Wigan was once a Roman station called either Coccium or Rigodunum, which was destroyed by the Saxons. At Blackrod he saw the Roman roads "expanding like rabbits from a centre". His account closes with Arthur's death in AD 542.

A more spurious, 1825, version of Arthur's campaign names Ochta and Abisa as the Saxon commander and his second in command at the Battle of Chester.

This same source identifies Paulinus as commander of Arthur's right wing, and suggests that this half-British half-Roman native of Manchester was promoted to Arthur's second-in-command.

Rather dubiously, the mouth of the River Dee in Cheshire is the site for Arthur's first victory. Unfortunately, no details are offered of how a river which Nennius called the Glem can be identified with the Dee, or where the story of Paulinus can be found.

Ochta and Abisa are the sons of Hengest who, according to Nennius, raided Pictland while still federates to Vortigern. Jeffrey Gantz (1976) identifies Ochta with Osla Big Knife, who leads the forces opposing Arthur in 'Rhonabwy' and drowns in the Severn during the boarhunt in 'Culhwch'. Another character in Lancashire folklore is Mallory's villainous Sir Turquin, whose patronage of the Roman fort at

Castlefield in central Manchester is fortunately recorded for posterity in Hollingworth's Mancuniensis of 1654:

*It is sayd that Sir Tarquine, a stout enemy of King Arthur, kept this castle, and neere to the foard in Medlock, about Mabbouse, hung a bason on a tree, on which bason whosoever did strike, Sir Tarquine, or some of his company, would come and fight with him, and that Sir Launcelot du Lake, a knight of King Arthur's Round Table, did beate uppon the bason, fought with Tarquine, killed him, possessed himself of the castle, and loosed the prisoners. Whosoever thinketh it worth his pains to read more of it may read the history of King Arthur.*

*It is certain that about AD 520 there was such a prince as King Arthur, and it is not incredible that he or his knights might contest about this castle when he was in this country, and (as Ninius sayth) hee put ye Saxons to flight in a memorable battell near Wigan, about twelve miles off.*

Two manuscript copies of this early attempt at a history of Manchester have come down to us. According to W.E.A. Axon the legend has been "since turned to verse by one of our local poets". Another source simply refers to a ballad.

Only two of Arthur's battles are allocated to Lancashire by Axon: one each for Wigan and Blackrod. When a tunnel was cut on the site at Wigan no less than three cartloads of horseshoes were found. A contemporary record of this early dig comes from the Reverend John Whitaker. His 1771 Arthurian account explains how Ambrosius had sent Arthur into the North.

Whitaker was the original proposer that Arthur's second, third, fourth and fifth victories were all won in Lancashire, claiming these: have been for ages supposed to be fought in our county, and upon the banks of our little Douglas. And the name of the river, the traditions concerning Arthur and three battles, a particular name, a British barrow, and some considerable discoveries upon it, all concur to prove the notion true.

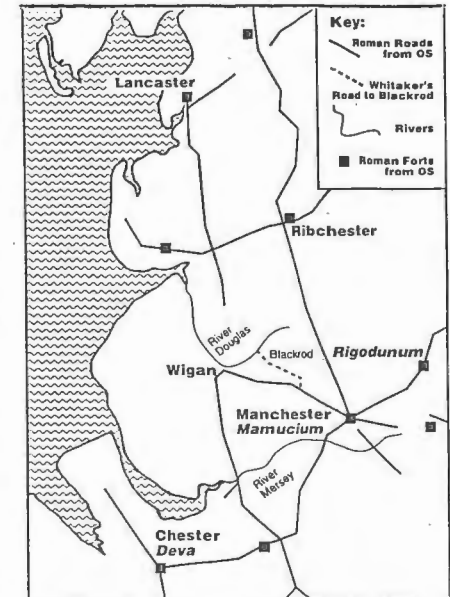
There is no mention of the Mancuniensis, as Whitaker's source was "three of the most ancient inhabitants" of Blackrod, who were the only people who still recalled Arthur's name.

This Reverend Whitaker used to trudge along the muddy lanes of Eighteenth Century Lancashire in an attempt to track the Roman roads radiating from Manchester. His route to Blackrod starts from that infamous ground called Old Trafford.

But in the 1950's two local historians uncovered part of the Roman road from Manchester to Wigan in fields far to the south west of Blackrod.

Whitaker had studied copies of the Second Century descriptions of Roman Britain and concluded that Blackrod was not only the Coccium recorded in the Antonine Itinerary but also the Rigodunum listed by Ptolemy.

It seems then that he was Baines' source on Arthur. Modern historians do not accept his conclusions. They suggest that Wigan may have originally been the Roman Coccium and that Castleshaw, which is near Oldham, may have been Rigodunum. Whitaker explored Castlecroft, to the south east of Blackrod village where the "evident remains of ditches" extended over half an acre. But he dismissed the contemporary idea that this had been a Roman mile castle, as he thought the Roman station must have been much bigger. He put the station on line with his



Roman road, near the River Douglas and a "considerable barrow" called Hasty Knoll, where:

*tradition speaks of a remarkable battle near it, in which a great officer was slain, many soldiers were cut to pieces, and the Douglas ran crimson with blood to Wigan.*

Over the years the locals had removed from the barrow "vast collections of small stones taken from the bed of the Douglas", "fragments of iron" and "the remains of those military weapons which the Britons reposed with their heroes at death".

*In the summer of 1770, on finally levelling the barrow, was found a cavity in the hungry gravel immediately under the stones, that was about seven feet in length: the evident grave of the British officer, and all filled with the loose and blackish earth of his perished remains.*

Four miles further down river at Wigan, Whitaker found oral



traditions of:

*two very ancient engagements in the immediate skirts of Wigan and on opposite sides of town.*

The finding of those three cartloads of horseshoes at a fourth site gave Whitaker his four Arthurian battlegrounds. He speculated that Arthur's army entered Lancashire by crossing the ford on the Roman road at Warrington; an idea which in 1825 John Corry was claiming as tradition.

Whitaker offers us a three page account of the battle at Wigan Lane; the folk memory of which has been "nearly obliterated" by the Civil War battle of the same name, fought over the same ground on August 25th, 1651.

After the main Saxon army had been defeated a contingent was summarised to have held out at Manchester under Turquin, where they were besieged by Launcelot:

*The general tradition of the fact in that episode is uncommonly lively amongst all the lower ranks of our people at Manchester.*

These outpourings led to one contemporary calling Whitaker 'this omniscient Pendragon of antiquarianism'. Such was the wit of John Collins, who jabbed away with the sword of sarcasm while shielded by the pen name "Tim Bobbin". He derided Whitaker's research and insisted that the route of the Roman road to Blackrod remained "dark and dubious". He asked, rhetorically:

*But how often does this Mamus not only build fortresses, but whole market towns, with few or no ruins at all to help him?*

As our own Angus Deayton might say, "The name of archaeologist Heinrich Schlieman immediately springs to mind". Whitaker attempted to make some historical sense of the legend

recorded in the Mancuniensis. So, we may thank our reverend friend for our tradition of Arthur's campaign in Lancashire. For without him and those who copied him, we would have nothing but two eye-witness accounts of the Battle of Wigan Lane, and that tantalising hint from 1654 that Arthur fought a battle twelve miles from Wigan.

Now, Bolton is about twelve miles from Wigan, while Preston is fourteen. Both towns were sites of Royalist defeats in the Civil Wars. So, perhaps a superstitious Lancastrian decided that such defeats of Royalty could only be the work of a resurrected Once and Future King, in the guise of Oliver Cromwell. Perhaps this was his explanation of God allowing the defeat and execution of an anointed king.

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# The Celtic Goddess of Sovereignty Caitlin Matthews

## Part Two: DAMSELS OF THE WELLS:

There remains a most important story which we must consider. Written as a pagan prequel to Chrétien's *Perceval*, the *Elucidation de L'hystoire du Graal* is an extraordinary document which has clear Celtic roots and it tells us more of the nature of the Divine Feminine and her guardianship of the deep springs of spiritual nourishment. It gives also a totally different explanation for why the land is wasted.

In the days before King Arthur ruled the land there was a king called Amangons. Now in those days if any traveller was abroad and suffered thirst or hunger he need only ask of the damsels of the wells, who would straightaway appear to serve him, serving the food which he most desired. But that kingdom lost the voices of the wells and the damsels that were therein. King Amangons seized one of the damsels and ravished her, taking her golden cup for his own table. And his men, following their evil king's example, did likewise so that any traveller who sought the hospitality of the wells was now denied. For only a few of the damsels of the wells now served in that way, and those few invisibly.

And where once the kingdom had been leafy with trees and full of rich meadows, now the trees were bare and the fields barren. The waters were also dried up. And no man might find the Court of the Rich Fisher which had once made the land bright with good things. However, when this Court was refound, then the Land of Logres was again enriched.

Many years passed and the days of King Arthur dawned. When he and his Round Table knights heard of the rape of the damsels, they swore an oath to God that they would restore the wells and avenge the damsels on the descendants of Amangons, but despite their purpose they never heard a voice from the wells nor ever saw a maiden. Now it chanced that one day, the Round Table knights found a band of damsels wandering through the forest accompanied by strongly armed knights. These they engaged in combat and one of them was captured. He was brought to Arthur and, as he was a mighty storyteller, he was able to tell the story. He and all his company were

descendants of the damsels whom King Amangons had enforced. He said that the wrong which the Round Table Knights sought to avenge could not be righted since all their company were descended equally from the damsels of the wells and King Amangon's knights. They were destined to wander the country until such time as God permitted the finding of the Court of Joy, and then again the land should be made bright.

It was so that Round Table Knights began to look for the Court of the Rich Fisher. Seven times the Court was found in all, as the Grail stories tell. And such was the joy of these adventures that the people re-peopled the land, and the waters which had been dried up were released, and so the woods and meadows were green again. (5)

This mysterious tale must stand as a parallel to the Christian prequel in which Joseph of Arimathea brings the Grail lineage to Britain. Its mystery lies largely in the fact that it was transcribed after Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* had been written. Its unknown author attempts to précis the very essence of the Grail legends in this compressed preface to Chrétien's story. Here he is no wounded king, however, and the Dolorous Blow is struck, not on a man, but on a woman – and that woman is very obviously the representation of the land itself.

