

# pendragon





# EDITORIAL

*Alone, unarmed, the Dragon King must go  
To seek the Cauldron by a magic shore.  
And in the moon's white path a mystic door  
Moves to strange music only Merlins know.  
(Thomas Samuel Jones Jnr.)*



Arthur in Wonderland has proved to be a most productive title. You will see from the contents page that our contributors have responded with right brain creativity and, with forty eight pages, I think you will agree that it is quite a Christmas stocking of an edition: full of surprises and unexpected goodies.

Which is my cue to spring another surprise. From this edition we shall be producing three journals a year, keeping to this larger size, still for a subscription of only £6. Subs. changed from £4.50 to £6 in Spring of 1991, when the mag was 32 pages and set in much larger type. During the 3½ years since then we have produced 14 editions of *Pendragon* and the journal has grown larger and fuller all the time, so that we have been offering more and more for the same money. Other magazines have all been raising their charges this year and we might have done the same but, as I told members at the AGM, I would prefer to continue to offer a larger, more varied journal than scrimp to produce four smaller magazines. The two deciding factors in reaching this decision have been: (1) it takes four months to get out a hefty journal such as this one, it's almost a full-time occupation, and (2) the saving of not having to post out one edition, and of printing larger pagination journals with higher runs means we save money - enough to act as a financial bulwark to guarantee a future for the Society. You will get as much as before, not quite as often but regularly and on time.

The Cardiff Day certainly brought the Society to the notice of a wider public and we are delighted to welcome Count Nikolai Tolstoy to our readership. We have been joined by some very creative and artistic people this year and the increased range of our contributors' expertise augers well for the future. Next year we must concentrate on organising events where members can meet up more regularly around the country. Local secretaries are much needed (see *Letters*). Future themes are suggested elsewhere in this issue and, with a larger journal, we shall print more creative writing in each edition. Response has been particularly encouraging in this area.

I received the following note in September: 'enclosed overdue subs with apologies. I am very impressed with what you are making out of the journal, the only thing I preferred before was the little loose reminders we had. I am getting too old to look for hidden messages in the artwork, splendid though it is.'

It has been told by several members that loose reminders get lost and they wished for a return to the standard method used by most magazines, so...please look right before reading on and in the little box you will see a red X, subs now due, or a numeral, which tells you how many more issues are credited to you. This is the system we shall use in future to keep you aware of your subscription situation. Our next edition will be published on March 31st.

'We wish all our members a Happy Christmas/Yule and a prosperous New Year.'

# PENDRAGON

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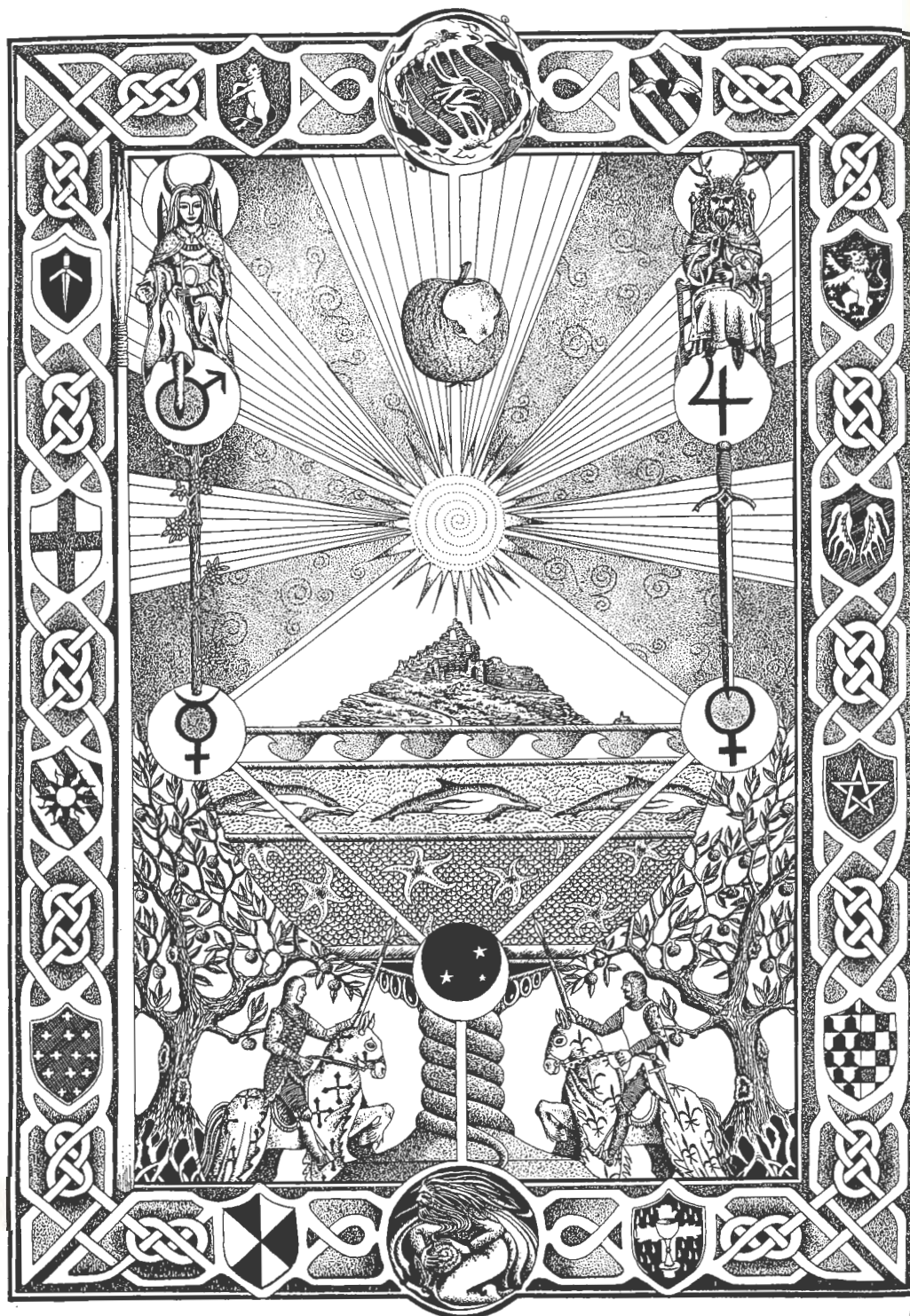
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# The Once And Future poem

## Steve Sneyd

Instances of science-fiction imagery  
in recent Arthurian poetry

Isn't there something robotic about the conception of clanking knights of the Round Table? Or a touch of the archetypal alien about the Green Giant? And as for the Grail, its ability to move seamlessly through Time and Space has much in common with a star-traveller's vessel. Thoughts such as these have surely a parallel with the growing frequency with which imagery from that myth-maze of our age, science-fiction, has appeared in much Arthurian verse in recent decades - the Wondrous Matter of Britain commingling with the 'what if?' Sense of Wonder about future matters.

In this article I propose to touch briefly on a variety of examples - by no means an exhaustive list - of the ways in which different poets have explored the possibilities of such an interweaving of archetypes.

Initially, however, without attempting a detailed taxonomy, it is worth remarking generally on the different main approaches to this testing task that are possible.

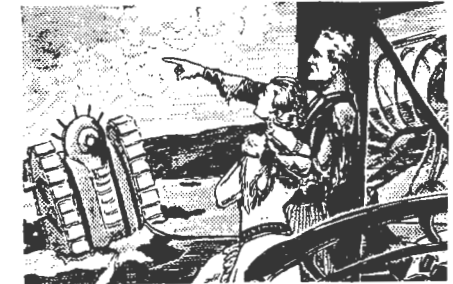
First, there are in effect three main stages to Arthur-as-entity:

1. the initial period of existence as *rex quondam*; 2. the continuing period of supposed comatose immortality; and finally, 3. the future return, proposed by the accreted cycle, to provide some unspecified salvation as *rexque futurus*.

Secondly, in relation to the *rex quondam*, there are again three divergent facets - 1. the 'real historical' Arthur, subject of endless scholarly disputation; 2. the curious ambiguous figure of Celtic myth, tricksome warlord of epic deed but dubious morals; and finally, 3. the tragic king of chivalry of the medieval stories.

Thirdly, through the Matter in its fully developed form is a vastly complex tapestry of interwoven stories, in many of which Arthur's own part is at most marginal - in that his Court and Table form a point of departure for some quest, or point of reference when correct conduct is in doubt - three threesomes, in a sense triangles, lie at its core, viz: 1. Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot; 2. Galahad, Perceval and the Grail; and 3. Mark, Tristan, and Iseult. (Though omnipresent, the 'wild card', Merlin, is in many ways, until, at least, his final encounter with Vivian, a detached symbol of freedom from the time and space to which the others are bound.)

Finally, lest it be thought that introducing science-fictional elements be seen as traumatically disruptive of the story's nature, it is worth recalling that, from the medieval



Arthurian poems to Tennyson's epic 'Idylls of the King', it has been traditional to turn the figures of the story into time-travellers, dragged from the flickering murk of the Dark Ages (perhaps indeed from some even earlier Celtic landscape) into the organised and panoplied era of High Feudalism.

Having thus provided a hopefully helpful context for the present article, exemplifying instances can be considered.

In 1955, in a book-length poem by Martyn Skinner (published by Chapman & Hall) Skinner wrote of a 1999 England, damaged by nuclear warfare, then conquered by the Soviets. As the title, *The Return of Arthur* makes clear, this is a *rexque futurus* work, in rather pedestrian and, in places, vaguely jokey rhyme royal, telling of the hero's return as saviour.

Onwards to 1968 - this saw a notable poem by D.M. Thomas; 'The Strait', which appears among the fine selection of his science-fictional work included in *Penguin Modern Poets 11*. It is a retelling of the story of Tristan's exile in Brittany with the 'second Iseult' in a way which remains faithful to the essence, while changing time, place and detail utterly. Brittany becomes a mining colony on the Moon and Yseult an android substitute bedmaid, deliberately made in the image of his first true love. The android ('her arms are whiter than Yseult's...some flaw in the dye' indicates how cleverly Thomas explains the details in terms true to his future world, without violating the structure of the original) develops human emotion and, in the end, our jealousy, keeps from Tristan the message from the Earth-bound Yseult which would save him, though her lie "made this plastic melt in fear." The action is executed in beautiful and haunting language - "I've bathed his wounds from rockfalls, faced the wind/ of plunging meteors/ with him, walked the rims of craters - shared this world, such as it is!"

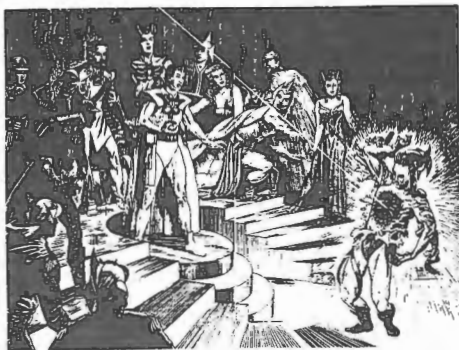
The seventies have a few small-press examples:

1973 saw the appearance in *Pennine Platforms*



Autumn issue of David Gill's 'Percival'. This has the village boy who "waits on the top of the five-bar gate/ like a silent note on a stave/ for something that words have not left/ hedge-darkness to sing" having his reverie interrupted by bikers in convoy, "road knights" whose powdered pillion riders titter as one tells the inquiring child "Angels, matey, we're angels". Pleading to be taken with them, the child Percival is instead left, in an ironic reference to Bomb-fears, "with fall-out enough to ionise the most sleeping heart".

In *Moth*, in 1976, Ian Hogg's 'Merlin' has a deceptive simplicity - "some people/ are 300 years behind/Merlin's quick/ to tell you/ that/ but/ then he / would be moving/ at the speed of light," neatly encapsulates, in its SF image, the ambiguity of the wizard's relationship to the other, time-captive, characters of the Arthurian cycle.



Again, in 1976, science-fictional imagery occurs in several poems in my own collection of Arthurian poems, *The Rex Quondam File* (Torc Press), 'Mercy of Modred', for example, includes starship imagery and alien world elements; 'The search completed : The Sangreal' has space-helmeted followers of Arthur discovering the Grail on the Moon but deriving no benefit from their discovery, and 'The Waiting Game' is an extended meditation by the 'ongoing Arthur' after his gradual realisation that his brain has been incorporated into a missile guidance system for use in nuclear war. (As well as this poem, reprinted in *Astral Dimensions* in 1977, I used the same image in 'The Risen Saviour' in a 1977 issue of *Muse* and it echoes again through my 'Day of the Bear' in *Orc* 13, 1984).