The damsels of the wells have a very venerable Celtic lineage. It is clear that at some point the women of the Sidhe, the Faery Mounds, have become incorporated into the Grail legends in a very special way. Indeed the very many *fées* (faeries) and other worldly women of the medieval tales are scarcely distinguishable from the *bean-sidhes* (literally, 'Faery Women') of Celtic legend. Traditionally they mediate the gifts of the underworld to all comers, giving hospitality and often teaching the ways of wisdom.

There is also some historical relevance to the service of the wells. In Irish tradition small vessels called 'ana' were kept at wells. They were generally made of silver and were legally bound to the well. They were placed there to help quench the thirst of travellers. It was anciently considered a measure of





how well the king's laws were kept to leave such precious cups unguarded.

The original state of Amangon's kingdom seems to have been in complete harmony with the Otherworld. The damsels of the wells give their bounty to all passers-by, just as the hospitality of the *sidhe* was offered in Celtic times. Moreover, when this pleasant time ceases, the kingdom is said to 'have lost the voices of the wells' - that primary harmony which we have lost. It also loses something else - the Court of the Rich Fisher, also called the Court of Joy, which is where the Grail is to be found. So, in this story, we have two concurrent traditions: the vessels of the damsels of the wells, which give nourishment; and the Grail which can restore the kingdom to its original harmony and fertility.

How the unknown story teller managed to conflate the Celtic and medieval traditions, we have no means of knowing, but he was a master. He knew that in both traditions, loss of the Otherworld, loss of paradise was the primal loss and that without communion with that otherworldly state, the world and its people fall into wasteland and misery. Heaven emphasises this point : that the story itself is a seedbearing vessel:

*"He who made this book wills that you show to everyone the story of the Grail and who it served, for its services should be heard about in the right context - from a good Master lest the good things which it serves becomes unknown and hidden, for the storyteller will teach it to all people."* (my translation)

It is in the story that the healing is found. The descendants of Amangons and the damsels of the wells are destined to travel on, telling their story until it seeds in the heart of those who can find the Grail. As in the parable of the tares and wheat in the gospels, the evil perpetrated by Amangons cannot be uprooted nor can his kindred pay for his wrong, for they are equally descended from the damsels of the wells.

The perplexity of the Round Table Knights is that of all good people who take up a cause. How shall they begin? How can they discriminate? How do they cope with the existence of evil?

Interestingly, if you recall the parable of the tares and wheat, Christ says that not until the world is remade will every wrong be righted and that good and evil must co-exist until that time. He also says that the good seed stands for the 'sons of the kingdom,' those who attempt to reconstruct the kingdom of God on earth. But if there is any difference between the establishment of the kingdom of God and the establishment of the Court of Joy then I am unaware of it.

#### RESTORING THE COURTS OF JOY

The Amangons story is really about loss of the Inner Kingdom, loss of the Otherworld, loss of paradise - and the one who is the bridge between the worlds is the Goddess of Sovereignty, the Mother of Earth. In this story her representatives are violated, unable to give of their cup to all who come. What is more horrific perhaps is the fact that Sovereignty herself becomes dumb, because no-one can hear her voice.

The way back to this communion with the Mother of the Earth, is by means of the quest for the Court of Joy - the natural realm of the Grail. Only a few worthy questors win through to that dimension, but their achievement benefits everyone, good or evil alike. But the Court of Joy is not some place 'out there', it is here, within.

The power of the story to bring about change, to prepare for the coming of the Grail, this is the inheritance of the damsels of the wells to their children. Within us also is a similar inheritance, for everyone has at least one speck of mother - wit in their make-up. If you like, we are all children of Amangons and the Damsels of the Wells, equally capable of acts of thoughtlessness or generosity. Whatever our genetic or moral background, this gift of the Goddess is a joyous yeast to our endeavours. This Celtic prequel allows us to see how we may make the Grail legends our own way of spiritual progress, for it stands in the tradition of the great salvific story, being itself a kind of gnostic Grail fable.

But the wisdom of the story must be applied directly. By reading, telling, meditating on the stories of the Grail, we keep alight that spark of wisdom which is our Mother's gift to us. But only we can assent to its growth. We do not become Kings and Queens of the Grail Castle without the willingness to heal ourselves and the earth.

And so, to sum up, we see that the Goddess of Sovereignty is she who inaugurates or sains the king, accepting only the most worthy candidate. He enters into a mystical relationship with his land via Sovereignty whom he encounters first of all as a hag and latterly as a beautiful maiden. While he is true to her, the land flourishes, but if he neglects his sacred duties - whether these be of his kingship or his sacred partnership with the land, then the land is laid waste. In the Grail legends this sacred relationship is apparent in the person of the Wounded King. His wounding - caused by the Dolorous Blow - results in impotence both personal and political. According to the rules of Celtic kingship a maimed man cannot be king, but has to be deposed in favour of the most worthy man of his clan. And so it is that Perceval appears to fulfil this role of *tanaiste*. By taking on the role of Grail-seeker, he takes up the kingly role, becoming the candidate king by right of his quest. Indeed, at the conclusion of most of the stories, Perceval becomes the new Grail King, reconciling the imbalances of the kingdom on all levels. The restoration of the Wasteland and the healing of the Wounded King is accomplished by the Grail-Winner's identification and union with the Grail. At the Celtic level of the story, this is affected by the Grail-winner's embracing the Hideous Damsel, or making her his wife.

This union is, of course, one of the prime images of wholeness throughout the world, from the Gnostic concept of the wedding of Sophia to the Logos within the bridal chamber of the Pleroma, to the Tibetan concept of the Buddhist emanation in the embrace of his Shakti. It stands also at the heart of the Grail gnosis and its implications are profound as well as practical.

The way to restore the Wasteland is to embrace it with compassion, to become identified with it in exactly the same way that the lover identifies with the beloved: for what wounds the beloved wounds the lover. When this compassion is sufficiently manifest in the world, then the Grail will make its reappearance.

Please remember that I have dealt with the myths and stories of Sovereignty and the Grail in their own framework, without imputing or drawing modern interpretations. I believe we should respect original stories in this way and not psychologize them or anthropologize them. These stories carry the deep and wisdom-bearing keys. We should also remember that, although the stories involve knights and priestesses of Sovereignty, that the healing of the Wasteland is not a gender-



specific task : it is the duty of all human beings who are called by the Goddess of the Land, in whatever land they live. In the words of my good friend, R.J.Stewart, 'Whatever does not regenerate is not the Grail'.(6)

Whatever sets us at odds with each other as human beings, separates us from this important duty. This is a task we achieve together.

The voice of the earth speaks to us in a clear way, for ours is a wasted land no less now than in the medieval Grail stories. The voices of the wells are those deep creative springs upon which we draw for our spiritual nourishment. Just as we have our mother-wit, that redeeming fundamental earthiness of common humanity, so do we have our imaginal sense which bridges the created and uncreated worlds. To be denied access to the Otherworldly realms, is to be without the Grail. Such a lack makes humankind desperately sick to the soul. Acts of violence are perpetrated out of an absence of imagination or out of the presence of a perverted one. The clear streams of the senses spring from the central well of wisdom.

The joint voices of the Grail Maiden and the Hideous Damsel are those of the Mother of Wisdom, Sophia, who in her Gnostic guise is a dual figure: one half transcendent, withdrawn into the fullness of the Pleroma; the other half manifest in creation, urgent for union and restoration. Together these Sophianic voices exchange the song of heaven and the song of earth.

Back beyond even the Celtic Goddess of Sovereignty stands the Goddess of the Earth herself - she whose appearances no longer come in pleasant forms. At this far end of the 20th century the picture is very different from the primordial times in which the Mother was more manifest in our myths. Even the simpering plaster madonnas of Catholic piety have been totally replaced by apocalyptic virgins who have no gentle message of peace. The gaunt empty-



breasted mothers of Ethiopia have replaced the Queen of the South who came to Solomon in glory and wisdom. The earth herself is wrapped in an atmosphere which we have made more and more devastating, as we puncture the ozone layer, poison it with chemical fumes. Yes the earth is fair, and yes it is also terrible. And where is our wisdom?

The answer to the Grail Question lies in the gift of the Goddess of Sovereignty: the Grail will serve you when you serve it: only by identification with the whole of creation we will become Grail-bearers. And only by asking the Grail Question can the quest be started.

The quest for the Grail must begin at home, in our very hearts. When we start seeking its regeneration in our own lives, when we become open to change, then its effect will begin to manifest about us. For whoever touches the Grail becomes a natural catalyst to restorative change.

When each human being perceives the intrinsic inner sovereign - the Wounded

King or Queen within them and within the land - then it may be possible to heal the Dolorous Blow and begin the reconciliation of the interconnected chain of creation in true alignment. And so listen. Listen for the voices of the wells and when you have listened - act wisely. The Courts of Joy await their founders.

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*(Caitlin Matthews is the author of over 20 books, the latest being the 'Arthuria Tarot Course'. She has appeared widely on radio and tv, and acts as an experiential consultant on matters concerning Celtic and British mythology, practical ritual and reconsecration of the land. She has a shamanic counselling practice in Oxford.)*

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- (5) "Arthur & the Sovereignty of Britain." Caitlin Matthews, Arkana, 1989.
- (6) "Power Within the Land" by R.J. Stewart, Element Books, 1992.



Lament for Arthur

On the island of Avalon  
lie buried the bones  
of Arth Vawr, my chieftain.  
"Great Bear" we called him...mighty warrior,  
keeper of our ancient faith and customs,  
Slain by a braggart. No son of his!  
(A man who crept into houses and  
ravished other men's wives.)  
No man can replace Arthur,  
No one can defend us, now.  
We are lost, and the people are doomed

Rosemary Longworth

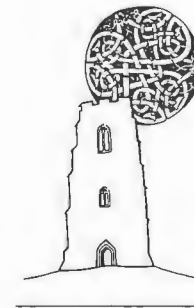
#### Horseman

Tell me then,  
Who is this Arthur  
Who excites you so,  
A man who lived an age ago?  
I saw him,  
A lone figure in the saddle.  
Still, on the crest of a hill,  
Motionless, he stared Eastwards,  
Rider and horse as one,  
His rugged worn face  
Etched by the struggle  
Of holding his rough land.  
He lifted his head high  
And slowly turned his pony  
to the West,  
Homeward to the farm.  
He straightened his back,  
Kneaded his wiry pony into a trot  
And left his dreaming behind---  
There was work to do!

Marilyn Steadman-Jones.

# Glastonbury: A Chronology

## PAUL SMITH



- c1000... "There is on the confines of western Britain a certain royal island, called in the ancient speech Glastonia.... In it the earliest neophytes of the Catholic rule, God guiding them, found a church, not built by art of man, they say, but prepared by God himself for the salvation of mankind, which church the heavenly Builder himself declared - by many miracles and many mysteries of healing - he had consecrated to himself and to holy Mary, Mother of God."  
-Life of St Dunstan (Anonymous).
- 1086.... "The Church of Glastonbury has in its own ville twelve Hides of land, which have never paid tax...etc" (Domesday Book folio p.249b).
- c1130... De Antiquitate Glastoniensia Ecclesiae by William of Malmesbury: contained a revised history which the author himself found spurious, although he seemed to accept that the church was built on the island of Yniswtrín ('Glass Island'), by messengers sent by Pope Eleutherias in 166 at the request of Good King Lucius.
- c1130-50. Life of Gildas by Caradoc of Llancarfan: linked King Arthur with Glastonbury Abbey - a variant of the Gwyn ap Nudd/Gwythyr ap Greidiawl myth found in Culhwch and Olwen.
- c1135... History of the Kings of Britain by Geoffrey of Monmouth: he claimed that Arthur "was carried...to the isle of Avalon for the healing of his wounds."
- c1150... Life of Merlin by Geoffrey of Monmouth: claimed that Arthur, when dying, was taken to nine sisters, 'Morgen' being the leader, living in the Island of Apples, known as 'The Fortunate Island' (lines 907-940). But Glastonbury/Avalon wasn't mentioned.
- 1184... Glastonbury Abbey destroyed by fire (25th May).
- 1189... King Henry II, Glastonbury's generous patron and benefactor died. His son, Richard I, needed all the money he could amass for the Third Crusade.
- 1191... Richard I (Coeur-de-Lion) presented Tancred of Sicily with a sword which he claimed was 'Excalibur', dug up at Glastonbury.
- 1193... De Instructione Principis by Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales); giving an account of their discovery of the remains of Arthur and Guinevere between two 'pyramids' (i.e., columns), with the additional information: yet above all it was King Henry II of England that most clearly informed the monks, as he himself had heard from an ancient Welsh bard, a singer of the past, that they would find the body at least 16 feet beneath the earth, not in a tomb of stone, but in a hollow oak."
- 1193... Henry de Sully leaves Glastonbury Abbey.
- 1218... Speculum Ecclesiae by Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales): stating that the Abbot who showed him the tomb and relics was Henry de Sully.
- 1221... Chronicum Anglicanum by Ralph of Coggeshall:  
1191: "This year was found at Glastonbury the bones of the most renowned Arthur, formerly King of Britain, buried in a very ancient coffin, about which two ancient pyramids had been built: on the sides of these was an inscription, illegible on account of the rudeness of the script and its worn condition. The bones were discovered as follows: as they were digging up this ground to bury a monk who had urgently desired in his life time to be interred there, they discovered a certain coffin

on which a leaden cross had been placed, bearing the inscription, 'Here lies the famous King Arturius, buried in the isle of Avalon For this place, which is surrounded by marshes was formerly called the isle of Avalon, that is, the isle of apples.

- 1240+..Interpolated accounts within William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate claiming that Joseph of Arimathea had travelled to Glastonbury in AD 63.
- 1243.. Charter of Henry III giving permission to hold an annual fair at 'the monastery of St. Michael on the Tor' for six days around the feast of St Michael held on September 29th.
- c1278..."The lord Edward (in 1278)..with his consort, the lady Eleanor, came to Glastonbury...to celebrate Easter ... The following Tuesday...at dusk, the lord king had the tomb of the famous king Arthur opened. Wherein, in two caskets painted with their pictures and arms, were found separately the bones of the said king, which were of great size, and those of Queen Guinevere, which were of marvellous beauty ...On the following day...the lord king replaced the bones of the king and the queen those of the queen, each in their own casket, having wrapped them in costly silks. When they had been sealed they ordered the tomb to be placed forthwith in front of the high altar, after the removal of the skulls for the veneration of the people"..
- Annals of Waverley.
- 1289..."The King (Richard I)...elevated as Abbot, Henry de Sully, Prior of Bermondsey a man born of royal stock...He, frequently urged to dispose more fittingly of the famous king Arthur ( for he had lain for 648 years near the old Church (i.e, the Lady Chapel), between two pyramids, one magnificently carved, one day surrounded the place with curtains and ordered that digging should be carried out..
- The Abbot and convent, raising up the remains, joyfully translated them into the great church, placing them in a double tomb, magnificently carved. The King's body was set by itself at the head of the tomb, that of the queen at the foot or the eastern part, and there they remain to the present day."
- Historia de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus by Adam of Domesham.
- 1300s..Cronica sive Antiquitates Glastoniensis by John of Glastonbury ('John Seen' ?). providing the 'Prophecy of Melkin'. First reference to the two cruet.
- 1331.. Edward III visits Glastonbury.
- 1345.. Edward III issued a royal writ permitting John Blome to search for the remains of Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury (outcome unknown).
- 1520.. First reference to the Glastonbury Thorn, in a lengthy anonymous poem dated 1502, entitled Here begynneth the Lyfe of Joseph of Arimathea.
- 1500s..William Good's (1577-86) manuscript giving details of his time at Glastonbury, including his eye-witness account of its destruction & claiming that Joseph of Arimathea "had brought with him two small silver vessels in which was some of of the most holy blood and water which had flowed from the side of the dead Christ", and that the saint was buried "on a hill near Montacute, called Hamden Hill".
- 1500s..Life of St Collen: contained in a MS of the time of Henry VIII.
- 1716...The blossoming of Joseph's staff, appearing as an alleged folklore item retailed to an antiquary, Charles Eyston, by a local inkeeper (R.Rawlinson, The History Antiquities of Glastonbury, 1722).
- 1907...Ruins of Glastonbury Abbey bought by the Church of England ( Ernest Jardine on their behalf).
- 1908...Frederick Bligh Bond becomes director of excavations at Glastonbury.
- 1922...Frederick Bligh Bond's dismissal by J.Armitage Robinson, Dean of Wells.
- 1922..."Quite recently a dignitary in Wells (= J.Armitage Robinson?) is stated to have gone out of his way to tell an antiquarians' party who were coming to Glastonbury next day, that the story of Our Lord's coming to Glastonbury and Priddy was entirely invented some 50 years ago by a schoolteacher at Priddy when writing a play for entertainment". Lionel Smithett Lewis St Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury.

- 1926...Two Glastonbury Legends by J.Armitage Robinson.
- 1931...Discovery of the remains of 'King Arthur's Tomb' - only the base of the cavity was intact: the tomb itself was destroyed at the Reformation and the bones dispersed.
- 1935...K.E.Maitwood's A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars.
- 1962...Excavations by C.A.Ralegh Radford, discovering the exact spot of 'Arthur's Grave'. proving there was once a possible exhumation. ( St Dunstan piled a fresh layer of earth on top of the existing cemetery, thus giving it a second storey- held in place by a surrounding wall.
- 1964-6..Professor Philip Rahtz's excavations of the summit of Glastonbury Tor, discovering traces of buildings older than the tower; also pottery.
- 1967....The Glastonbury Legends by R.F.Treharne: disregarding Radford's findings.
- 1971...."Historians have gone to considerable lengths to add colour to the hypothesis of a forgery, even suggesting that the monks had dug up elsewhere a Celtic chieftain and his wife, buried over a 1000 years ago in a tree-trunk canoe or coffin, in order to 'salt' the grave. The only comment needed here is that no modern archaeologist would know where to dig up such a burial".
- Arthur's Britain by Leslie Alcock ( director of excavations at Cadbury).
- 1980..."Most historians would still insist that it was not (a genuine discovery), that the claim was only a fund-raising stunt, though in fact no evidence exists that it ever was exploited for that purpose".
- A Guidebook to Arthurian Britain by Geoffrey Ashe.

#### Addendum: Arthur's "Glastonbury Cross" ; its inscription:

Hic Iacet Sepultus Inclitus Rex Arthurus Cum Wenneveria Uxore Sua Secunda In Insula Avallonia (Gerald of Wales, De Instructione Principis, 1993).

Hic Iacet Sepultus Inclitus Rex Arthurus, In Insula Avallonia Cum Uxore Sua Secunda Wenneveria (Gerald of Wales, Speculum Ecclesiae, 1218).

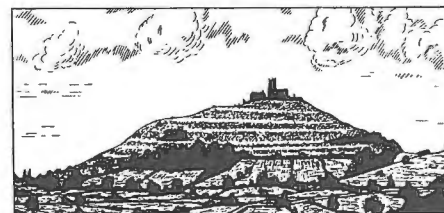
Hic Iacet Inclitus Rex Arturius, In Insula Avallonia Sepultus (Ralph of Coggeshall, Chronicon Anglicanum, 1221).

Hic Iacet Sepultus Inclitus Rex Arturius In Insula Avalonia (Leyland, Secretum, 1542).

Hic Iacet Gloriosissimus Rex Britonum Arturus (Simon of Abingdon's eyewitness account found in Leyland).

Hic Iacet Sepultus Inclinitus Rex Arturius In Insula Avalonia (Camden, Brittania, 1610).

( This article is an updated reprint from Paul's 'Mystic Chronologies' (1990). As Paul says, 'It takes a lot of doing, compiling chronologies. Different historians say different things and you have a lot of ground to cover.' To have the key references and statements about Glastonbury available for immediate reference is a great boon, and we thank Paul for letting us have the fruits of his labours. Others of Paul's Chronologies are: Sir Francis Dashwood, The Sauniere Mystery, Christianity, Freemasonry, Rose + Croix Degree, Shugborough Hall, Thomas Wright, Rennes le Chateau, Et in Arcadia Ego.)





# Letters



## CATHARS & CALIBURN

◊ From Steven Banks, South Africa.