In June 1977, in *Moth* 7, Pete Faulkner's 'Rockin the Camelot Fillmore, With Gareth The Minstrel on Pixiephone' is a feast of beautiful imagery ("Tides of white light/flow over your starnipped breasts") but actual anachronism of a time-travelling kind in this account of an Arthurian banquet is limited to the title and

"unpopping champagne corks", though the girl has alien (or elfin) characteristics including "spiderweb eyes,/ butterfly wings".

A long gap is followed, in 1989, by what I believe is the most realised full-length melding of the science-fictional and the Arthurian, viz. K.V. Bailey's Triffid Books collection *The Sky Giants*, which relocates Parsifal's quest in a numinous realm of spiralling spaceship, spires of emptiness which summon at once the magic of the original story and the awe felt at Man's first faltering steps away from his own planet.

Before looking more closely at some instances of the delicate control of its material - and mood - shown by this sequence, a brief study of American examples of the form shows that, also in 1989, John M. Ford's 'Winter Solstice: Camelot Station', winner of the Rhysling Award for the best long SF poem of the year (reprinted from Ace Books anthology *Invitation to Camelot*) locates Arthur's Court in the last days of British steam railways, and ingeniously interweaves the elegiac technological mood with the sense of gathering decay round the Court, the ambiguities cusp around the description of Galahad, who now knows even "stainless steel corrodes". Modred's alienation is symbolised by the fact that he arrives by train like the others only because his DC9 is grounded by weather.

The next year, Ford returned to the Arthurian theme with a lighter weight piece, again a Rhysling long poem nominee, though not the winner, 'A Holiday in the the Park'. This is *rexque futurus* country - Merlin and the Child who is the reborn Arthur visit a Camelot theme park, and come to the rather predictable conclusion that its false magic is of value if it inspires even a few to seek the true magic of the Grail.

In the 1992 Rune Press anthology *Time Frames*, edited by Terry A. Garey, the sonnet 'Once and Future Abductee' by Ann W. Schwader has the comatose post-Camlan Arthur taken away from Earth for (unsuccessful) alien interrogation - "Aboard the vessel which was Avalon/Earth's crystal wiredreams wrap her sleepers fast."

In the 1993 Rhysling nominee anthology, Jane Yolen's 'The Question of the Grail' is science-fictional only in its feminist perspective recasting of the vessel's nature - "the bowls of my breasts, my cup-like womb". On the other hand, Charles Jacob's 'The Once and Future Robot' (*Star Line* Vol.16. No.3 May/June 1993, subsequently a finalist in the 1994 Rhysling ballot after appearing in the year's nominee anthology) is as starkly futuristic in its transformation of myths to mechanisms as its title implies - Guinevere is "not programmed for either betrayal/or love", Lancelot "a cunning set of chips", Arthur is "lights that go on and off/in regal quantum sequence", and Excalibur "hums

fully charged" for "certain dominion" over "vassals.../shackled to the feudal machines." This is a fascinating, reductionist, almost neo-Marxist reworking, but the sense of wonder is a cold, dehumanised one, stripping the cycle of many, indeed most, 'deep level' resonances.

Returning briefly to 1993, there is one poem in the anthology 'Arthurian Poetry Issue' of the Rochester, N.Y. publication *The Round Table* of that year (edited by Barbara Zepa Lupack and Alan Lupack) which is relevant to this article. Jim Dietz's 'Excalibur', folksy and gentle in its approach, has its protagonist possessing a baseball bat, "Zed Williams...he hit 3000 with" which he is told by a 'wizened man' is no mere Boston Redsox artefact but the "Splendid Splinter" which must be returned to its roots. He obeys, and "slowly, the land moved and the hole filled in/ returning the bat to the land of dreams". A pleasing but not demanding piece, then, but intriguing in its linkage of Arthurian epic and the ritualistic role of sport in modern culture.

By contrast, Bailey's cycle, to which I return to end this article, in retaining the wonder while thrusting the Matter forward into a possible - but not certain - future between the stars, demonstrates to my mind the truest value of mutually enfolding the imagery of science fiction and Arthurian myth - that of simultaneously giving the story meaning as more than quaint 'heritage item' for a technology-flooded age, and at the same time demonstrating that a hard-wired, high-tech world requires the archetype of myth to render it graspable by its human denizens at any level of meaning higher than that of atomised, powerless 'consumable consumers'.

The sixteen poems of *The Sky Giants* are intensively quotable - yet quoting is paradoxically hard, without doing damage to the flow, the inter-action and overall resonance of the work. However, as a token of the way the two symbiotic senses-of-wonder, that of the Arthurian matter and the science-fictional metaphor, entwine a few lines from the final triumphant ENVOI will perhaps suffice to indicate the flavour:

"A jewelled ship, the Carbonek flies by./ Now out of time./(...) sweeping with mile-long flames in train/around the Earth./ The Carbonek has golden hosts on board./ some feast, some laugh, some weep./ Circling the Earth she turns again towards/ the outer deep."

It would be possible to devote a full article to this collection alone, but to attempt to do it justice here would overbalance what is intended as a more introductory general overview of a fascinating 'crossover' field poets are beginning to explore. However, as an indication of the rich multilayering of meaning in Bailey's approach, I

will, with permission, quote a few lines from a letter, in response to a query from Steve Jeffery, 'Vector' critic, about K.V. Bailey's image of the spiralled horn:

"In the Gauvain continuation of Chrétien de Troyes it is a white stag that is hunted through parkland. My imagery of territory and beast is shifted towards the bizarre and the macabre. I had in my imagination something rather more like a monstrous white rhino than a stag, but I should not have fancifully described "a spiralled horn" which can of course evoke the unicorn. Your association of the metal jungle with the Shrike's tree is appropriate, though the poem was written long before the Dan Simmons books."

A setting, indeed invocation, where the complexly symbolic literary developments of Celtic warrior tale and seasonal myth are allowed to cross-fertilise with the closely imagined and wonderfully poeticised artefacts and myths-in-embryo of times yet unborn, with respectful fidelity to the essence of both to give the reader a stereoptic 'double truth' formally and finally united in a rich, discordant, mutually enriching whole; its summit the ship of wonder whose departure futurewards I have quoted above.

(In case you want to follow up: a few copies of 'The Sky Giants' are left: £2 from: Triffid Books, Triffids, Val de Mer, Alderney, Channel Isles. Rhysling Anthology copies for various years are still available; enquiries: J.C.Hendei, SFPA, POB 3128, Moscow, Idaho, ID83843-1906.

Steve's own chapbook of Arthurian poetry 'What Time has use for' has been reprinted by K.T.Publications, 16 Fane Close, Stamford, Lincs, PE9 HHG.)





# The Dolorous Stroke

## John Billingsley

Lorena Bobbitt and the Grail Disconnection



There is without doubt something mythical about castration. Far stronger passions were aroused - if not (for one person at least) a lot else - by the recent Lorena and Wayne Bobbitt genital mutilation case in New York than by any amount of clitoridectomies in other patriarchal cultures. How curious! Was there more going on in that suburban apartment than meets the mundane eye?

The facts of the case are, I'm sure, well known. A young woman, after a long period of abuse from her husband, was suddenly driven to symbolise the despair at the rape and abuse of power involved (yes, I do think these issues were involved) by severing his penis, jumping into a car and driving off with it. Suddenly, she becomes aware of this rather unpleasant object sitting for once limply in her lap, opens the window and tosses it out. It lands in a piece of wasteland, where police later recover it and take it to doctors who stitch it back in its rightful position. Wounded Wayne now has difficulties achieving an erection, and is this surprising? His abuse of power has rendered him physically impotent.

In the meantime, Wayne has been cleared of marital rape (a decision which would appear to conflict with later judgement, but which probably reflects the widespread indecision as to whether rape is possible in the context of marriage, which has itself long been a local microcosm of the prevailing power structure),

and Lorena has been charged with malicious wounding. Her trial attracts publicity and an acute degree of ideological interest. For a variety of reasons, only a few of which are necessarily celebratory of the act of castration, Lorena received the support of feminist groups; Wayne got the support of the backlash and presumably millions of clenched abdomens all over the world. She was found not guilty of malicious wounding, due to temporary insanity, and spent a few weeks in a mental hospital. These are the bare bones of the case, yet my interest in it was not aroused by the fact of this woman's extreme reaction to her husband's behaviour, and it certainly wasn't out of prurience or out of any male sympathy for Wayne's plight. Even sympathising with Lorena's despair and in a sense understanding her action, how could I or anyone really sympathise with the action itself? Genital mutilation, whether castration in anger or clitoridectomy in some righteous ethnic culture, must be deplored as a crime not merely against the person but against the most sacred expression of human life.

My interest stemmed from the obvious symbolic nature of the act. It is an act that is frequently imagined, whether as a gesture of revenge by certain women or as a nightmare by certain men; but though well imagined, it is not an act that actually happens very often, despite the periodic calls to castrate rapists. Whether Lorena intended it or not, her act was a symbolic gesture towards an object whose existence has also been exaggeratedly symbolised, both in interpersonal relations and in socio-political structures such as government and religion. Wayne, in effect, just happened to get in the way of a larger battle, that has been going on for thousands of years in society and myth. The battle is going on all around us - no, actually, *within us* - all the time, almost unnoticed (except by feminists and a few men), until a mythic element intrudes.

That mythic element was exposed for me by Lorena's final act with the hapless penis. It was found on waste land. The metaphor completed itself psychologically and declared itself in mythic terms. This is the city where the recent movie 'The Fisher King' was set, reawakening and reinterpreting the Grail legend of the Maimed King and the Waste Land; and Wayne's maiming is a further step in the legend's own dynamic in the United States, as Alby Stone

indicated in his recent Pendragon article, Wayne of course is not the King, his penis is (or was). Its symbolic exaggeration in American (and wider patriarchal) society equates with power.

The whole case was given a larger-than-life scenario by the various interest groups that associated themselves with either Lorena or Wayne, and was commemorated in tee-shirts and other consumer merchandise; this is apparently a requisite of a myth that is to play itself out in the emotional arena of modern society, as we saw with 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind', 'Jurassic Park' and so on.

The legend of the Fisher or Maimed King is a highly charged symbolic scenario that revolves around sovereignty and the issue of the well-being of the land. As such, it can readily be seen that the former relates very much to issues of personal power that are in current consciousness, while the latter is a very crucial concern of today's over developed and desecrated Earth.

The essential meaning of the Grail is harmony between the people and the land, this is what delivers ineffable grace experienced as its vision. The Waste Land represents the loss of harmony with the Earth, the Maimed King represents the loss of wholeness in the people. Chretien de Troyes explained the onset of the Waste Land as the result of a king raping and stealing a golden cup from one of the maidens of a magical well. These naiads would always provide reinvigorating refreshments for travellers on the roads. Yet the king, contrary to established custom and the duties of his office, violated one of these well-women, and moreover by his action, drought came on, leaves and plants shrivelled and the kingdom wasted.

Thomas Malory, on the other hand, attributes the wasting to the defensive blow struck by Sir Balin on King Pellam, using a sacred lance - a weapon that should be used for protection rather than belligerence. We can again see in this image a phallic symbol being used improperly.

In later Arthurian tales, King Arthur's malaise and the failing of the land is partly attributed to Arthur's delegation of spiritual responsibility - represented by his failure to participate along with his knights in the Grail Quest - but the loss of vitality in the land and its association with the ailing monarch irrevocably raises once more the theme of impotence.

The Fisher King's wound is a wound in spirit, which the Christian mediaeval mind would naturally emphasise, but this is a corollary of a wound in the body, and is generally explained in physical terms as a wound through both thighs, a wound that makes it difficult for him to 'mount a horse', and to perform sexual functions. The genitals are the earth chakra, and the fount of vitality; damage to this part, as D.H. Lawrence made clear in his own 'Fisher

King' scenario in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, destroys more than sexuality - it destroys balance, the peace of the land, the support of the people, and the joy and fecundity of life itself. Spirit dies with the loss of this vitality. In all variants, along with the lesson in abuse of power are themes of harmony, responsibility and appropriate action.

Yet the Maimed King in his castle is also the Guardian of the Grail. His sickness and his return to health, depends on not just the vision of the Grail but on the proper attitude to it. Hence, when the Grail knight Perceval witnesses the Grail, he fails to heal the king and the Waste Land by not asking the right questions. Traditionally, the correct enquiries are what does one do with the Grail and whom does it serve; without these questions this immensely powerful symbol is, paradoxically, powerless in our fate.