1. My attention was called to the Cathars by the 1994 programme of the tour operators Swan Hellenic. Now they have a tour to 'Languedoc and the Pyrenees' from 20th June to 1st July. This tour is to be largely concerned with the Cathars, in whom I have been interested for many years, so I have made a firm booking. Now, two days ago I read Ian Forrester Roberts' letter on 'Arthur & the Cathars in XXIII/4' and I would be most willing to correspond with other interested Pendragons and follow up facts, ideas and theories on site. I always take a camera. Certainly there is one obvious link between the Matter of Britain and the Cathars: Galahad, that Perfect gentle knight.

I'm sure Ian Forrester Roberts will be interested, Steven. Members will remember that Ian won a Churchill travelling scholarship last year to visit the Languedoc and pursue his studies of the Cathars and Arthurian links with the region. Ian is at present preparing an illustrated article for a future edition of Pendragon and, I understand, one of his splendid poster/maps.

2. Pendragon XXIII/4 was also of special interest to me in your article "Serpents & Lifestones", concerning Wilkinson's replica of Excalibur. At first glance it does not seem to me unreasonable for Excalibur to be conceived as a legionary's short sword, suitably decorated for presentation to a

client of the Empire. But if you would be so kind as to have Wilkinson Sword send me a copy of their publicity material, I might be able to write for Pendragon a useful follow-up to your article. In training as an engineer in the RN I was taught metallurgy, and as an amateur archaeologist I accumulated some knowledge of ancient metalmaking.

Captain Banks, our pages are ready and waiting! I'm sure our readers will find your observations fascinating. I'll ask Wilkinson Sword to send you their glossy advertising.

3. I dug at Llanellen in the mid-seventies for several seasons, with very happy memories. Which leads us to:

## LLANELEN REUNION

◊ From Kate Pollard, Bristol, Avon.

I am trying to contact anyone who took part in our archaeological dig at Llanellen, Gower between 1973 and 1985. We have remained in touch with several of these former volunteers who helped enormously with the work that was carried on over so many summers. However, others have moved away or lost contact over the years. Our address has also changed twice! The final reports on this dig will be published during the next two years, next year in the *Archaeological Journal* and this year in the *Gower Society Journal*. The archives and finds will pass into the care of the National Museum of Wales at Cardiff. Copies of the reports have to be ordered well in advance of publication and, to mark the occasion, we are planning a reunion of everyone who has been involved. We would like any of our past helpers to have information about this and a copy of the report if they would like one.

Please spread the word if you know the whereabouts of anyone who took part in the digs. You can contact Kate at: 21 Hill St., Totterdown, Bristol, Avon, BS3 4TW (Tel. 0272 776744, evenings & weekends). For new members, Kate gave an account of the Llanellen Project in our last edition: XXIII/4.

## SAXONS AND YEW TREES

◊ From Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall.

(Re. Charles' review of *Anglo-Saxon England*, Beryl mentions the earlier, and useful *Guide to Anglo-Saxon Sites*, Paladin, 1982): There appears to be no mention of Cornwall in this book, which seems to indicate that the Saxons didn't get this far west in any significant numbers. A few years ago I was intrigued to discover that there is a tiny hamlet called Tresawen between here and Truro. 'Tre' is Cornish (or Celtic - sorry, Charles!) for 'the settlement (of)' and 'Sawsen' is the Cornish equivalent of the Welsh 'sais' and the Scots 'sassenach'. So: the settlement of the English. I got Archie to drive me out there one day, but it was disappointing - just a few houses on either side of the narrow road and a couple of farms lying further back. I'm still wondering just why it's called Tresawen - there must be some historical or legendary reason for it. Perhaps I'll go and knock on one of those doors some day and see what I can find out...

That's the trouble with armchair archaeology, I find. I recently went to visit Potterspury in Northants - a significant site in my search for the Perpetual Choirs (yes, I'm still working on it!). Just off the M5, near Milton Keynes, it seemed to be the least interesting place on earth. After watching Timetam unravel the secrets of Athelney, however, I think it might be worth another visit - if I can persuade the team to bring their helicopter, aerial cameras, computer enhancement gear, walkie-talkies and magnetometers. I can't wait to see them searching out the Romans in Lancashire.

Your notes on 'Yew View' and the 'special reverence' for the yew trees were interesting, inasmuch as we are approaching the season of the Norse god Ullr, forerunner of 'Father Christmas', and from whose name we derive our word 'Yule'. Ullr's Rune is EOH, which means 'yew tree' and is the rune of the

winter solstice (no.13). In the booklet which accompanies our Phoenix Rune-cards, I have written that 'yews traditionally grow in our churchyards not to represent Death but its opposite, immortality - for the yew is one of the longest-lived trees in the northern hemisphere.' This seems to be confirmed by the remarks from 'Rural Wales', about the 1,500-year-old yew at Carreg Gwenlais. For those of you who don't know, Beryl has designed and published the Phoenix Runecards, which were the first fully illustrated rune pack available in this country, with accompanying booklet. She gave an interesting talk on the cards at the 1991 AGM at Bristol. If members are interested we can put them in touch with Beryl.

## GERIATRIC YEWS

◊ From Richard Ives, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

With reference to Talking Head regarding Yew trees, although Susan Newland might describe the Yew trees around Wychbury Hill as ancient, the Botany point of view is that the oldest Yews in the country are probably unlikely to be more than 800 years; dating of Yews is doubtful at the best of times as the irregular buttress, often over 6 yards girth, is split and rotten in the middle. The best example of this is the specimen in Crowhurst Churchyard in Sussex. Having said this, Yew has always been regarded as the sign of everlasting life because of its long life and being evergreen. There is also another example of geometric Yew plantings at Salisbury; again these appear ancient but in all cases the fact must be allowed for that the Yews that now remain are in all probability only part of an existing forest of mixed trees with Ash and Whitebeam.

Oak is another example of longevity, according to one authority some of the oldest Oaks date back to Saxon times. Obviously legend and superstition has surrounded the few remaining examples of ancient trees still extant but even the oldest was - around the time of Arthur - no more than a



twinkling acorn on mother's bough.

Sue Newland has sent in some interesting articles from newspapers and journals on this subject. Briefly the case they make is:

a. The Kew Gardens 'Bible' on trees: W.J. Beans's 'Trees & Shrubs Hardy to the British Isles' now says that new work by experts such as Alan Mitchell suggest earlier estimates about the possible life of yews as 800 years has been superseded and 'well over 1000 years' is now accepted.

b. Mitchell and David Bellamy take serious account of amateur expert Allen Meredith's exhaustive work. Meredith believes there are over 450 British yews over 1000 years old, more than 90% in churchyards.

c. The reason for previous underestimates is that the hollow trees renew themselves from inside and yew growth may slow down or stop for centuries while the tree is still alive. Dartington Churchyard has a yew estimated now to be 1500 years old.

d. In 1988 Bellamy launched the Conservation Foundation, to collect information and to validate ancient yew trees: 300 have been given certificates and twenty have been certified as over 2000 years old. A photocopy of the certificate for the tree at Wychbury Hillfort claims that it is 1500 years old.

e. To register ancient trees or donate for their protection contact: The Conservation Foundation, 1 Kensington Gore, London, SW7 2AR (071 823 8842).

f. To plant a Yew sapling, ring the Tree Council Hotline: 071 235 8854.

I merely report these conflicting ideas, readers may wish to make their views known.

From trees to tables, after all they're made from trees!

#### ROUND TABLES

◊ From Chris Thornborrow, Edinburgh.

News from Bonny Scotland. Another member of 'Avalon' and I have just finished a pair of Round Tables.

Both are 4' across and are unusual; based on the Grail Legend one table is female and one male. The male is in gold on black and represents twelve knights, their shields and names surrounding a Christian Grail. The female one is based on John and Caitlin's work, being silver on black and depicting nine women and the Pagan Grail on the name ERIU. The two hang on permanent display.

News of another Round Table, at Hereford, appears in the Editorial. I must get to Edinburgh this year to see your Avalon HQ, Chris. Further news:

We have now finished our video, but the final cut is not yet available. It has a mystical feel and we are all very pleased. In its present form it deals mainly with symbology in the legends. I hope to have a final cut to send you soon. It will not be for sale but we may enter it for the amateur video awards.

I'm looking forward to seeing your video very much, Chris. It would be good to show it at the AGM; even better, if you could be there to tell us about its making. I have been wondering about the possibility of our setting up a production team to make an Arthurian video, I have some tv training myself and a friend is a professional cameraman. This could be done in a concentrated period, unlike the production of a dramatic performance, of course. Perhaps this is where our 'enactment' plans could focus: Anne Marie and the group met in December and decided to seek support at the AGM, perhaps this is the way forward?

#### A PERCEVAL OPERA?

◊ From Tom Byrne, Congelton, Cheshire.

I am putting together a small studio at home at the moment, and am composing and recording a work tentatively called 'A Pelagian Mass'. I am hoping to combine the ethics of the British heretic Pelagius (of whom I believe Vortigern was a devotee) who denied the requirement of an external agency for personal salvation, but emphasised

personal progress, and the ethics of the Grail legends, which can be interpreted as the progress of Perceval, from raucous naivety, through stunning conformity to balanced wisdom; and to contrast this journey and its landscape with the landscape we find ourselves in now.

I have put down some of the music but I am looking for someone with a good voice to help me complete the first song of the cycle in early 1994. There wouldn't be anyone in Pendragon would there?

I shall be at the next gathering.

Another exciting possibility that we could explore, perhaps-related to the points made in the last letter. In the meantime, is there any singer out there who would like to be put in touch with Tom?

#### EXCALIBUR

◊ From Scott Hobbis, St. Athan, S. Glamorgan.

I have been searching high and low for the sound track of the 1981 film Excalibur, in every music shop in every town I've visited. I am a great fan of John Boorman's film but, unfortunately, was only six when the film was made. I did find out that the sound track is no longer in production. I'd write to John Boorman himself if I had his address, the members of Pendragon are my last hope: someone must have it somewhere.

Can anyone help Scott in his search? I know there are copyright issues involved. Tel: 0446 750153.

#### AN ARTHURIAN THEME PARK

◊ From Eddie Tooke, Twynning Tewsbury Glos.

Referring to your paragraph in Talking Head, 'Imagineers', the comments by Fred Benckenstein makes wry reading. Euro Disney may not tolerate 'sloppiness', but something must be responsible for the several hundred million pound losses it has made, bringing it to the brink of receivership. What a wonderful thing it would be if an Arthurian Theme Park could be established on the same scale: one can imagine enchanted forests with ogres, fire-breathing dragons and questing beasts - where visitors

may be incarcerated in one of Morgan's sinister castles until rescued by gallant knights. A section of the Park could be dedicated to Arthur of the Mabinogion of course. Ah, me! One can dream. Perhaps the projected Pentecost 'Round Table' might lead to greater things? After all Pentecost is a time for magic... Beautifully apt to round off our hopes for a productive and creative future for the Society, Eddie. It is significant that the Japanese Disneyland is a huge financial success. I understand that they are beginning to be interested in Arthur, perhaps we'll have to go there to live out our fantasies one day? I understand that there is a show at Las Vegas called 'Camelot' but it features Robin Hood and Charles and Di as well. What happened to Dick Turpin and Sherlock Holmes?

#### CELTIC BROTHERS

◊ From Ramon Guinovart, Barcelona, Spain.

Many thanks for your letter, your magazine and your good opinion about 'Gwenva'. I think that your magazine is very good. It is little in dimension but 'big' in contents. The articles are interesting and there is a lot of news, information and addresses. I would like very much to continue exchanging magazines with you. Neither in Catalonia nor Spain is it easy to find magazines or books about Arthurian legends or Celtic culture.

Celtic greetings from Catalonia. We do like your magazine, very much Ramon. The rapidly expanding interest in all things 'Celtic' may be a better way of uniting European minds than the efforts of the politicians.





# BookReviews



Journey to Avalon  
Chris Barber & David Pykitt  
ISBN 872730 04 3 (Paperback)  
Blorenge Books, 1993 £9.99

Tintagel: Arthur & Archaeology  
Charles Thomas  
ISBN 0 7134 6690 (limp) £14.99  
Batsford/English Heritage, 1993

Of these two books with Arthur in their subtitles, it is noteworthy that one tries to forge definitive links in time and space for the Dark Age hero while the other attempts to break them. F.T. Wainwright wrote, in an illuminating essay, about the relationship between the disciplines of history, archaeology and place-name studies, and it might be informative to use certain extracts as criteria by which to judge the success of each.

*Tintagel* is one of a growing series of attractive English Heritage books designed to appeal to and inform the interested lay-person. They might be on general topics such as church architecture or prehistoric settlements, or on selected sites such as Stonehenge or Glastonbury, and are written by acknowledged experts in their field. Charles Thomas is well qualified to write about this Cornish site and, though he is certainly a doubting Thomas where Arthur is concerned, he has produced a successful middlebrow book which still retains considerable sympathy for Tintagel's Arthurian resonances.

*Journey to Avalon*, the other publication, is a handsome book co-authored by Pendragon member David Pykitt, with copious monochrome photographs by Chris Barber, plentiful line illustrations (mostly uncredited) and attractive maps. There is an extensive bibliography, several appendices and generous acknowledgement of sources of information (including Pendragon and the Dragon Society). The main theme of the book is the identification of Arthur as not only one Arthwys ap Meurig but also the Breton saint Armel. The result is nearly 200 pages of close-packed argument in which the authors present the conclusions of years of research.

However, when we come to examine the details of Barber & Pykitt's hypothesis, with the deliberate echoes in its title of Geoffrey Ashe's *The Discovery of King Arthur*, we find that the scaffolding surrounding their construct is decidedly rickety. In the absence of any absolute proof of Arthur's existence, the hierarchy of evidence - so crucial to a scholarly presentation - is ill-presented and often non-existent so that the whole edifice threatens to crash to the ground.

I will leave it to others to deconstruct their genealogical material, which in any case will take a book almost as long. What is easier, if rather more brutal, is to pick out at random some of the more obvious misconceptions which careful homework would have avoided. David Pykitt's statement, for example, that "the Emperor Claudius received the submission of Arviragus at Cadbury Castle", refuted recently in *Pendragon*, reappears verbatim on p 63. Another fancy occurs on the same page: a city on Nennius' list of 28 which they call *Camelion* "by changing letters around". They then say that this is "surely" derived from *Caer Melin*, present day Llanmelin. Further, this is "certainly" more convincing than any other candidate for *Camelot*, even though they acknowledge that *Camelot* is "an invention of French medieval poets". What

is the purpose of this meaningless semantic juggling? If *Camelot* is imaginary it matters little that it could be related to Llanmelin, and it is then irrelevant to any of their arguments that Llanmelin might be remotely similar to a city on Nennius' list. In any case, as Wainwright noted, "place-name evidence is essentially linguistic evidence and direct evidence only of language and speech habits." It cannot prove, for example, that Arthur inhabited an Iron Age Gwent hillfort.

Another example of tangled logic occurs in their discussion (p 123) of Arthur's eleventh battle, as recorded in Nennius. They note an old gloss on this battle of Mount Agned which reads "In Somersetshire, quem nos Cath bregon." So far so good. Now Catbrain Hill, their favoured identification, is indeed to the northwest of Bristol, in the modern county of Avon; unfortunately for the authors' purposes it was originally located in Gloucestershire, not Somerset. Further, the original gloss was an attempt to locate the battle at one of the Cadbury hillforts in Somerset, and thus represented a guess, not a piece of ancient wisdom. To quote Wainwright again, "historical evidence is written evidence and direct evidence only of the state of mind of the person who composed it or dictated its composition." Finally, it is arguable that the second element of Catbrain is cognate with a Brythonic word meaning "high place" but there is no known archaeological evidence or even folklore to suggest that there was a major Dark Age conflict here.

The authors seem unaware of the irony involved in their description of "many an Arthurian sleuth" spending long hours "scanning old maps in search of anything remotely resembling this name" (ie Agned) when they then go on to confess to discovering the name Catbrain "on examining Ordnance Survey maps covering the old county of Somersetshire (sic)". Or a similar irony when, after Catbrain evolves in their text from being "a feasible location" to "probably the site of the battle of Cath Bregon", they proceed to castigate *King Arthur: the True Story* for over use of the words "possible, probable, perhaps, may, might and could".

Now, some of the inadequacies of this work may be blamed fairly and squarely on poor proof-reading. The index in particular, is disgracefully punctuated, and the most blatant visual gaffe is the virtual transposition of Léon and Finistère on the map of Brittany (pl44). Such lack of finish in a commercial publication is irritating, to say the least. But the mistakes of fact exemplified above are, I'm sorry to say, compounded by the method adopted by the authors of marshalling the evidence.

Barber and Pykitt follow an older generation of historical writers who place narrative high in their order of priorities. There is nothing inherently wrong in this method, and the fly on the wall approach can sometimes be tolerated for its dramatic effects if the essential facts are not in dispute. But sadly *Journey to Avalon* is not a scholarly work. Its annotation is patchy and hardly begins to justify the assumptions of the main text. The distinction between undisputed facts, logical extrapolations and creative reconstruction is frequently blurred, and usually unstated. The text, with its frequent internal repetitions, reads like a mass of notes sewn together patchwork-fashion. Interesting episodes (such as Henry VII's veneration of St Armel, which deserves study in its own right) are used unsuccessfully in an over-ambitious attempt to buttress their claims. On the other hand, they seem unaware of academic developments such as Leslie Alcock's re-evaluation of his views on an historic Arthur.

To assemble the relevant evidence in each case and then to interpret it within its own proper sphere, that is as direct evidence, are operations that pose problems enough for any scholar. But they do not reach formidable proportions so long as the limits of direct inference are not exceeded... Greater problems of interpretation arise as soon as specialists advance outside the narrow confines of their own disciplines. (Wainwright 92-3)

These are not arguments against any effort at synthesis. Rather they are a warning that great care needs to be used in steering a course in such difficult waters. Thomas' *Tintagel* represents a more successful attempt to do this. As a polymath he is well aware of the limitations of each of the disciplines. As an archaeologist he knows that "archaeological evidence is essentially material evidence and direct evidence only of practical skills, technological processes, aesthetic interests and physical sequences" (Wainwright again!); and so he painstakingly deconstructs the 1930's interpretation of the site as a Celtic monastery, and just as painstakingly draws together the evidence for it being a secular citadel. He knows too the uses of philology when he deduces from a corrupt 8th century text that *Perocoronavis*, which might represent *Durocornovio*, could be a lost Roman name for Tintagel as the fort of the Cornovian tribe. And he draws the natural inferences from statistics when he postulates that Tintagel must have been a high-status British site to receive the equivalent of a galley-load of East Mediterranean goods transported in amphorae and other containers. I do regret using one publication as a stick to beat the other, especially as the victim represents the major opus of a fellow Pendragon member. However, it is, sadly, a prime example of the pitfalls of labouring in isolation. To change tack with metaphors, the journey to Avalon will always prove to be a difficult sail, whether or not the traveller actually reaches their chosen destination; and a first-rate crew is as important as the ballast.

Reference:

F.T. Wainwright 1962, *Archaeology and Place-names and History: an essay on problems of co-ordination* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London).

Chris Lovegrove

## EXCALIBUR BOOKS

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Rivenoak, 1 Hillside Gdns.,  
Bangor, Co. Down, BT19 6SJ  
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Tintagel - Arthur & Archaeology  
Charles Thomas  
ISBN 0 7134 6690 1 (Limp) £14.99  
Batsford/English Heritage, 1993



Yet another in the highly successful English Heritage series. A certain amount of Arthurian hype appears with the misleading subtitle-Arthur and Archaeology - but this is an interesting book. Professor Thomas dispenses with the Arthurian connections very quickly and gets into the archaeology and history of Tintagel.

Consisting of 144 pages, 100 black and white illustrations (including photographs, plans, diagrams and maps), 9 colour photographs, five pages of information for further reading and visits, a glossary and an index of four and a bit pages, this is not a book for those interested in mythical aspects of either Tintagel or Arthur.