Today, we see widespread striving to replace the harmony and vitality in our lives, to re-establish the link of fate with the land that should sustain us, but which we have brutalised. It is under such conditions that we might now expect to see the issue of the Waste Land surface in our consciousness. The film *The Fisher King* demonstrates how detachment from emotion can externalise a violence that does further harm to the wholeness of the wider world; realisation of this damage removes the wholeness of the individual and all sense of worth and balance. In short, the world becomes held in the thrall of acute alienation and normlessness, or anomie. The symbolic meaning of the Grail therefore becomes extended into the meaning of reconciliation. As Joseph Campbell put it:



"The life destroying effects of this separation of the realms of nature (the Earthly Paradise) and the Spirit (the Castle of the Grail) in such a way



that neither touches the other except destructively, remains to this day an essential psychological problem of the Christianised Western world...the Christian is taught that divinity is transcendent; not within himself and his world, but 'out there'. I call this 'mythic dissociation'...there has now spread throughout the Christian world a desolating sense not only of no divinity within (mythic dissociation) but also of no participation in divinity without (social identification dissolved), and that, in short, is the mythological base of the Waste Land of the modern soul..."

(The Hero With A Thousand Faces, p.393-4)

The sense of desolation that occurs in a loss of identification with a spiritually meaningful group and also a loss of relationship with a "dimension of experience, being and rapture" beyond "that provided by an empirically classifiable conglomerate of self-enclosed separate, mutually irritating organisms held together only by lust (crude or sublimated) and fear (of pain and death or of boredom)" (ibid, p.501))

Perhaps this is where we can see the Arthurian mythos playing its part in the Bobbit affair. The young couple became sidelined in the symbolic reverberations of the case; their opposing supporters bayed at each other in a caricature of the feminist/mysogonist conflict. The penis, for too long a symbol of male power and its corollaries of the capitalist system and environmental destruction, needs, when used in its power role, to be taken out of action. If not, the power destroys the harmony - it destroys the balance of minds, the joy of sex in its sacred meaning of union. The meaning of masculinity cannot be understood when an important delineator of that masculinity, the penis, is swollen with power rather than love. And power creates, looks for, victims, not lovers. Feminism has made many men aware of this, but at least as many men dread equality with erstwhile victim - fear the loss of power as a loss of respect and all too literally equate it with impotence. The castration fears of these men are projected on to feminists - feminists are unjustly portrayed as 'ball-breakers' and other tell-tale terms redolent of male anxieties. Yet let us remember that Lorena Bobbit was in no way a feminist, just a victim, and it would seem that that first contact she had with feminism was when some of them told her they were going to make a campaign of her case, whether she liked it or not. Wayne, similarly, was no conscious and dedicated patriarch or activist of the anti-feminist movement - just an 'ordinary guy' who liked sport and a few beers and admitted to never being one for foreplay - just a rank-and-file patriarch, if you like, going along with the general trend and sadly unconscious of his oppression. So the case was not really about the

Bobbitts; it was about the abuse of power represented in man's attitude to woman, and secondarily about another use of power - the insistence of certain ideologised groups to make a battlefield out of what should be a lesson or theme for meditation.

So the Bobbitt case raises the issue of what is the right attitude to the Grail? What are the right questions? Of course, there are no real answers to such questions, the important dynamic being that the questions are answered, and that the meaning of the circumstance is sought. I might suggest that, for men at least, these questions could be 'what is the penis for?' and 'whom does it serve?', intending the responses to address the wilful imbalance of gender that men have preserved through law, religion and, distressingly often, violence. If the penis does not serve the whole cause of life, joy, love and harmony, but upholds the law of status quo, then it *de facto* serves no one; even the proudest erection is a gesture of impotence. And, in such circumstances is, alas, expendable. Appropriate responses could be the key to the meaning of the Grail, that of reconciliation and harmony - the implication of this reconciliation being the restoration of vitality to the relationship between the sexes, between human society and the land, between body and spirit.

Lorena's Dolorous Stroke was only a small item in the greater tragedy of today's worldwide Waste Land, but if it should cause some of us to ask the right questions and work towards the reconciliation of the world, then Wayne's wounding may have meaning as a healing, and the Wounded King - the penis, the damaged, patriarchal male - may yet be healed.

(Footnote: John Bobbitt was featured on the TV4 programme 'The Word' on 25th November. He is now 'living large' as a celebrity in the USA; his manager, Jack Gordon, estimates 'The Bobbitt Industry' as now worth 10 million dollars. John Wayne has thousands of adoring fans, a glamorous girl friend and a limousine like a Nile cruiser. He receives 3000 dollars a night as a stripper and has recently starred in a pornographic film, 'John Wayne Bobbitt Uncut' made by 'Leisuretime Communications' with the unlikely Veronica Brazil as Lorena. The sad story is retold with the addition of a posse of sympathetic nurses who care for the hospitalised Wayne. In the light of our author's final paragraphs, it looks as if Mr Bobbitt has not yet asked the Grail Question and is now truly lost in the Wasteland. We look forward to printing John Billingsley's observations on these developments in our next edition.)



Quite a number of books have been located and transferred to new owners since our August edition so we are happy to continue this column.

Chris Lovegrove: The response to "Booksearch" is really impressive. Some of the recent books should still be available through booksellers. Many libraries sell off old fiction quite cheaply and I've picked up the odd bargain here and there. I remember reading *Our Man in Camelot* some years ago and thinking what a curiosity it was with its mixture of espionage thriller and obvious academic interest.

Colin Ellis: I am interested in obtaining copies of *The Bear in Britain* by Edward Frankland (MacDonald, London, 1940) and *From Caesar to Arthur* by Geoffrey Ashe (Collins, London, 1960). In answer to Pamela Constantine's query about Mary Stewart's trilogy she should try W.H. Smith. All the novels are published by Coronet and are currently available.

Rule 1. Check with a good bookshop whether the book you are seeking is in print; they have computer facilities to do this.

Cherith Baldry: I've found charity shops, jumble sales and second-handshops quite productive in finding out-of-print Arthurian books. I make a point of trawling the local ones as often as I can and look for them if I visit a different town. Mary Stewart in particular still seems easily accessible in this way. Norris Lacy's *Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (1986) includes masses of information on Arthurian fiction, drama and poetry.

Rule 2: Scour Oxfam, etc, regularly. I've bought most of my Arthurian novels this way, usually for about 30p each. Never pass by a second-hand bookshop. Rule 3. Use reference books and bibliographical books to find out what has been published. (We'll run a feature next time on the major Arthurian biblios).

Morgana le Fay: Also suggests Oxfam shops and library sales. Sharon Jones wanted some advice on how to purchase a copy of *The Sword at Sunset* and I feel that I ought to point out that the author is Rosemary Sutcliffe not Mary Stewart. Morgana also gives details of Stephen Lawhead's latest book *Pendragon* and this appears in our Booknews column.

Beryl Mercer: Pamela Constantine says in *Booksearch*, 'from quoted extracts I've seen, hers is quite the finest Arthurian writing I've ever come across', with which tribute I am in hearty agreement. Have just finished reading a library paperback called *New Stories from the Twilight Zone*, which includes a rather intriguing tale by Roger Zelazny called *The Last Defender of*

*Camelot*. This casts Launcelot in the sort of Wandering Jew role and a resurrected Merlin as a baddie. Worth a read if you can find it. (This story can also be found in Isaac Azimov's SF Adventure Magazine, Summer 1979.) Please will you enter the following in *Booksearch* Beryl Mercer seeks a copy of *EXCALIBUR* by Sanders Anne Laubenthal. She had a much-prized paperback of this which has mysteriously disappeared. Replacement, at any reasonable cost, is urgently sought. (The publisher was Ballantyne, New York, 1973, Beryl. *Excalibur* in modern Alabama.)

Ronan Coghlan: has a copy of *King of the Lordless Country* (recommended last time) in good condition for £7.95.

Tim Harris: I greatly enjoyed the AGM at the Cardiff Literature of Festival's Arthurian Day. I heard that there were pamphlets about listing good sources of Arthurian books but failed to get one. Could you possibly help me get a copy? While there, however, I did pick up a volume entitled *Kitezh-The Russian Grail Legends*. I have a great interest in the Grail Mythology and had hitherto not known of any Russian version. If you wish, I could do a review of this book for a future Journal. Yes please, Tim, start typing for XXV/1. I didn't see any pamphlets at Cardiff either, though I was rather busy - Can anyone help?

John Ford: I would like to obtain any *PENDRAGON* magazines prior to Summer 93. Any members out there who wrote an article and received two copies of the magazine and would sell me one please contact me. Also, I would like any copies of *DRAGON* that people have finished with, as this magazine sadly folded before I became aware of it.

Fred Stedman-Jones: I have a hardback copy of *Arthur, Roman Britain's Last Champion*, Bertram Saklatvala, David & Charles, 1968, in excellent condition. O/P. £7, plus postage. A bargain.

#### THEMES

##### Suggested future themes

Morgan/Morgana/Morgaine  
Arthur and the Arts  
Arthur of Scotland  
Guinevere the May Queen  
Caerleon Edition

Articles, poems, stories, artwork on these and other topics are welcome



# Jung And The Sacred Bear Brendan McMahon



Charles Evans - Gunther's excellent short account of Arthur's connections with the sacred bear (*Pendragon XXIV/3*) raises many fascinating questions. It is now many years since an etymological link between Arthur's name and old Celtic ARTOS, 'Bear', was first suggested, and many Welsh and Irish personal and place names are derived from this root. As Anne Ross pointed out in her lecture, the existence of bear deities among the ancient Celtic peoples is reasonably well attested, and, though deities such as the Gaulish Artaius (who was also a culture hero, who stole pigs and a cauldron from the gods, in order to give them to mankind) must have been part of a developed body of myth, most of their stories are lost. The folklore of the Celtic peoples, moreover, shows no trace of the sacred paw print; it is many centuries since the demise of the last native British bears, and folk tales concerning them would soon have lost their relevance and followed them into oblivion: where therefore, could we find a text to help us to understand the significance, at a psychological level, of the sacred bear?

Jung, in volume 9 of his collected works, recounts the following dream, which was told to him by a patient in analysis:

*'We go through a door into a tower-like room, where we climb a long flight of steps. On one of the topmost steps I read an inscription. The steps end in a temple, situated on the crest of a wooded mountain, and there is no other approach. It is the shrine of Ursanna, the bear goddess and mother of God in one. The temple is of red stone. Bloody sacrifices are offered there. In order to enter the temple precincts one has to be transformed into an animal, a beast of the forest... On the altar in the middle of the open space there stands a moon-bowl, from which smoke or vapour continually rises. There is also a huge image of the goddess, which cannot be seen clearly.'*

In psychoanalytic thought dream and myth are closely related, in their use of symbolic language, and in their ability to communicate and condense many levels of meaning simultaneously. Thus, while this dream undoubtedly contains significances that are personal to the dreamer/patient, it may also tell us something of the sacred bear. Jung, on the basis of his research into myth, and in the analysis of many dreams of this type, concluded that the bear represents the dangerous, chthonic elements of the psyche which threatens to destroy the self. In this particular dream the bear goddess stands for the destructive aspect of the feminine, what Jung calls 'the all-devouring Terrible Mother'. Paradoxically, the dreamer/hero must himself be transformed into a 'beast of the forest' in order to re-enter the womb, the 'temple-precincts', and achieve symbolic rebirth, this creative, generative function of the goddess balances her destructiveness, the 'bloody sacrifices'. The reincarnation of the soul was, of course, a fundamental tenet of ancient Celtic religion, and was attributed particularly to the Druids. The function of the hero is to destroy the dangerous beast which threatens both his community and his psychological integrity. Jung cites an episode from 'Hiawatha' in which the protagonist, Modjokeewis, slays a mystic bear to secure possession of a magic belt:

*With the heavy blow bewildered  
Rose the great bear of the mountains,  
But his feet beneath him trembled  
And he whimpered like a woman.'*

Here, the hero destroys his feminine self, the 'Terrible Mother', in order to achieve a new selfhood in the form of a magic belt.

But Arthur is not a hero of this type, nor a bear slayer; he is the sacred bear. He has dared to accept the feminine in both its destructive and creative aspects, and so transcend the stereotypical maleness of the hero. In doing so he is transformed into a symbol of the cosmic order, and of the ideal human society, in which men and women live in generative harmony. This accords



with the traditional view of Arthur, the defender of Romano British Christian civilisation, (the cosmic order) against the destructive forces of Saxon barbarism. It may even be that, by identifying with the sacred bear, (becoming a 'beast of the forest') Arthur acquires the power to be reborn, ('enter the temple precincts') as many have believed. If this is so, then it may indicate, in the original lost mythos of the sacred bear, some redemptive element which has fed

into later constructs, such as the sleeping Lord and, of course, the Christian resurrection, to produce the legend of the 'ymadawlad', or departure, of the Once and Future King.

I must at this point declare a special interest. My own name, McMahon, is a corrupt form of the Irish MacMath-Ghamhain, 'son of the bear's son'. I am myself a descendant of the sacred bear!

(Our author is also a psychotherapist and university teacher.)