Over the years Tintagel has had more than its fair share of publicity and all for one small incident in a 12th century piece of "faction". When Geoffrey of Monmouth produced his *History of the Kings of Britain* he made Cornwall one of the most interesting places in Britain. Despite the amount he wrote on Caerleon as Arthur's capital it would be Tintagel that would become the focus of attention. There can be no doubt that there were Arthurian connections in Cornwall before Geoffrey's book. If one accepts that the tale of *Culhwch and Olwen* predates the *History of the Kings of Britain*, a place called Celliwig in Cernyw (considered to be Cornwall) was Arthur's main palace. Where did Geoffrey get his ideas from? Was there a tradition of Arthur being born at a remote 'island' fortress in Cornwall?

Professor Thomas begins his book with an overview of Tintagel and postulates the possibility of dividing the chronology of both the "Island" and the archaeological evidence on the mainland into periods. This first period is "0" representing prehistory, of which there seems to be no evidence. Period I- Roman Period, Period II- Post-Roman, Period III- Late Pre-Conquest, Period IV- The Castle and Period V- Post-Medieval to the Present. These periods are discussed in the following chapters. The second chapter, entitled magical conceptions, modern misconceptions" and chapter 8- "Other and future Tintagels" I will leave till last.

The main part of the book is taken up with the history of the archaeological examination of Tintagel Castle, the pre-Castle evidence and the Churchyard on the mainland. The author shows how the first archaeologists looked at the evidence and gives considerable space to the work of Courtney Arthur Raleigh Radford's famous 30s excavations. Did William de Mortain or Reginald de Dustanville build a simple fortification beneath the 13th century castle of Earl Richard of Cornwall? Were the post-Roman remains those of a monastic settlement? And what of the pottery finds from the Roman Mediterranean? According to Professor Thomas, Raleigh Radford stuck to his ideas even after further excavations came up with a different picture. Today it is believed that the site had considerable importance to the hierarchy of Dumnonia. Certainly the volume of pottery found at Tintagel must mean something. It must have been important in the importation and trading - both of the ceramics and the contents of these pots.. Was Tintagel a focus of trade for the Celtic Sea? Did the 'historical' Arthur then have any connections with Tintagel? Was it Arthur's castle or the fortress of King Mark? Professor Thomas sees less problem with answering these questions than he does to giving justice to the later fortifications, which have become overshadowed by all the Arthurian hype. He points out that the Arthurian connection is limited to Arthur's conception there, though there were definitely pre-Galfridian Arthur connections with Cornwall.

The chapters on the Roman period (was Tintagel Durocornovium?),

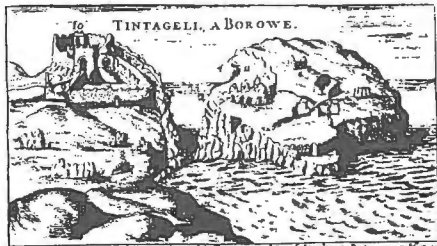


We are left with a very interesting book, well worth reading. A lot more work needs to be done on Tintagel and the surrounding area but this book goes a long way to presenting the archaeological evidence simply and clearly.

Charles Evans-Günther

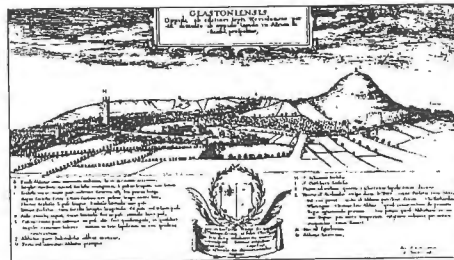
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Charles Evans-Günther



Between A & B a Draw Bridge decay'd. Between A & C 3/4 Decayed. Between C & D a  
 1/2 Decayed. 2 1/2 Between A & B a Building fallen into the Sea. 3 The Old Chappel. 4 a Spring of  
 fresh water. 5 The Iron Gate. 6 A Vault thrown on the Rock. 7 a Gate guarded w.  
 a Chain. 8 Entrance into the best Building on the Land side. 9 the Main Building on  
 the Land side. 10 the ruined Building on the Island.

*Norden, 1584*



Hollar 1684



Philip Rahtz (with Lorna Watts)  
ISBN 0 7134 6866 1 (Hardback) £25  
Batsford/English Heritage, 1993

He tells the story of Glastonbury from Prehistoric times up to today, looking at various aspects that have put this little town well and truly on the map. We are shown the written sources, the myths are discussed and the archaeology of the area is covered clearly and concisely. This is a book that 'tells it as it is' and cuts through the layers of the irrational. There may be those who will particularly dislike Professor Rahtz's book but many will be happy to see such a publication.

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The discussion of the mythology of Glastonbury takes up only a small part of the book: of particular interest are the excavations of the Tor, Glastonbury Abbey, the town itself, Chalice Well and of various sites near to Glastonbury. This information shows that, even without Arthur, Joesph of Arimathea and Holy Grails, Glastonbury is an important and fascinating place in the early history of Britain. There is considerable evidence to show its prominence during the Dark Ages, in both the secular and religious worlds.

The paperback edition will almost certainly be available by the time you read this review: it is a book many will wish to have on their shelves.

Charles Evans-Günther

Charles Evans-Günther

W.A.Cummins

ISBN 0 7509 0186 1 (Hardback) £16.99  
Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd 1992



Dr Cummins begins by casting doubt on the historical existence of Arthur, using fairly familiar arguments based on Gildas, Nennius, the *Annales Cambriae*, etc. Certainly no one can deny that the real evidence is scanty. But *someone* beat the Saxons so comprehensively at Badon that their advance was halted for several decades. Who? Dr Cummins favours Ambrosius. His thesis is that Arthur was an already renowned hero from an earlier epoch whose fame was so great that later deeds, such as the campaigns of Magnus Maximus in Gaul and the exploits of Ambrosius against the Saxons, were attributed to him. It's true, of course, that many originally independent legends, such as the story of Tristram, were attracted into the Arthurian orbit in a similar way.

Stonehenge fascinates him even more than the identity of Arthur. As a geologist, he has numerous significant things to say about the stones, their provenance qualities, the methods of transportation and erection - he even calculates how many men over how long a period might have been needed: 750 labourers, plus 50 masons shaping the stones, working over 6-9 years.

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that Stonehenge was known throughout the Ancient World, attracting foreign visitors to this island at the height of the Wessex Culture. The builder of such an edifice ( why not call him 'Merlin' in the absence of other evidence of his name?) would have attained fame that might well have lasted thousands of years, even without written records.

The Dark Age Mellin was a different individual, later subsumed into the fame of the original one and so credited by Geoffrey with the erection of the transported Giants' Dance from Ireland as a monument to Ambrosius. Geoffrey's 'Cloister of Ambrius', he thinks, is another name for Stonehenge, interpreting the temple in twelfth century terms, and the 'brothers' were not medieval monks but a Bronze Age priesthood. 'Ambrius' he sees as a variant of Ambrosius, probably the name of the Wessex Culture prince who commissioned the original Merlin to build Stonehenge III.

Once suggestion that I find interesting and attractive here refers to Geoffrey's account of the fatherless boy Merlin's interview with Vortigern: when he declared, 'I am called Ambrosius,' he was not naming himself, he was in a prophetic trance and it was his 'control' identifying himself as the spirit of the original Ambrosius, patron of the original Merlin. This, if accepted, would certainly clear up a good deal of confusion.

Thus we have Ambrosius and Merlin active in the period around 2,000 BC and a parallel pair in the sixth century AD. Arthur, he maintains properly belongs with the earlier pair, adducing in support of this contention the almost universally denigrating or hostile references to Arthur in the Dark Age lives of the saints as evidence that he was really a prehistoric pagan hero whose reputation the Church was anxious to belittle. Here he might have found useful material to support his claim in the *Mabinogion*, where Arthur is surrounded by fabulous events and characters more appropriate to early myth than to legend/history.

I feel that Dr Cummins is too preoccupied with Geoffrey of Monmouth and is not consistent in his attitude to that dubiously reliable source. At one moment we are asked to dismiss as pure invention sections of the narrative and at another to accept episodes as being based on genuine tradition that survived for centuries. I do not find these arguments wholly convincing, especially when the legendary 'lost source' raises its head yet again.

If Arthur really was a prehistoric figure, who were the opponents against whom he performed deeds so valiant that their fame endured for perhaps two thousand years? Dr Cummins points out himself that the era of the Wessex Culture was a settled, peaceful one when manpower and resources could be devoted to such projects as the building of Stonehenge III. At its curiously sudden and unexplained demise (he has a theory about that too) it's true that there was a period of internal strife, as evidenced by the appearance of hill-forts and the prevalence of weapons of war among grave goods, but surely fame of Arthurian dimensions would not have been won in mere inter-tribal squabbles and skirmishes?

Finally there is much more in the book than I have space to refer to in detail, some of it of dubious relevance to the main theme but all of it

interesting and often provocative. Like many such books it advances speculations on scanty evidence and erects further speculation upon this dubiously sound substructure; the whole edifice, though ingenious and imaginatively stimulating, could be argued to rest on foundations as lacking in solidity as Vortigern's ill-fated tower!

**Geoff Roberts**

(Another in-depth review of this book, by Nick Grant, will appear in our next edition. Thanks to both contributors for taking up the gauntlet thrown down in XXIII/4. We shall also print Charles' review of 'Journey to Avalon'.)

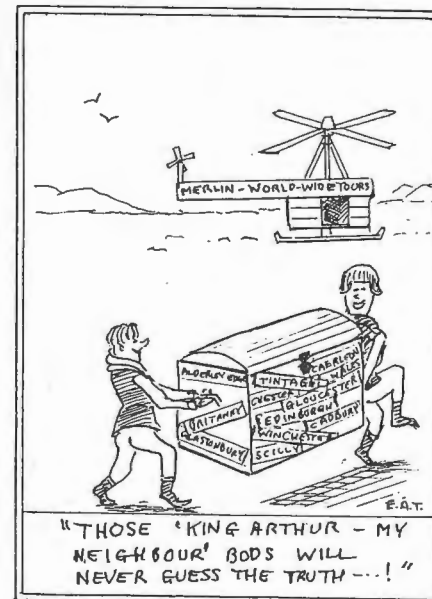
REMARKS FROM THE VISITORS' BOOK  
AT A CERTAIN ANCIENT MONUMENT

First visitor's book I've signed  
A bit creepy  
Long live the King  
Much older than I first thought  
God bless Soviet Russia  
Very unsafe by the look of it  
Nice place for nice people  
Bautiful climax to a very happy honeymoon

### THE KENTISH VIEW OF IT

Alas, Stonehenge, where were the Genii of the Druidical Temple, while a few rabbits were undermining the stones that had continued upright for no one can tell how many centuries? For, to this cause, and not to a rapid thaw after a high frost, is this catastrophe attributed in a Kentish Gazette.