## A BAND OF BROTHERS HUNT THE GRAIL

*turn back  
old clone detect  
brethren still young at ease  
golden with laughter mocking your  
lone quest*

★

Steven Sneyd

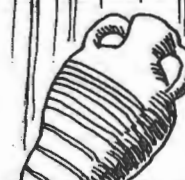
## Little-known Arthurian Facts

### KING ARTHUR'S ROUND TABLE, WINCHESTER CASTLE

NOT A GIANT DART BOARD AS ONCE THOUGHT!



NOT A "TABLE" EITHER, AS ALL THE CROCKERY WOULD FALL OFF!



THOUGH THIS COULD EXPLAIN DARK AGE BROKEN POTTERY, EXPERTS SAY...

Chris Lovegrove 1994

FACT! IT IS THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE FOR THE ORIGINAL "SECRET" CAMELOT LOTTERY™ ©1994



PROOF ① IT HANGS IN WINCHESTER (CAMELOT) ② "CHAIRMAN" SIR RON DEARING IS NAMED AFTER RON, ARTHUR'S LEGENDARY LANCE!



# The Sign of the BLACK HORSE Chris Lovegrove

WAS THIS KING ARTHUR'S LOCAL ?



The power of advertising is such that you may be forgiven for thinking that this is an article about banking services. Before I thoroughly disabuse you of this notion, you may be interested to know that the black horse in the Lloyds Bank logo appears to be derived from one of the supporters of the more traditional Lloyds coat of arms. I will however leave it to others to investigate whether there is any link with the Glamorganshire custom of Mari Lwyd (Holy Mary). In this Christmastide ritual, according to Brewer, "the chief character wears a white cowl and a horse's skull bedecked with ribbons".

No; the theme of this article takes us instead to the other side of the Severn Bridge, to Bristol, which, despite its occasional flashes, is a quiet provincial backwater. It rests for the most part on past laurels; commercial and industrial ventures made it for a long time the second city in the kingdom after London, but that position has long since been relinquished.

But faded glory may still retain some fascination; after all, Gloucester, Bath, Glastonbury and Caerleon, those smaller sites at the four points of the compass around Bristol, continue to resound with Arthurian echoes, so why not this particular medieval metropolis?

The simple answer is that numismatic and documentary evidence suggest that Bristol, "the settlement of the bridge", was not an important site until the 10th century. Archaeology too is

eloquent in terms of what it does not say, indicating that up to now there has been virtually nothing of note between the Roman period and the late Saxon period.

But there are ways, other than through written sources and archaeology, to reconstruct missing history, and these include folklore and place names. A valiant effort was made in 1971 to find traces of Arthur through examining the names of public houses. S.G. Wildman's *The Black Horsemen* (John Baker, 1971) came to the conclusion that most pubs called the Black Horse up and down the length of England indicated where Anglo-Saxon forces received setbacks due to the intervention of mobile cavalry led by Arthur. This could be an exciting possibility, if true. But is it likely?

Wildman examined, and rejected, several alternative hypotheses for the origin of this particular inn-sign. These include folklore customs such as hobbyhorses (goodbye, Mari Lwyd), religious and mythological sources, and links with army units and medieval monarchs. There appeared to be no obvious links with hill figures, White Horse pubs and other heraldic beasts (cheerio, Lloyds Bank). Packhorses were also eliminated. This list seems quite exhaustive, but I remember feeling uneasy about its comprehensiveness when I first read the book.

Seven areas showed concentrations of Black Horses, which Wildman then used to bolster his theories for the locations of Arthur's campaigns. These were

1. north Wirral and central south Lancashire;
2. the Durham area;
3. a swathe of the country stretching from Ilchester through Bristol, the Cotswolds, Warwickshire, Rutland, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and the West Midlands;
4. Watling Street and the Black Country;
5. the Stoke-on-Trent area;
6. the Chilterns;
7. the South Downs.

What strikes so forcibly now is that, apart from the final two instances, all the areas mentioned include the principal coal measures in England. This geological link is not one that I can find discussed in Wildman's book. With the exception of the Chilterns and the South Downs, could not the sign of the black horse represent not Arthur's cavalry (if such a force ever existed) but beasts of burden or draught animals connected with the coal industry?

I decided to see if this alternative theory stood up in the Bristol area by examining Black Horse sites in North Somerset, Avon and South Gloucestershire supposedly on the line of the British frontier against the Saxons. Coal was certainly worked in the the Gloucestershire Forest of Dean as early as 1282 (and used for iron smelting by the Romans there) while the Bristol and North Somerset coalfields have been



mined commercially until this century. And despite Wildman's dismissal of the theory, the Black Horse in Castle Rising, Norfolk, derived from a three-dimensional sign of a packhorse, and so it may be relevant to note that packhorses were used extensively in the narrow streets of Bristol until at least the end of the 17th century, a practice noted by Pepys among others.

## 1. Clapton-in-Gordano (Clevedon Lane, N. Somerset, now Avon)

This Black Horse pub stands in the middle of the village on an ancient route between Bristol and Clevedon, and is said to have been in existence for more than 600 years. Parts of the inn are stone-flagged, with tiny windows set in massive walls. The hillfort to the north is Cadbury Camp, Tickenham, possible site of a Roman temple (not to be confused with another Cadbury at Congresbury, with its clear evidence of Dark Age occupation). From at least the 14th century, if not earlier, coal has been mined at Nailsea to the immediate south, with further development in the 18th century for glass manufacture.

## 2. Easton (West Street; east central Bristol)

West street is part of a major thoroughfare, now the A420 leading from Bristol to London and running north of the R. Avon. The Black Horse, a Victorian pub (ex-directory!) is encountered before the Packhorse, but separated by a major roundabout and underpass. The road runs on to the east, taking in The Earl Russell, The Redfield, The White Lion, the George & Dragon and the Black Horse at Redfield.

## 3. Redfield (172 Church Road; east Bristol)

Originally one of three cottages, the Black Horse in Redfield is one of several pubs with a horsey or animal theme on the A420. Directly opposite is the Horse & Jockey, and after passing The Fire Engine (circa 1769) the traveller reaches The Three Horseshoes. After Don John's Cross, there is a fork, with the A420 continuing northward towards Kingswood, and the A431 heading off to Bath via a Roman road. On this Bath road is located The Pied Horse, and, three

pubs on, another Horse and Jockey.

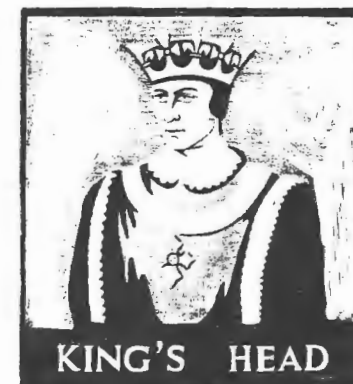
4. Kingswood (372 Two Mile Hill Road, Avon) Like the Redfield Black Horse, this example lies on the A420, but further to the east, towards the Kingswood collieries and at the junction of the A4017 Soundwell Road leading north to Coalpit Heath. There is a distinctly upper class feel to the naming of the pubs leading to it: after Don John's Cross are The Merchant's Arms, World's End, The Bell Hotel, Lord Rodney, Prince Albert, The Rose and Crown, The Essex Arms and the King's Head. Perhaps this was to overawe notoriously lawless colliers of Kingswood. In 1726 Parliament allowed the erection of turnpike gates on all roads out of Bristol up to a distance of ten or twelve miles to pay for their upkeep. Wagons and coaches were charged 2d per horse, and packhorses were 1d each (if loaded with coal, ½d). This pub must lie at or near the turnpike, lying as it does virtually on the boundary between the modern Bristol and Kingswood district authorities, and is dated to 1787.

## 5. Blackhorse (S. Glos, now Avon)

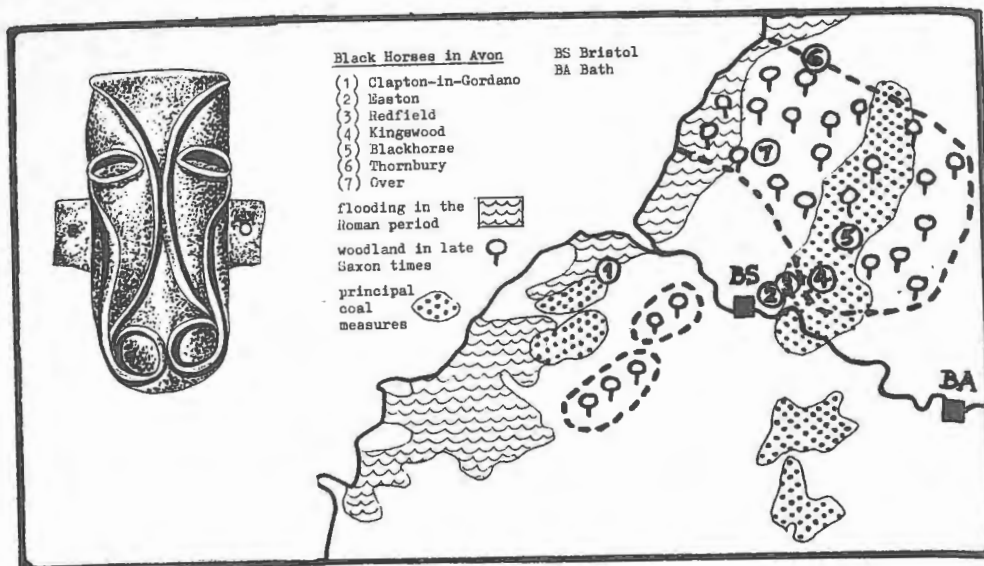
This was until well into this century a small hamlet east of Bristol, just over a mile from Mangotsfield on the road to Westerleigh, and now commemorated by Blackhorse Lane and Blackhorse Road (to be distinguished from the Kingswood Blackhorse Road). In the late 19th century it consisted of a dozen or so cottages and three farms, one of which was called Black Horse Farm. There was a colliery 1½ miles to the north at the appropriately named Coalpit Heath.

## 6. Thornbury (S. Glos, now Avon)

Recorded in Domesday, the town is now noted for its 16th century castle, but the Black Horse Inn itself was only built in the 1960s. This perhaps shows that all examples need to be checked: the Black Horse at Pluckley in Kent, for example, was apparently until the turn of the century a private residence.







#### 7. Over (Glos)

This Black Horse does not seem to have been picked up by Wildman's trawl through telephone directories, though it has been around for at least a century. While some inns in the vicinity clearly owed their existence to developments in transport (the 1863 Railway Inn, for example, and two other turnpike inns, the Swan and the New Inn) it is noteworthy that the Black Horse at Over has its counterpart in the White Horse at nearby Lower Tockington. In 1862 the building of the new railway at Cattybrook revealed not only good quality clay but also several seams of coal.

However, in travelling further north through the Cotswolds, the coal trail becomes colder. The Black Horse at North Nibley (Glos), though not noted by Wildman, has some suggestive neighbouring place names; the River Cam runs through Dursley two miles to the northeast (surely does not Camelot lie nearby?); and Uley, a mile beyond that, boasts traces of a post-Roman Christian church. The example at Stroud (Glos) is Wildman's Amberley, a parish formed in 1840 out of Minchinhampton and Rodborough, both immediately south of Stroud. Woodchester is nearby, with its famous circular Roman mosaic of Orpheus and the beasts, identified by some with Arthur's Round Table. The Naunton (Glos) Black Horse Inn is located in the valley of the River Windrush, four miles west of the Cotswold town of Stow-on-the-Wold. This is perhaps either Guiting Power or Stow itself on Wildman's list. I know little of this, or of Cranham (Glos); this latter example is

near Painswick, and Painswick Beacon, 929 feet high, is the site of a hillfort.

Finally, the Black Horse Hotel, in Castle Street, Cirencester (Glos) lies in what was the fourth century capital of the province of Britannia Prima. Traditionally, Cirencester passed to Saxon control after the battle of Dyrham in 577.

These Cotswold examples are however in a traditionally very rich part of the country. Packed with Roman villas, economically powerful in the medieval period and home to royalty in the 20th century, almost any theory plucked out of the air about this region might be counted valid until detailed research might prove otherwise.

Better to stick closer to home! Out of curiosity, therefore, I looked up the A-Z for Bristol to see if street names could give any clues to local Arthuriana. There were indeed not one but two streets bearing the name of our hero. They are both in Victorian urban developments, and, yes, they are both cul-de-sacs. Is it possible that this inquiry itself is also a dead end?

#### A COMPETITION

We invite readers to study the splendid illustration on page 4 and to send us their personal reaction to it in any form they wish: essay, poem, story... Your submission must fit one page of the journal. The most interesting three will be printed. Our grateful thanks to artist Anna Clarke for letting us reproduce her work, which was first printed by Tracey Brown in her journal *Wisht Maen*.

# Cardiff Arthurian Day



The Welsh Academy Festival of Literature, 8th October 1994, Bute Theatre,  
College of Music and Drama, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

In May I was contacted by Kevin Thomas, Director of the Academy, to give advice on the choice of speakers for this prestigious event. Later Kevin invited me to host the day and to introduce the speakers. It seemed a good occasion at which to hold a Pendragon AGM because the event was likely to attract more members than usual. It is not often that so many high-level Arthurian scholars are assembled in one place, and a very comfortable venue it proved to be - with refreshments available all day and plenty of lounge space for people to meet and talk. There were bookstalls, our Pendragon information stall and Rodney and Eleri Munday's attractive display of their Arthurian sculptures. Gareth James of Beaumains was also there with an interesting selection of role playing books and games.

What follows is a general account of the lectures and discussions that took place and I am indebted to Chris Lovegrove (CL) and Charles Evans-Günther (CEG) for sharing their lecture notes with us. Occasional editorial interjections in *Italic* are my own.

**Dr Brynley Roberts:** Arthur - Y Brenin a fu as a fydd. (Arthur-The Once and Future King).

(CEG) This lecture was given in "the language of the angels". Sadly, the translation service was not so angelic and a few times I took my headphones off and tried to understand the talk in what rudimentary Welsh I possess. Nevertheless, Professor Roberts gave a fascinating lecture on the importance of Arthur and the growth of the literature from its Welsh origins. He emphasised the difference between the Welsh Arthur of 'Culhwch and Olwen', the Triads, etc., and the King Arthur that came after Geoffrey of Monmouth. Many of the themes that were later to become part of the romances that developed in France and culminated in Malory's epic had roots in early Welsh stories. Unfortunately, we often have only the poetic remains or hints in the Triads. He went on to show that Arthur was someone who grew over the centuries - a powerful leader, a supernatural power freeing the land of the terrors of the Otherworld. But he also presented Arthur as an important representative of Welsh society, playing his part in the stability of Welsh mediaeval life. In the earliest tales he had a court and officials that were recognisable to anyone hearing these stories when they were first told. More than this, Arthur is part of an ancient myth that draws on the deepest feelings beyond words. Arthur is a great warrior, a defender of society yet one who is defended. But in his defeat there is the mystery of his death - he is in Avalon, in the Otherworld: there is no grave. Dr Roberts finished by asking: what is the perpetual appeal of Arthur? and answered by saying that, despite the destruction of our dreams, there are always the seeds of renewal - "The King that lives and will live again".

**Dr Juliet Wood:** Arthurian Folklore, Then and Now.

(CL)

Dr Wood's theme was the use and abuse of folk memory. She argued that the survival of reported folklore has been employed by specialists in other academic fields to support their theories where it suited them or discarded when it did not. Does Merlin's transportation of monoliths from Ireland really recall the transfer of Welsh bluestones to Stonehenge? Is Arthur really an ancestral memory of a prehistoric Wessex dynasty, as David Dumville suggests? She gently disparaged the romantic assumption that folklore necessarily preserves ancient traditions. Many archetypal folk "memories" are what Dr Wood called *a priori* paradigms, or apparently self-evident patterns which, unfortunately, are not provable. This can be seen developing where, say, recently expressed views on a historical Arthur rapidly became part of an instant folklore, especially when it seems to validate a belief system. But such abuses are balanced by modern uses of Arthurian motifs, as happens in merchandising. From the naming of 1930s steam engines after Arthurian characters to the Carling Black Label advert with its allusions to the "Excalibur" film, it is easier to accept the re-hashing of such material as a reflection of its new social context. The transmission of the legends can then be seen as a dynamic almost genuine folk process, rather than the simpler linear model demanded by some historians. For example, the latter might ask whether Arthur's Glastonbury lead cross was genuine or a Tudor-forgery. Dr Wood's folklorist point of view suggests that this may be the wrong question.

*That this lecture was intellectually challenging is illustrated by Chris's honest footnote: Re-reading it*



I find what I thought I understood when I first drafted it I no longer think I still understand! Basically I think she was castigating specialists in other disciplines who ought to know better and indicating that the development of the legends continues in the present, often on an unconscious basis.

*Dr Wood's rate of delivery was generally too fast for such complex ideas to register. It would be good if we could have this lecture (and the others) in printed form, to savour and reflect upon at leisure. Over to you Welsh Academy! On the Arthurian bear associations Chris writes: Popular etymology, which for instance derives the name Arthur from Artio and Ursus, may soon achieve the status of an established tradition. Charles writes: When talking about Arthur's name she seemed to say that bears died out before humans came to Britain. Checking this out it would seem that the Romans prized bears that came from Britain. Most references agree that the bear was extinct before the Norman invasion. There is, however, evidence that the bear was not found in Ireland.*

#### King Arthur & Popular Fiction.

(CEG)

*This discussion between three contemporary Arthurian novelists was ably and sensitively chaired by the Librarian of the Library of Avalon at Glastonbury, Keith Pickett. Sadly, some of the conversation was not projected sufficiently (the audience were a long way from the speakers) because the provision of a microphone had been overlooked. This was rectified for the Round Table discussion later in the day.*

The next part of the programme was a joint talk with three novelists who have recently written on the Arthurian subject. These were Robert Holdstock (author of 'Mythago Wood' and now 'Merlin's Wood'); Helen Hollick whose first novel 'The Kingmaking' was published recently) and the American writer Stephen Lawhead (author of 'The Pendragon Cycle' - the fourth and concluding title, 'Pendragon', was launched at the Arthurian Day). The authors were asked a series of questions that related to their backgrounds, why they had chosen to write about the subject, and what they thought about the historical possibilities of Arthur. Each had contrasting views which made for an interesting discussion. The last question concerned what got 'the fire going' to write their Arthurian books. Helen said it was the works of Rosemary Sutcliffe and Mary Stewart, Stephen mentioned John Rhys and the connections between Atlantis and Lyonesse and Robert said it was the TV series 'Lancelot' and 'Robin Hood' of his childhood.

#### Professor Stephen Knight: The Holy Grail & The Crusades.

(CL)

With a name like Knight, it is hardly surprising that the speaker once held the chair of English at Simon De Montfort University, Leicester! Now Professor of English at Cardiff, Stephen Knight was on home ground and on sparkling form with his talk on the Grail. His thesis was that, rich though the grail legends are in terms of symbolic interpretation, the historical circumstances of the late 12th and early 13th centuries were particularly conducive to the growth of these legends. The tales were, he felt, a kind of spiritual compensation for the trauma represented by the loss of the Holy Land. A helpful handout was provided, with, in parallel columns, Crusade 'events' and Grail 'events'. Yes indeed, as the disasters of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Crusades unrolled, a general sense of the unworthiness of Western Christendom was underlined by the various developments of the Grail tales. Particularly noticeable is the shift from Perceval to Galahad as the hero who achieves the object of the quest in an atmosphere of rather more rarified spirituality.

Few seemed to disagree with Dr Knight's analysis, though one member of the audience corrected the speaker on a point of information concerning the author Charles Williams; the interjector turned out to be the poet John Heath Stubbs, himself a notable contributor to recent Arthurian literature. And though Professor Knight later declined to comment on recent speculation about links between the Grail and Templar interest in the Ark of the Covenant, this did not detract in the least from a lucidly presented talk, characterised by the willingness to treat the audience as an intelligent body. *Dr Knight gave a demonstration of the talents required by effective teachers at all levels of education. It is not enough to 'know your stuff', you have to be able to enlist the cooperation of your audience in the lecture, communicate with and respond to them, and then send them away hungry for more.*

#### Count Nikolai Tolstoy: The Mythical Arthur.

(CEG)

Following Dr Knight's fascinating lecture came Count Tolstoy. His lecture focussed on the possibility of Arthur's having connections with Scotland and the North of England. He spoke out against the writings of Oliver Padel and David Dumville, saying that he believed that there was value in the references to Arthur in the epic poem 'The Gododdin', the 'Historia Brittonum' and the Welsh Annals. As far as he was concerned the evidence pointed to a northern Arthur. He pointed out the references - that the Gododdin dealt with events in the north, certain families in the Dark Ages named their sons after Arthur - they are nearly all in the north and the battles that can be possibly

identified seem to be in the north. He pointed out that there is a River Glen near Lindisfarne, the Douglas in Linnis could be in Scotland since there was a place called Lindon near Loch Lomond, Breguion could be one of the forts on Hadrian's Wall and that the City of Legion could be Chester or York. However, he believed that once Arthur had been victorious in the north he made one important foray into the south and fought the battle of Bannerdown. But what of Gildas not mentioning Arthur? Here Count Tolstoy discussed the possibility that Gildas was connected with the north and well away from the people he was criticising - Maelgwyn being the most northerly king mentioned. He believes that Gildas deliberately ignored Arthur. Count Tolstoy intends to go further with this and write on the subject. (Later he told us that he was also working on Macsen Wledig and other stories from the Mabinogion.)

#### Chris Barber: Journey to Avalon.

(CL)

Despite gremlins in the electrics, Chris Barber's audio-visual presentation "Journey to Avalon" (based on his and David Pykitt's recent book of the same name) was attractive and entertaining. The original colour slides displayed the polish that might be expected from a professional photographer, and the sound track boasted a stirring musical score and the narration of Philip Madoc. What a shame, then, that the script showed little recognition of the criticism levelled against the book, and that there was no opportunity to question the author over the more contentious assertions. The central hypothesis, that the legendary Arthur, the historical Athruis, and the sainted Arthmael were all one and the same, was restated at every opportunity, as though by repeated hearing one might start to accept this credo as sacrosanct. But for most of the evening the presenter had the air of a prophet rejected in his own country.

#### Arthurian Question Time: Round Table Discussion.

(CL)

On the panel were Keith Pickett, Stephen Knight, Stephen Lawhead, Nikolai Tolstoy, Chris Barber, Helen Hollick and Charles Evans-Günther. The 'Round Table discussion' was billed as "the day's participants field your questions from the floor." Unfortunately, the table wasn't round, and it was the panel in fact who were on the floor of the lecture theatre! Nevertheless, the points raised were wide ranging and virtually nonstop for the hour, the whole being ably chaired by Fred. Was Colchester, Roman Camelot, really Camelot? No, was the consensus. Was there in fact a gap in Arthurian story-telling between Tudor times and the Victorians? No again, remember Dryden, for example. The topics flashed by - the Cathars, Trevor Ravenscroft, Jessie Weston, the Arabian Knights, Apocalypse Now! Nobody was willing to be limited by a medieval chivalric vision and, by recognising that the Arthurian tales themselves re-used various motifs as building blocks, the panel argued that the pattern can be fitted to any historical period or literary genre. Archaeology, Alfred the Great, anti-feminism, the Armorican connection - personal passions sparkled like flares in the night. And, sadly, no-one seemed able to give much of an answer to the young lady who had had a dream of the grail and wanted to share it with the rest of us. But perhaps we all realised that the real answer to this question comes from within. And then the time was up!

*The audience were seated on a sharply raked tier, fronted by a metal handrail: a chasm separated them from the stage from which the lecturers spoke, using a microphone. The two discussion events were held at a rectangular table situated in the dark well between stage and audience. As Chris says, it was hardly a round-table situation: as a participant I found it to be more like addressing the deck of the Titanic from a floating raft. Some of the earlier speakers of the Day did not appear to man the raft (though they had been around shortly beforehand) so I press-ganged Keith Pickett and Charles Evans-Günther: thank you to both for joining the crew at such short notice. Add to these problems a distinguished blind man in the audience (Mr Heath-Stubbs) who spoke out with authority and eloquence but who could not be signalled to from the raft and you have some idea of the voyage which I was called upon to captain. From Chris's summary we seem to have made a circumnavigation of the entire Arthurian world. It was fun!*

#### Hugh Lupton: Sir Gawain & the Green Knight:

'I schal telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde, with tonge'

*It had been a long day and Hugh, renowned story-teller, now had the task of projecting his magical tale from the stage across a gap of eight yards. He did so manfully and held his audience in the palm of his hand. For good measure he added the Tale of Lady Ragnell and we were reminded vividly of Gawaine's courage and integrity as an exemplary knight of the Round Table.*

#### Colin Thomas: Excalibur-The Search for Arthur.

(CEG)

The final event of the night was a look at the production of the forthcoming television series called 'Excalibur'. This was to have been given by Professor Gwyn Alf Williams, but, regrettably, we were told he is unwell and that he was in considerable pain during the final days of the filming. Instead,



the talk was given by the Director, Pendragon member Colin Thomas. We were shown extracts from the takes which conveyed a picture of how the programmes would proceed- from the Welsh Arthur through to the Romance versions. From the evidence of what we saw the series should prove to be most interesting. It will be screened next year on Welsh S4C and in English on BBC2 later. There will be a book to accompany the series and though it was on display in the foyer it was not yet for sale, it has to await the release of the programmes. The poster advertising the book attributed it to Glyn Williams instead of Gwyn Williams: don't be fooled, there's only one Alf Williams!