*The Gentleman's Magazine*, February, 1797



### PENDRAGON ADVERTISEMENT RATES

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The Society investigates Arthurian history, archaeology and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain.



# TAVAS yn grŷth EDDIE & COOKE



Chris Lovegrove, writing in *Pendragon* XXIII/4, questions the resurrection by Phillips and Keatman in their book, *King Arthur - the True Story*, of Beram Saklatvala's theory that Arthur took the sword from a Saxon, not from a stone. According to Saklatvala's work, *Arthur, Britain's Last Champion*, a clerical abbreviation reduced *ex Saxono* (from a Saxon) to *ex saxo* (from a stone). Saklatvala supports his argument with the conjecture that Arthur would hardly have handed over the sword to his foster-brother, Kay, without first reading what was written on it in golden letters - namely that whoever pulled it from the stone would be rightwise king of all England.

Chris points to all the ifs and buts and general speculation that are prominent features of *The True Story* but tacitly acknowledges the difficulty of firmly establishing any facts concerning Arthur. It is satisfying, then, to be able to offer a piece of firm circumstantial evidence - not of the identity or provenance of Arthur, it is true - but of certain facts about his legacy to our culture and civilisation.

The simplest explanation of Arthur's failure to read the inscription on the sword is that he could not, being at the time illiterate, like so many nobles of his era. The indications are, however, that Arthur, despite his earlier illiteracy, was responsible, four centuries before King Alfred, for the growth of education in his realm.

Let us examine and develop the scenario in a logical manner, starting from when the young Arthur grasped the sword's hilt before the assembled populace: "What shall I do now?" he asked.

"Pull it, sir!" they cried. Arthur did so.

"Now, what?"

"Gird on your sword! Gird on! Gird on!" came the chant.

So Arthur, a modest lad who would not have pulled out the sword at all had he been able to read the inscription, girded on the sword and became *Pendragon*. Once he had been told what the writing said, however, he resolved that never again would he or his subjects, through ignorance, be at the mercy of the scholars, and declared, before the multitude, that universal literacy would be his aim.

A reporter from the *Tintagel Times* misheard 'gird on' as 'guerdon' and spelt it thus when faxing details to his editor of these exciting events resulting in Arthur's promise to the nation. The editor assumed that a 'guerdon' (reward or prize) was involved and gave the whole matter banner headlines. The 'Pull-it-Sir Prize' - as he called it for want of a more sensational name - was henceforth awarded yearly for the best contribution to literature in Logres, and played a major part in raising educational standards in the realm.

Fourteen hundred years later, when Arthur's copyright had run out, an American journalist, coincidentally named Joseph Pulitzer, churlishly claimed the credit for introducing the Prize. One cannot sufficiently condemn such deceit.

In the interests of fair-mindedness, it has to be acknowledged here that an alternative 'theory' about the Pulitzer Prize is extant that has nothing to do with swords in stones or literary campaigns. The theory's proponents claim that the phrase was merely a distortion of an exotic chicken dish served at King Arthur's inaugural banquet - Pullet Surprise. I pity anyone who believes such a patently mischievous derivation. Such are the depths, however, to which some etymologists will descend.

(Where did Sir Lancelot learn to read?)

(In Knight school, of course)

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# TALKING head

## ★ THE MEDIA

Christmas 1992 was celebrated on tv by a host of Arthurian films: Christmas 1993, in marked contrast, had none. The first was on Sky Jan. 18th, *Lancelot & Guinevere*, starring Cornel Wilde, and *The Fisher King* was shown on the 20th, also on Sky - which is out of my reach. Instead we had Arthur on radio, a better prospect, I found. Arthur's Knight: Kevin Crossley Holland's six-part series on Radio 3 between 21st and 30th December kept me up late. His aim was 'to restore King Arthur to where he has always belonged - the world of the storyteller. For me he never put a foot wrong. He framed the stories by placing Sir Thomas Malory, a confused, complex man of action, against some of the major events of his life, in situations where he was seeking to reconcile the chaotic values of his time with those of the idealized code of chivalry of the Round Table. Various narrators told him stories which focussed thematically around six of Arthur's knights. This frame work allowed subtle interaction, questioning and discussion among the teller and onlookers, and we



were led deeply into the thematic material. I sat with the 13 year old squire, snowbound in the Derbyshire Peaks, and heard the magical story of Gawain and the Green Knight, I fought with him in Burgundy where we heard of Arthur's invasion of France and, finally, while Malory was embroiled in a plot to kill the king, heard of Mordred's betrayal of Arthur, of the King's death and his promised return. I listened to the tapes in the darkness and conjured myself into a world that the film maker seems unable to portray: where six knights, aspects of one Every-Knight, ventured forth and were challenged to examine their actions and learn the lessons of true knighthood. If you didn't hear these programmes they will almost certainly be repeated, I'm sure.

Merlin & Arthur on the Way to Glastonbury from Deptford High Street: Radio 4. (90 mins). Nigel Baldwin reworked the legend so that an inefficient Merlin comes from the C5th to fetch Arthur - to lead the people of his time out of their bad ways. (Perceval is a lecher!) He chooses Tony, a young cockney market trader. His sister Faynia and a reporter called Geoffrey Monmouth go along too. Robust, earthy and contemporary in tone, it is inevitable that Tony is too wimpish to pull the sword from the stone and his sister - a tough cookie - achieves this, instead. On returning to our own times we find that the course of history has been altered by these happenings and men are the weaker sex while women recall the glorious tales of Queen Guinevere. On this occasion I was glad it was all fantasy - it was wasn't it, chaps?

King Arthur: Radio 4, 30th Dec.3.

This featured Arthur Uther Pendragon, a young man with an estuarian accent who is the reincarnation of Arthur. His declared mission is to 'unite the Celts'. He travels his kingdom on a motor-bike, instantly recognisable to travellers and other New Age people. He has the sword Excalibur, a shield and a warband of loyal knights who appear when needed (e.g. a sit-in at Winchester Cathedral) and attend the Round Table in his council house in Farnborough. Last year he was allowed, by the police, to touch the Heel Stone at Stonehenge (he is also a druid) after two previous abortive attempts. He sounded amiable - the canon at Winchester seemed to think so too. (Factual).

## Timeteam:

At the time of writing one of these programmes has been shown: (Sunday, Channel 4, 7pm.) I'm sure this 4-part series is destined to be a huge success. To watch a team of archaeologists at work, under pressure of time but with modern equipment, then report back in language a 'Beano' reader can understand is a challenge. 'Baldrick' Robinson achieves his aim well: to be the 'all-purpose irritant' - demanding answers on our behalf, Three days to show us what Alfred got up to in the marshes of Athelney. Brilliant! I can't wait to see the Romans come alive at Ribchester.

Arthur Meets Gwyn Williams: Chris Lovegrove tells me that member Colin Thomas, producer of *The Dragon has Two Tongues*, the tv series which featured Professor Gwyn Williams, is working on another series with that fascinating Welsh, down-to-earth academic, this time on Arthur. Shooting is scheduled to start in the spring with broadcasting likely in the summer. I wonder if we could entreat one of these gentlemen to write about this project for *Pendragon*?

## The Sun and the Serpent:

A half hour programme was scheduled for 1.00 pm on Saturday, 15th January, showing Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst's quest to chart the lines of earth energy known as

the Michael (and Mary) current(s). Needless to say, it was cancelled for a sports programme with half an hour's notice. I should have known that it was disposable by its timing. Very annoying.

## ★ LIVE PERFORMANCE

### Robin Williamson:

At last I've heard the Bard in person. Robin performed at Theatr Clwyd on the 7th December, and he lived up to all my expectations.



I bought two tapes of his story-tellings of Celtic tales, they are pure magic. If you would like a list write to: Robin Williamson Productions, BCM Box 4797, London, WC1N

The Death of Arthur: St. Donats Arts Centre, S. Glamorgan. Fri. 4th-7th March. Brith Gof, Wales' experimental theatre company, D.O.A. asks urgent questions about nationalism, patriotism, and terrorism. Promenade staging throws actors and audience into intimate contact. Advance booking essential: Tel. 0446 7948848.

## ★ ARCHAEOLOGY

Current Archaeology: Some of the following information is abstracted from recent numbers of *Current Archaeology* which is published 6 times a year for a subscription of £12, including postage. It is not available on bookstalls, Andrew and Wendy Selkirk prefer to deal direct and give better value for money. Articles are illustrated in colour and supplements list opportunities to take part in digs, to visit sites and to join courses. Write to Current Archaeology, 9



Nassington Road, London, NW3 2TX (Phone & Fax: 071 435 7517). Back numbers are available. (Numbers in brackets indicate editions of this journal.)

**The Hoxne Hoard:** (No.136) At Hoxne, in Suffolk, the biggest hoard of late Roman gold and silver coins ever discovered anywhere in the Roman Empire was found, together with spoons and jewellery. Article and photographs.

**Celtic Coin Index:** (Oxford Today, vol.6, No.1) The Institute of Archaeology at Oxford has been given a grant of £56,000 by the Leverhulme Trust to assist the computerization of its Celtic Coin Index over three years. Present records, on cards, with photographs, give all known data on the 15 - 20,000 Celtic coins known in the UK. These were struck by Iron Age tribes between 100 BC and the Roman Conquest.

**The Archaeology Resource Book:** Contains 3 databases: 1. Education - details of the National Curriculum and various exams in archaeology; 2. Addresses of various archaeological bodies, societies, professional organisations & museums; 3. List of videos & filmstrips for teaching archaeology. From: The Council for British Archaeology, 112 Kensington Road, London, SE11 6RE. £6 post-free.