*Those who were hardy enough to attend the last two activities, and there were many, then joined those who had been socialising; talk and drinks flowed freely and the generous buffet supper provided by the Academy was available to all who cared to partake. My own group were joined by Count Nikolai Tolstoy, who had read our latest magazine earlier and told us he would be happy to receive it in future. He delighted us with tales of his family's pet donkey and with his plans for future books. Groups merged, melted and reformed and it was good to see Pendragons and members of the public meeting up and talking together animatedly all around the room. Sincere thanks to the Welsh Academy for having the imagination to set up the day, to the Drama College for their hospitality, and our appreciation to those Pendragon members who saw the day out like true Arthurian troupers: they were ambassadors of the Society in a real sense and we had many inquiries about our work.*

*Perhaps we as a Society may continue to grow in numbers in the next few years so that we can organise events of this calibre for ourselves: in the meantime we must be seen, heard and represented wherever Arthur's name is invoked - that's a challenge to all members: join the Quest.*



# PENDRAGON SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1994.

The programme of the Arthurian Day was decided by the Welsh Academy and was very compressed - as host I had first hand experience of this. No intervals were allowed for between the lectures and, inevitably, lecturers crept forward on their times. Instead of an hour we had to fit in to a forty minute lunch hour - I didn't get any lunch at all - and continued in the tea break. This meant that the reports were intensively presented and there was little time for identifying and greeting new members. This was most unfortunate but the style of the meeting was dictated by the overall structure of the day. On the positive side, there were over two dozen members present, usually we get much fewer. Moreover, PENDRAGON was seen to exist in a larger and more public setting than our own parlours. On this occasion it was up to members to find each other in the relaxation areas and to relate in the wider framework of the day. The opportunity was there and this was especially true in the evening, after the scheduled events were over. Those remaining certainly had a very enjoyable time.

There is nothing to prevent us holding other activities which bring members together, or for Pendragon 'cells' to form in various parts of the country, and this was discussed briefly at the meeting - all we need are the ideas and members willing to be active in promoting these events. The express business of the AGM this time was to get through some essential and overdue decision making and this was achieved. The 1994 AGM was not a 'cosy' affair but it was properly held, it was quorate and fully constitutional. The next AGM will be held in 1995.

## Business conducted at the Meeting:

(F.C.S.-J)  
Reports were received on the last AGM (1991) at Bristol, a financial statement was presented, and the Chairman reviewed the continual growth of the Society and of its journal. He warned that rising costs and the seeming unwillingness of some members to pay their subscriptions promptly or to help in the recruitment of new members means that an exhaustive publicity campaign is not seen to be as effective as it might be. It is difficult to forecast likely income and there may be a need to raise subscriptions or to print three larger journals per year.  
Committee elected: Chairman: Chris Lovegrove; Secretary: Fred Stedman-Jones; Treasurer: Marilyn Stedman-Jones; Vice Chairman: Simon Rouse. The Editor proposed that Charles Evans-Günther be elected to the committee and this was carried. A new category of membership was agreed, that of Life Member: to be awarded exceptionally to those who have given outstanding service to the Society. The following members were proposed and elected: Chris Lovegrove, Kate Pollard, Anne and Eddie Tooke. They become honorary members of the executive committee and receive free membership for the rest of their lives.

# TAVAS yn grŷth EDDIE & TOOKE



## From the writings of Brother Edgar of Sodbury Abbey

It is well known that herbs were used in cooking even in Arthur's day and most communities, religious or secular, had their own herb-gardens, Camelot was no exception.

Few historians (or myth-torians) however, have recorded the occasion when the herb garden serving Arthur's capital was endangered. Organic perfection became Morganic infection as genetic mutations resulted from the magical miasma created by the wicked witch. Giant varieties of poisoned parsley, mint and thyme formed a nine-foot high mutant jungle, growing denser and immenser by the minute.

It was all very dist-herb-ing. Camelot itself became threatened, trapped as it was between the twin wastelands of Camlann and Chipping Sodbury. If the domesticated ostrich which, for economic reasons, had replaced the horse (two shoes instead of four) hadn't been flightless, escape would have been possible, but it was, so it wasn't.

"We must stop it!" chorused the Court Committee, "The mint's demented, the parsley's garsely and, as Bill Shakespeare will say later in Hamlet, 'the thyme is out of joint.'"

"I can't bay-leaf this is happening," said Merling the Sage rue-fully. "How I wish I'd ne-verbena magician."

"Big dill!" said Basil and Rosemary, his apprentices, "But what do we do?"

Herbie Leaven, a barm-y knight from the Yeast who lived in Castle Carbonate, rose to the occasion. Having been dumb ever since he was a Jew-nipper in India, he knew all about mute-Asians. "Explosive ant-mutation capsules are what we need!" he shouted in sign-language, "They will neutralize the nuisance! Invent some, Merlin! Jaldi! Jaldi! Hurry it up!"

"Ek dam!" replied Merlin, waving his wand, "At once!" The capsules materialized. "Step forward nine sup-herb volunteers to fumigate the foul fungus!"

"Cummin!" "Cummin!" "Cummin!" "Cummin!"

"Cummin!" "Cummin!" "Cummin!" "Cummin!"

"Cummin!" cried nine brave men simultaneously (well, nearly) and seizing the capsules they clove a way into the heart of the parsley patch, planted a pellet and got out before it exploded.

The scheme worked; the parsley grew more sparseley, shrinking to normal and becoming edible once more. Next the mint. Tracing it to its sauce they blasted the mutant genes stone dead.

The thyme, however, was a tougher task. To

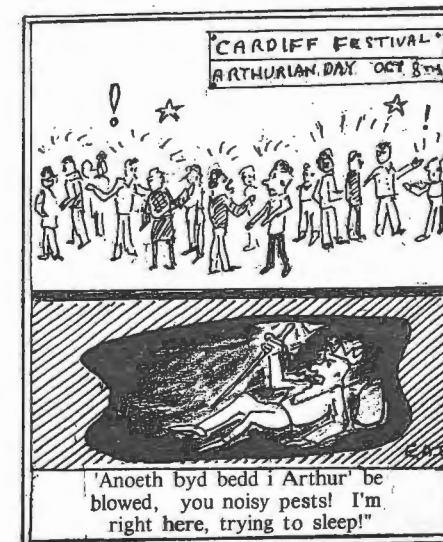
hard-working Avalonians killing thyme normally posed no problem. But how could they penetrate the warped undergrowth of straggling stems without becoming trapped in a thyme-warp? There was no future in that, especially if the capsule exploded before they got out.

Nevertheless the heroic nine made the attempt. Hacking their way into the matted mass they set the capsule's thyme-switch and ran. As they had feared, the seconds ticked by too quickly. They were running out of time.

With moments only remaining, they had almost given up hope when a passing ostrich saw their predicament and fearlessly plunged to the rescue, tearing down the thyme with its strong claws. The nine men staggered out of the thyme patch, and flung themselves flat so the pellet-propelled plethora of putrefying pollen particles passed over their prostrate, panicky persons.

Their successful escapade was witnessed by a keen reporter who faxed the story to the editor of the Camelot Courier with the blurb "Merlin Curbs the Herbs! Sage Mage Saves our Age!" His editor, however, was less interested in pot-herbs than in prov-erbs and next morning the Courier's headline merely announced:

"OSTRICH IN THYME SAVES NINE."





# How many Children Had Queen Guenevere? Geoff Roberts

Considering the popularity of the Arthurian legend over the centuries it is surprising that there are so few references in traditional folk song and ballad to King Arthur, Queen Guenevere and the Knights of the Round Table. That other great British folk hero, Robin Hood, is the subject of literally dozens of ballads, whereas Arthur only appears in one or two - to my knowledge at any rate.

One well-known traditional song which does figure the once and future king is "King Arthur Had Three Sons", a jolly little ditty which was probably a drinking song - and sometimes still is. It goes like this

*King Arthur had three sons, that he did.  
King Arthur had three sons, that he did.  
He had three sons of yore  
And he kicked them out of doors  
Because they would not sing, (that he did)."*

So far, so good. They clearly deserved their father's wrath! (The Triads might well have referred to them as 'The three reluctant vocalists of Ynys Prydein', but they don't figure in those lists, not even in the Iolo Morganwg version.) However, the next verse is a little unexpected:

*The first he was a miller, that he was.  
The second he was a weaver, that he was.  
And the third he was a little tailor boy  
With the broadcloth under his arm (that he was).*

One might have anticipated less proletarian professions for the King's sons, but after all Sir Kay was a steward and Sir Lucan a butler... So far the song has been quite jaunty, but then tragedy sets in. In typical folk song style there is no explicit comment on the sad fates of the three; the singer can draw out the first two lines to make them sound mournful if he wishes, but nothing on earth can prevent the final flourish from sounding perky:

*The miller he was drowned in his dam, that he was,  
The weaver he was hanged in his loom that he was,  
But the devil ran away with the little tailor boy  
With the broadcloth under his arm (that he did).*

In medieval times millers were notorious for their dishonesty (see Chaucer) and weavers were traditionally among the most turbulent of the trades; as for the little tailor boy, he was probably a 'prentice', and no one had much of a good word to say for them, whatever their trade, so perhaps their sticky ends were richly deserved - one will never know.

As I've suggested, their occupations seem a little inappropriate for princes of the blood royal, and I suspect that the song may originally have been about some other worthy until one day a minstrel with his eye on the audience ratings had the idea of improving its popularity by bringing in a more celebrated hero. However, about one thing the song is quite right: King Arthur did have three sons - possibly more, but the ancient sources usually speak of three.

Everyone knows about one of them, of course:

**Modred/Mordred/Medrawt** was conceived in incestuous coupling between Morgawse, wife of Lot of Lothian and Orkney, and her half-brother Arthur, who was at the time unaware of the blood relationship between them. Illegitimate product of incest, usurper, queen-ravisher, parricide, finally killed by his father's own hand, there is little that is edifying about the career of Modred. He is the instrument of doom, the symbol of human sinfulness that is the fatal weakness in Arthur's would-be ideal society; in him resides the true tragedy of the downfall of the Round Table.

But what of the other two?

"I have been where Llacheu, son of Arthur, wonderful in songs, was killed, where ravens croaked over gore", declares the poet in *A Dialogue between Gwynn son of Nudd and Gwyddneu Garanhir* from 'The Black Book of Carmarthen.' Apart from this sombre reference. I know of only two other mentions of Llacheu (though someone reading this is sure to be able to enlighten me about others - please do). One is a tradition, usually described as unreliable, that Llacheu was killed by Ceï; this appears to be based on an identification with Loholt in *The High History of the Holy Grail* who was killed by the envious Sir Kay, but Ronan Coghlan in his invaluable *Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends* is of the opinion that Llacheu and Loholt were two distinct characters.

The other is a mention in the Morganwg version of the Triads, where No.70 describes Llacheu as one of the 'three naturalists of Ynys Prydein' along with Gwalchmai son of Gwyar, and Rhiwallon of



the Broom-brush Hair: 'there was nothing of which they did not know its material essence, and its property, whether in kind, part, quality, coincidence, tendency, nature, or of essence, whatever it might be'. As far as I know there is no information anywhere about who was the mother of this early ecologist.

The third son, Amr or Anir, (Ronan Coghlan prefers Amr), also had a brief life and a sad fate. Nennius is the source this time; there is an Amhar mentioned in the *Mabinogion* too, who must surely be the variant spelling of the same character. Once again there is no indication of who was his mother, but the only significant thing known about him is that he was killed by his father, Arthur - how or why is never stated - at Archenfield and buried under a cairn raised by Myrddin on the banks of the River Gamber in Herefordshire. The cairn was called Licat Anir and had the property of never having the same dimension twice however many times it was measured.

Arthur's family history is a tragic tale. The current Royal Family may have their problems but nothing quite like those of King Arthur! Of the three sons known, one at least was illegitimate, two died by their father's own hand and none of them outlived him. The underlying details of the story would be fascinating but the chances of unearthing them now are nil. However, I feel that one at least of them - the most enigmatic of all - deserves further celebration, so here is a poem from an unpublished novel (yes, you've guessed it, my own):

## Taliesin's Lament for Amr mab Artos

Small is the river and dark the trees,  
Sombre in the moonlight the cairn of grey stones.  
There is little to tell who lies there by the streamside.

Tall he was and fair to look on, the goddess-born,  
Blue his bright eyes and black as the raven his hair,  
Young and fair, his white flesh laid in the black earth.

Swift is the river and tall the trees,  
Sick lies the sunlight on the cairn of grey stones.  
There is little to tell who lies there by the streamside.

Strong was his arm, like lightning his sword,  
Foremost in fight, he kept the ford against all,  
Young and fair, his white flesh laid in the black earth.

Three came against him, three fell before him,  
The edge of his sword was reddened with blood,  
Reddened with blood the swift-flowing water.

Three fell before him, the fourth was a champion;  
Who could withstand the grim hand of Artos?  
Sombre in the moonlight the cairn of grey stones.

Mourn now for Amr son of Artos son of Utr,  
Slain unknowing by the hand of his father.  
Young and fair, his white flesh laid in the black earth.

Blue his bright eye and black as the raven his hair,  
No maiden now shall clasp him in her white arms;  
He lies by the swift river under the leafless trees.

She crouched by the streamside, the old grey crone,  
Reddening the swift water, the Washer at the Ford:  
Three fell before him, the fourth was a champion.

Weep now for Amr, slain son of Artos,  
The fair young warrior laid in the cold black earth.  
Few shall know who lies there by the streamside;  
Sombre in the moonlight the cairn of grey stones.





# The Quest of Castle Peradventure

## William Moy Russell



Once upon a time, in the kitchens of Camelot, there worked a scullion called Simpkin. He was a good lad, strong and well-made, but not particularly bright. And so it happened that, when a particularly complicated feast was being prepared, the chief cook sent him out of the way into the forest to gather herbs. When he entered the forest, he heard a voice saying "Hist!", or perhaps it was "Psst!". He looked round, and there was a fully armed knight, leading his charger and an ordinary palfrey. From the armour and shield, he saw at once it was none other than Sir Launcelot.

The knight explained he was going on an important and very secret mission. Would the young man mind staying here for a while in his armour and holding his charger? Nobody would be likely to bother him once they saw the armour and shield. Simpkin was honoured by such a request. He put on the armour, held the charger, and Sir Launcelot rode hurriedly away on the palfrey.

Scarcely had he left when Sir Kay arrived, leading a palfrey on which sat a very delightful damsel. He announced that this damsel had begged King Arthur for a knight to help her master and mistress, the King and Queen of Belgravia, held prisoner by an evil magician in one of their own dwellings, the Castle Peradventure. In view of the formidable difficulty of this quest, the King had appointed Sir Launcelot. "And here thou art", added Sir Kay. "So here is the damsel. Get questing".

Simpkin's mother had brought him up always to tell the truth. He raised his visor, and began, "To say the sooth, I am not actually Sir Launcelot -" But Sir Kay had already hurried out of earshot. As for the damsel, she did not seem at all put out. She liked the look of this young man, and besides she had heard on the damsel grape-vine that Sir Launcelot was generally not available, except for a quick romp that left you with a cracked mirror and probably pregnant. She introduced herself as the Lady Melissa, and begged Simpkin to undertake the quest. Luckily his mother had brought him up never to refuse requests from damsels, and he agreed at once.

The Lady Melissa led the way deep into the forest. After a while they came to a clearing, where a mounted knight in red armour emerged from a pavilion. "Defend thyself", said the red knight, "for I will have ado with thee to the utterance." But then he did a double-take, for he saw the armour and shield and was not near enough to make out Simpkin's features. "Oh nay", he cried, "thou hadst to be Sir Launcelot. 'Tis not my day".

Simpkin's mother had brought him up always to tell the truth. "To say the sooth", he began, "I am not actually -" But at this point a soft little hand quietly closed his visor. When he had got it up again, the red knight and his horse were a small dot in the distance.

At the next clearing, exactly the same sequence of events occurred with a knight in blue armour, and at the clearing after that with a knight in purple armour with yellow spots, and so the day drew on.

Five clearings later than this, they emerged from the forest into open country, and there on a rocky hill stood the Castle Peradventure, as the damsel announced. When they dismounted at the foot of the hill, the evil magician appeared on the battlements. "Aha", he cried, "I know thee! Thou art Sir Launcelot! And because I know thy name, I have the power of magic over thy life! Abacadabra! Simsala bim!"

Simpkin's mother had brought him up always to tell the truth. "To say the sooth", he began, "I am not actually -" But at this point a soft little hand closed his visor with rather more force than usual. By the time he had managed to get it up again, a hideous demon, some thirty feet high, had appeared with the evil magician on the battlements.

"There stands Sir Launcelot!" cried the evil magician. "Demon, destroy him!"

"There most definitely does not stand Sir Launcelot", said the demon firmly. "As a matter of sooth", he added, for beneath the scales of every demon there is a gossip columnist longing to come out, "Sir Launcelot is not standing up at all at the moment, and neither is Queen Guinevere." "Still", he concluded sadly, for after all he was only a demon, "that is really none of our business."

As for thee, evil magician, thou wottest full well the penalty for supplying the wrong name when summoning a demon." He picked up the evil magician in one claw, bit his head off, and, chewing reflectively, vanished with a clap of thunder.

Simpkin and Melissa wandered through the castle, marvelling at the great heaps of gold, silver and jewels accumulated by the evil magician, and at his weird instruments of magic. Melissa found one of these that, according to an attached parchment, would transport any object to any desired place. Simpkin was delighted, for he had been wondering how to return Sir Launcelot's armour and charger. They were duly despatched to the place from which the quest had started.

In the dungeons they found Melissa's royal master and mistress, a holy hermit, and a number of knights and ladies held prisoner by the evil magician. All overwhelmed Simpkin with their profuse thanks. The King dubbed him knight on the spot, and gave him the castle and all its contents, since he had plenty of other castles to live in. Simpkin would never have dared to tell Melissa how he felt about her, but after she had had a quiet word with the holy hermit Simpkin somehow or other found that they were being married. I leave you to imagine his joy, and in sooth Sir Simpkins and the Lady Melissa lived happily ever after in Castle Peradventure.

When Sir Launcelot returned from his important and very secret mission, he was rather surprised to find his charger grazing beside an empty suit of armour. However, before he had time to wonder what had happened to Sir Simpkin, Sir Kay appeared with three more damsels, and despatched him on three more quests, for this was a busy time of year at King Arthur's court. By the time Sir Launcelot had accomplished these quests, and several more that accumulated while he was doing so, everyone had forgotten about the Quest of Castle Peradventure, and nobody ever asked him how it had turned out.

Later researchers could find no details about it, and simply left it out of their quest lists. And that is why you will find nothing about the quest of Castle Peradventure in the Mabinogion or Geoffrey of Monmouth or Wace or Layman or Chretien de Troyes or Gottfried von Straasburg or Wolfram von Eschenbach or Marie de France or Robert de Boron or Hartmann von Aue or Malory or Spenser or Drayton or Blackmore or Heber or Tennyson or even Terence Hanbury White.



### ARCHEOLOGICAL ODDMENTS

#### DINDERS AFTER RAIN

The secretary spoke of a certain schoolmr at Wroxeter that used to send his boys to gather dinders as they call roman moneys after a shower of rain, and he melted all the silver ones into a tankard. The lord of the manor at Wroxeter puts it into his leases that the tenants shall bring all Antiquitys found there on forfeiture of their lease. A vast quantity of coyns etc. found there brought to Mr Ashmole were burnt in the fire of London. *Society of Antiquities Minute Books, May 12th, 1725.*

#### A GOLDEN CORSELET

(Found at Bryn yr Ellyllon (Hill of the Goblins) near Mold, Clwyd, 1833)

Connected with this (discovery by workmen) it is certainly a strange circumstance that an elderly woman who had been to Mold to lead her husband home late at night from a public-house, should have seen or fancied a spectre to have crossed the road before her to the identical mound of gravel, 'of unusual size, and clothed in a coat of gold, which shone like the sun', and that she should tell the story the next morning many years ago, amongst others to the very person, Mr John Langford, whose workmen drew the treasure out of its prison-house. Her having related this story is an undoubted fact.

*Archaeologia, XXVI, 1836*



# Letters



## LIVING STONES

♦ From John Billingsley, Hebden Bridge, W.Yorks.

Chris Lovegrove (24/3) writes that "stones require a huge stretch of imagination to transform them into living beings". Can he be sure?

The belief in a 'living earth' is common enough; and so is the belief that certain objects, regarded as inanimate in cartesian cultures, have a particular life of their own. We talk of temples hewn from the 'living rock', and visit megalithic monuments whose stone was transported over back-breaking distances in order to be part of a ritual community comprising both humans and the stones themselves, presumably because of some special quality in that stone. Detachment from 'living rock' does not necessarily 'kill' the stone, as numerous numinous erratics, standing stones and other loose boulders will testify. Sensitives in Japan see the 'kami' resident in certain stones. The painter Paul Nash was astonished to see megaliths of Avebury, in a number of which (whom?) he *felt*, not just saw, "personages" - beings possessing life. In addition, at circles like Long Meg and her Daughters, faces and characters readily appear from the stones and may well have given rise to the name of the site itself. Folklore may record 'after-the-fact' personification of remarkable megaliths; but it may also be a record of a past human perception of an animate presence.

The personification impulse is more than the desire, as Chris suggests, to imbue the inanimate with life - it may be the perception of life, albeit in a different form, that is most easily represented in a humanoid 'personage'. Folklore tends to 'infantilise' a perception and reduce it to its simplest form over time, perhaps - as in tales of Sabbath-Breakers turning to stone - under political influence. Such tales of incarceration in stone are different from those which suggest life within stone; and I feel the latter are a remnant of a once-

universal belief that living beings are more than flesh-and-blood.

*As a boy at Margam in South Wales I made a point of not bathing in the sea on Christmas morning for fear of being crushed by the local standing stones that make their way there on that day each year.*

♦ From Alby Stone, Brockley, London:

## RAYMOND CHANDLER

Glad my shamelessly-biased filmography is still creating ripples. As it happens, I live and work near 'Chandler Country' - the Man Himself studied at Dulwich College (I work in Dulwich these days), and-so I'm told-lived in Nunhead, which is about a five minute walk from my present home. I must be picking up Chandlerian emanations, as I only noticed the Arthurian references in *Farewell My Lovely* shortly after I moved here nine years ago. There's certainly something about these mean streets...

*Do you wear a shabby raincoat and a wide brimmed hat, Alby? And do you always have a cigarette dangling from your lips as you walk the dark streets of Brockley?*

## CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

The Graham Phillips/ Martin Keatman controversy seems never-ending. I read the first couple of 'psychic questing' books they did a few years ago - the 'Meonia' saga - and formed certain opinions of the pair based on that stuff. I haven't yet read their book on Arthur, however, so I'll not comment on that until I've done so. But I suspect that they are working to a Plan...

Meanwhile, I'm currently reading Andrew Sinclair's *The Sword and the Grail*, which appears to be ploughing much the same furrow - in a more restrained, scholarly, and sober way - as Baignent, Leigh and Lincoln did a decade ago, and as Hancock did more recently in *The Sign and the Seal*. I'm a long-time admirer of Sinclair's novels, and his meticulous approach came as no surprise, but, like the rest, the presence of the Grail is a bit superfluous. Maybe I should write a piece on the strange Grailward compulsion that afflicts historical conspiracy-theorists! It is a rather good read so far, though.

*The Sign and the Seal is reviewed by Chris Lovegrove in this edition.*

♦ From Chris Lovegrove, Monpelier, Bristol:

## CONTROVERSIAL EVENTS

Nick Grant asks what were the "controversial events" Phillips and Keatman were involved in. The answer, in case Geoff Bird doesn't provide it, is psychic archaeology. In 1992 Andrew Collins published "The Sword and the Stone" (issue 2 of his occasional magazine *The*

*Supernaturalist*) which I reviewed in XV/4. Phillips and Keatman had their version published later in the year as *The Green Stone* (Neville Spearman) which I confess I haven't read. Graham Phillips is described by Collins as being a trance medium who, amongst other things, discovers a stone in a buried 16th century casket. This green stone has a pedigree which stretches through Mary Queen of Scots, the Knights Templar and the Pharaoh Akhenaten, taking in a spell as the original grail while at a Staffordshire Bronze Age earthwork. Collins told his version frankly, but while some of the tale seems to describe what appears to me to be wishful-thinking, or past lives "remembered" from photographic memory, the finding of material artefacts is less easy to explain away. (See also Eddie Tooke's review of Andy's *The Seventh Sword* in XXII/1.)