**Royal Celtic Burials:** (No.132) Articles appear on the two burials of Celtic royal families which came to light in 1992 at St. Albans (Verulamium) and at Colchester (Camulodunum). Plans, coloured photographs and artists' reconstructions of the lying in state and funeral rituals. All this for £2!

**Snettisham:** (No.135) The most spectacular Iron Age treasure ever discovered in this country, excavated by the British Museum in Norfolk. The original treasure, with the magnificent torcs, was discovered in 1948, but two further seasons of excavation have revealed much more, dating from the 1st century AD. The Snettisham Treasure is normally kept at the British Museum but is at present at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (till 4th March).

#### ★ COURSES AND VISITS:

It is always wise to ring well in advance, many courses are heavily booked up.

**Iron Age Wessex:** Winchester 5-8 April. The Association Francaise pour l'Etude del'Age du Fer (AFEAF). The Leading European conference on the Iron Age, held for the first time in Britain this year. Programme includes visits. King Alfred's College, Winchester. Contact: Richard Whinney, Winchester Museum Service, 75 Hyde Street, Winchester, SO23 7DW.



**The Celtic Arthur:** Leeds University, Dept. of Adult Continuing Education. Dayschool, from 10.15. Fee £12.50. I mentioned this course last time, Charles Evans-Günther is giving two of the six lectures: *Dreams & Tales: The Welsh Romances and Dream of Rhonabwy*, and *The Plantagenet Arthur. The Discovery of Arthur's Grave*. A registration leaflet must be returned by Friday, 4th March and this can be obtained from Pendragon or from Dept of Cont.Ed., University of Leeds, LS2 9JT. Enquiries: (0532) 333220.

**The Arthurian Tradition:** Reading University. Tutor: Dr. J. Wood. Tuesdays 7.0 - 9.0 pm, 11th Jan- 15 March. Fee: £29. Course No.199. A comprehensive syllabus, which looks at folklore, archaeology, art and literature as contributing to the Arthurian tradition. The course will also look at modern revival material including the New Age dimension. This is a catholic overview that accords well with our own objectives. Member Eric Fitch is enjoying the course, he writes of Dr. Wood, 'she certainly knows her stuff and I look forward to the rest of the course. It is the largest evening class I have ever

attended - there are 33 on the register! Interest in Arthur is certainly not dormant in Reading!' Nor anywhere else, I think, from members' reports. How can we net even a small proportion of these people, I wonder? Write to Extramural Office, Building 5, Dept. Extended Education, The University, London Rd., Reading RG1 5AQ. Tel: 318347.

**The City Lit. London:** These courses were mentioned in XXIII/4, but you may be a new member. Course No. SH0231. Sat. 5th March. Glastonbury Legends. Venue: Stukely Street, Fee: £17.50. (10.30-16.30). Course No. SH0229. Wednesday (19.30-21.30), 12th January - 23rd March. Stukely St., Fee: £38.30. Contact: The City Lit., Stukely St., Drury Lane, London WC2B 5LI (Tel. 071 430 0542).

**New Light on Roman Wroxeter:** A day event, Saturday 26th March (10.0-5.00) Cost: £12. Held at the Gateway. Wroxeter is Phillips' and Keatmans' 'Camelot'. Course No. G/026/AHD. Tel. 021 414 5607.

**Saxon Market:** Sun. & Mon. 3rd, 4th April. Change modern money for Saxon style coins and purchase crafts from traders in costume. Story telling and activities based on Anglo - Saxon life. Entry £3. Anglo Saxon Village, West Stow Country Park, Icklingham Rd., West Stow, Nr. Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. Tel. (0284) 728718.

**The Sun, the Moon and Megaliths:** Lecture given by Aubrey Burl himself. Birmingham University, 12th March (10-5.00) Cost: £12. Course No. B143/AHD. Tel. 021 414 5607.

**Glastonbury:** This course was held at Bristol University's Dept. of Continuing Education on January 29th, with Prehistoric, Roman and Dark Age experts Philip Rahtz, John Coles and Peter Leach lecturing. Chris Lovegrove has agreed to give us a report. We cordially invite members who attend courses to contribute short reports.

#### ★ ARTHURIAN MODELS:

The Sunday Times assembled a team of design experts to judge the window displays of the six biggest London stores over Christmas.

Fortnum & Mason won hands down with the theme *Arthurian legend*. The 'models were small but detailed' with a 'wonderful use of colour & material'. Other comments were, 'Kitch with conviction' and 'Arthur lies trapped in the snow staring at bottles of spirit', 'Merlin is surrounded by books', and 'Fay Viviane offers a daring plaster nipple'.

#### ★ CAMELOT:

It is amazing how often you come across this magical name in non-magical contexts these days (see letters pages). Las Vegas equates it with 'Olde Englishe kitch', and an Introduction Agency uses it as their business name, 'Creating happiness', says Miss S of Knights-bridge. Two more acceptable contexts I've come across recently are: a production by the Truro Amateur Operatic Company who will be performing the show at the splendid Minack clifftop theatre in Cornwall this summer. I'll give details next time. I played there myself years ago and was awed by the setting: the backdrop of sea and sky stretching away into infinity: a magical place to enact the story of Arthur.

The other Camelot appears on the list of *The Musicals Collection* which is now appearing at intervals in Smiths, etc. Each issue contains a book of the musical and a tape of the show. Priced at £3.99, it is a cheap way to remind yourself of the words of 'If ever I should leave you' and 'How to Handle a Woman'. At least Merlin doesn't have the nerve to advise Arthur on this topic. It's left to Sir Pellinore of Questing Beast fame!





## 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 Saward, 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.

**GWENVA** - Celtic Culture & Traditions of Europe (Music, History, Legends, Ancient Sites). Written in the Catalan language. Editor: Ramon Guinovart, 27-29 E1 08028 Barcelona, Catalunya, Spain.

**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

**MOONSHINE** - Paganism for self and planet. £1.30 per issue, £2.60 for 2. Cheques: Kate Westwood, Box M, 498 Bristol Rd., Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6BD.

**NORTHERN EARTH** - Earth Mysteries, Antiquarianism and Cultural Tradition, Editor: John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorkshire HX7 5NP. 4 issues £5.00, single £1.50.

**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: to 'Anna Franklin', Windrush, High Tor West, Earl Shilton, Leics.

**RENNES OBSERVER** - Journal of the Rennes Group: The Mystery of Rennes le Chateau and its priest Saunière. Meetings, visits. Editor: Huntington House, St Paul's Ave., Willesden Green, London NW2 5SR. £2.

**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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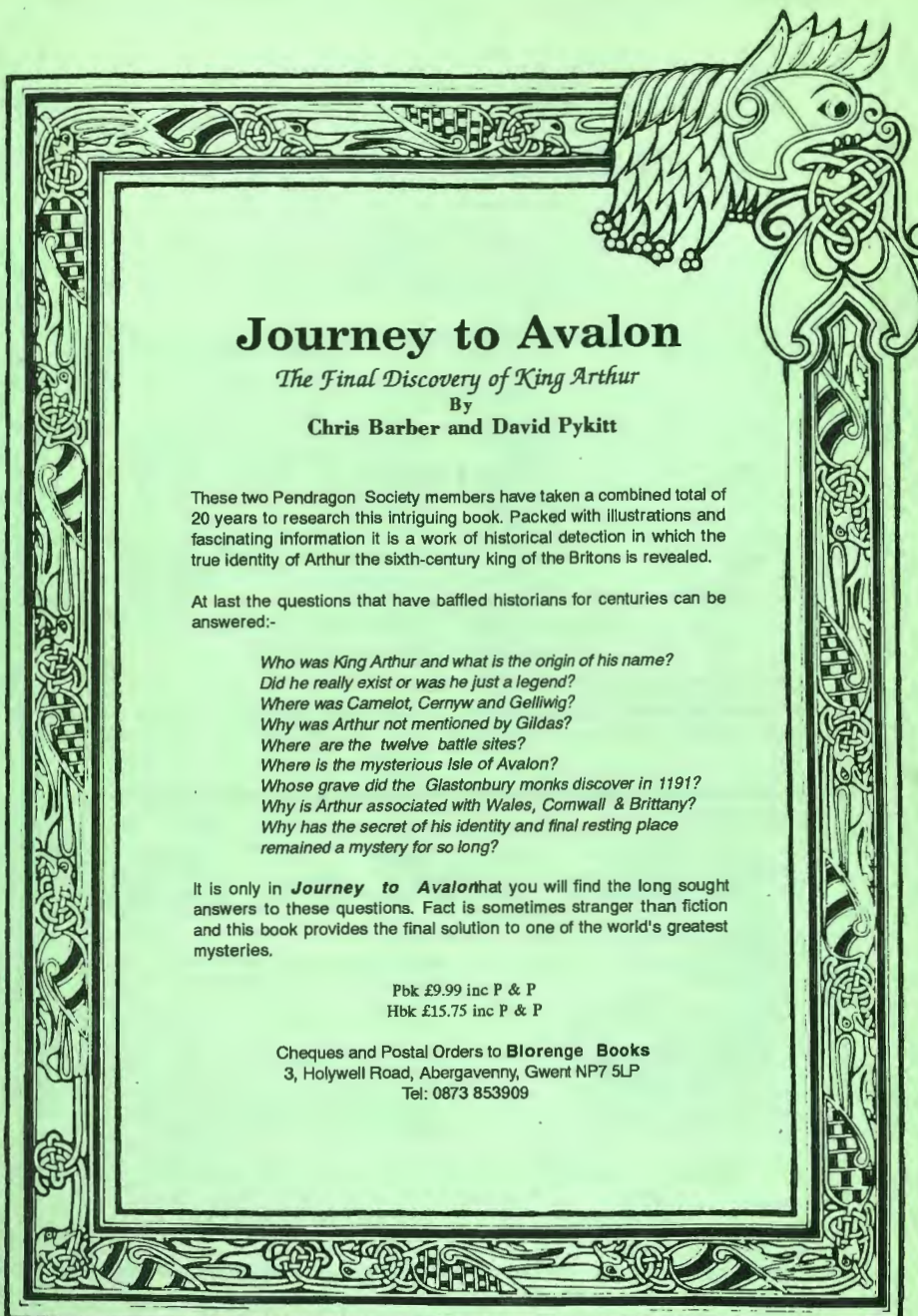


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