*We have not heard from Geoff Bird since he raised this issue, I'm afraid, so we are grateful to Chris for throwing some light on his enigmatic statement in XXIV/3.*

## ARTHUR'S SHIELD

While reading *Veronica and her Cloth* I got to wondering about icons, the famous diptych of Stilicho with the picture of a woman and child on his shield, and whether the report of Mary on Arthur's shield at Badon was historically likely. So it was with real interest that I noted Paul's and Helen's separate comments on Arthur's shield. You will probably realise that I have a kind of obsession with claimed Glastonbury links with Arthur. I am agnostic about it, though I think there is something curious about the affair, and I find the depth of feeling displayed for one viewpoint or the other curious too. If you are happy I would like to explore the disputed Arthurian links with Glastonbury in a series of loosely related but essentially independent articles. Beginning with the Virgin on the shield (an image associated with the medieval abbey) the illustrated articles could deal with the so-called pyramids (and other contemporary Saxon crosses), the authenticity (or not) of the lead cross, the Dark Age Glastonbury as revealed (or not) by archaeology, etc.

*Start writing, Chris, it's a series our readers would be most interested to read, I'm sure.*

## THE HOXNE TREASURE

I paid a visit to the British Museum and picked up a couple of books. In particular, they had the Hoxne treasure on temporary view, with an excellent accompanying booklet at £4.95. You'll recall that this is one of the richest Roman hoards yet discovered and declared Treasure Trove. Nearly 15000 coins and 200 gold and silver objects. Of particular interest is the fact that this Suffolk find can be dated to between 410 and 450 (from its virtually unworn coins) and that the name Aurelius Ursinus is found

no-less than ten times engraved on ten spoons. I'm reading up about Late Roman names in Anthony Birley's *The People of Roman Britain* to ascertain the significance of any of Aurelius's family name (eg. Aurelius Caninus) but you will no doubt have already spotted that Ursinus seems to include the element *URSUS* for bear...

*Arthur the Bear seems to be rising from our collective unconsciousness as a Society at the moment. See Brendan McMahon's article in this issue.*

## THE DRUID PRINCE

Another book I have finally got round to reading, in anticipation of the B.M. visit, is *The Druid Prince* essay on Lindow Man. I agree with Kate's strictures which she brought up in her 1989 review, but noticed that the two authors postulate a link between the ritual sacrifice of 'Pete Marsh' in Lindow Moss and the Arthurian sleeping king legend of Alderly Edge, which I hadn't realised was only a couple of miles away. An interesting coincidence, but perhaps no more than that on the evidence presented.

*Come and spend a day in the Northwest Chris, and you will fall under the spell of these two evocative sites.*

## CARDIFF, Oct. 8th.

**Before:** Thank you for the Cardiff information; congratulations on your coup and hard work behind the scenes. See you then!

**After:** Thanks again for a thoroughly entertaining day!

*Thank you Chris (Charles too) for the reviews printed elsewhere in this issue. It was sufficient reward to see members like yourselves enjoying the rich intellectual fare that was on offer.*

## VIDEO LECTURES

From Keith Pugh, Wolverhampton, West Midlands

I am writing to say how much I enjoyed the Arthurian Day in Cardiff on 8th October and to thank you for all the hard work you put in on





the day (and for many days before, I'm sure). I wondered if, at possible future events of this nature, the proceedings could be video-recorded. It would then be possible for members to buy copies if they were unable to attend (or to keep for posterity) and so raise funds for the Society. All that is needed is someone with a camcorder and the time to do the copying, (or pay a bit more if not). It might be an idea for discussion, anyway.

*Whether such a splendid opportunity will come our way again for a long time is doubtful, Keith. As a retired academic myself, I must tell you that the last thing the speakers or the Academy would have allowed would be the recording of the lectures. This would be a breach of copyright in their eyes. The same is true even of tape recording. One redoubtable female lecturer would probably have taken us to court!*

♦ From John Ford, Watford, Herts.

#### ARTHUR'S SWORD

I have just read *King of the Last Days*, a novel by Diana Norman, which was based on the monks finding the grave at Glastonbury and taking the sword to Henry/Richard in Europe. Has anybody covered this subject in *Pendragon*? It raised a few questions in my mind, like were there any records of either king having the sword or was there any record of the person who was given the sword by Richard then lost it?

*Ah, the Great Sword of King Arthur 'that gave light like thirty torches.' I wrote an article about Excalibur in XXIII/2, John. In the last paragraph I wrote. "On the way to the Third Crusade, Richard the Lionheart presented Excalibur to King Tancred of Sicily. (At least he told him it was Excalibur!)"*

#### REGIONAL MEETINGS

Reading the future plans for *Pendragon*, I am warming to the idea of regional meetings or get-togethers. I will start the ball rolling by asking if there are any members north of the Thames who would like to meet up 3 or 4 times a year, say two to three weeks after *Pendragon* has landed on their doorsteps. We could meet in a nice pub somewhere, in a friendly atmosphere with, I should imagine, some interesting chat. I'm prepared to organise a time and place, no formal agenda, no speakers, just a group of people sitting around a table, chatting about our favourite subject. If you are interested please send an SAE to: John Ford, 41 Ridge Street, Watford, Herts, WD2 5BL.. *I take it that 'north of the Thames' extends as far north as Watford, John? Barbarians lie beyond! An excellent idea: if anyone else would like to act as a local organiser in this way we would be glad to hear from them and print contact addresses in the journal.*

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

#### ARTHUR TURNCOAT?

In reply to John Ford's letter which appeared in *Pendragon* XXIV/3, John raises a very interesting question - would Arthur have turned his back on his country?

According to *The Paimpont Syndicat d'Initiative*, c.1978 (sic), King Arthur returned to Brittany after the Britons had experienced a disastrous defeat at the hands of the West Saxons under Cynric at the Battle of Salisbury in 552. This indicates that there is a long-standing Breton tradition that King Arthur survived the Battle of Camlan fought in 537 and lived to fight another day. The collapse into anarchy did not come immediately after the departure of Arthur because the confederacy of British kingdoms held together for some years after. The Breton source suggests that Arthur returned to mainland Britain to have one last crack at the enemy. Unfortunately, he was not successful. He would then have been 70 years old and his best fighting years were behind him. He did, however, participate in the overthrow of his old enemy Marcus Conomor in 555.

The Arthurian Centre in Brittany may well be interested in *Journey to Avalon*.

*I trust you have sent them a copy, David, I'm sure your Breton connections for Arthur will bring forth some interesting comment from French academics and Arthurian enthusiasts.*

#### JOURNEY TO AVALON

I am very disappointed that you have not included my reply to Charles Evans-Günther's review of *Journey to Avalon*. By not including my counter-attack you have left *Pendragon* readers with the false impression that Charles has successfully demolished the theories presented in the book. I realise that Chris and I will be able to argue our case at the Arthurian Day on 8th October but the seeds of doubt have already been sown among *Pendragon* members who will not be present at the event.

Incidentally, Chris Lovegrove's review, which appeared in the same issue of the magazine



containing the advertisement for the book on the back cover, did little or nothing to help sales.

*The full page advert on our back cover (the prime advertising space) was given to you free of charge to help you sell the book, David, I didn't realize I was expected to devote the magazine to an ongoing debate because the reviews did not please you. I have a file of densely typed notes from you and from Charles which would have taken over the next journal at least. I think our readers should be credited with being able to make up their own minds about the thesis presented in your book on the evidence included in it. It has ever been thus in the academic world: Have you read the review of The Age of Arthur in Studia Celtica Vol X/XI, 1975-6 by academics Kirby & Williams of Aberystwyth College? It is 32 pages long and tears the book's 'evidence' to pieces. John Morris's book is still selling well to date. Take heart, believe in your offspring, David, let it walk and talk for itself.*

#### TRUCE

From Charles Evans-Günther, Flint, Clwyd, North Wales.

I thank David for his comments and information, both in *Pendragon* and through personal correspondence. I would like to state that I must disagree with the theories found in *Journey to Avalon*. My own research on this evidence shows it to be flawed. Therefore, since I do not want to let our discussion take over the magazine, I would prefer to leave it at that and agree to disagree with David on this subject.

*Nuff said: it would be foolish for us to fall out over differing views of who Arthur might have been when I know he was an alien from a UFO.*

#### CHRONOLOGY

From Granville Calder, Stourbridge, West Midlands.

I became very interested when reading the Book Reviews in the summer issue of *Pendragon* XXIV/3 and began to wonder about the veracity of the chronology of the events mentioned in the reviews. It began when I read that Arthur was the son of Uther Pendragon fighting Vortigern in 450 AD. If Arthur was only one year old at that time, by the Battle of Camlan dated at 536 AD in the Annales Cambraie he would have been 87.

Similarly with Vortigern, what age was he when he took power in 425 AD? What age was he when he fought Uther Pendragon? The same with Ambrosius, how old was he in 444 AD when he started his campaign? And when did he die? Questioning these dates also make one ask when Arthur was born and who did he take

over from, Amrosius or his sons? Also, regarding the Battle of Mons Badonicus, which Laing places in 470, Bede 493, Gildas 494, Alcock 499, Morris 505 and the Annales Cambrai 517 AD. Which date is the correct one? We can begin by asking ourselves: are there any true, certified, verified dates?

*It may never be possible to reconcile the different chronologies for this period but it's fun trying. The same applies to King Lists and Battles, of course. Each hypothesis is an exercise in probability, an argument - little can be claimed as 'xertainty' in the light of present evidence.*

#### ARTHUR'S TREASURE

♦ From A. Winfindale, W. Bridgford, Nottingham.

I wonder if you could throw any light on the supposed legend of Arthur burying his treasure (whatever it may have been) in the county of Lincolnshire? Personally, I have never come across this before, but an associate of mine says it is very well known. Can you help please?

*Personally, I know of no such 'legend' but we would be happy to print a letter stating the references for this 'well-known fact' - we are always open to new ideas and information.*

#### TRAWSFYNYDD

♦ From Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.

You doubtless saw the picture in the *Guardian*, August 18th, of the Camelot set being erected in front of Trawsfynydd power station, for the filming of *First Knight*. It gave me an eerie feeling, the prophetic touch as it were, having had a poem published a while ago (in the booklet you reviewed) in which Arthur's Wild Hunt descend into Trawsfynydd!

*Details of the publication containing Steve's poem will be found in the footnote to his article.*

♦ From Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall.

#### ARTOS THE BEAR

I was very interested in Charles's report of Dr Ross's lecture about the bear. Since Dr Ross mentioned that "in Celtic Europe the bear was respected as a deity... Artos, Arto, Andarte..." I looked up Celtic legends in Richard Cavendish's *Legends of the World* - no bears. I then checked Charles Squire's *Celtic Myth & Legend* - no bears! Please will Charles let me know whence Dr Ross derived all this fascinating information? The only references I have are Rosemary Sutcliff, who writes of 'Artos the Bear'. Oh yes, and Mary Stewart in 'The Crystal Cave' also mentions "Artos the bear coming out of Cornwall" in the prophecies that Merlin made of Vortigern, (p.292).



It might be fairer to Dr Ross to let her speak for herself: see her Pagan Celtic Britain, Routledge & Kegan Paul (1967), Cardinal (1974), revised edition Constable (1992).

#### ALDERLEY EDGE

Having read with interest the various pieces about sleeping heroes, I can perhaps add a few points without overlapping. Nobody seems to have mentioned the Alan Garner books based on the Legend of Alderley Edge, in which the Merlin-figure is called Cadelinn. These are *The Weirstone of Brisengamen* and *The Moon of Gomerath* - children's books but very well written and recommended reading for all interested in Celtic legend.

Readers will remember that Beryl has a great love of historical fiction and is pleased to advise our readers in this area.

#### ARTHUR & CORNWALL

♦ From Colin Ellis, Truro, Cornwall. I was interested in Thornton B. Edwards's reference to the new Cornish revival vid. *The Sleeping Hero* in Celtic Tradition. There is now a flourishing language movement which is determined to re-establish spoken as well as written Cornish. Evening classes are held throughout Cornwall and in some schools the language is taught in pupils' free time.

See Booknews for details of *The Cornish Language Fellowship* and other materials available for learning the Cornish language.

So what part does King Arthur have in all this? The ceremonies of the Cornish Gorsed, which are conducted in Cornish, are based on the Welsh Gorsedd and Arthur's name is invoked throughout. There is a song called *He Shall Come Again* of which the last verse reads:

'Where shall we find King Arthur?  
His place is sought in vain.  
Yet dead he is not, but alive,  
And he shall come again.'

Bardic initiates swear on a replica of Excaliber (sic) to be faithful to Cornwall. Later the Deputy Grand Bard declares:

'Still Arthur watches our shores,  
In guise of Chough there flown:  
His Kingdom he keeps his own,  
Once King, to be King once more.'

To which the Bards respond:

'King Arthur is not dead!'

The Grand Bard then administers the Oath of Loyalty:

'Behold a Sword which represents Excaliber, the Sword of King Arthur, which came from the Lake, and went to the Lake again. Will you swear upon it to be ever loyal to Cornwall, our Motherland?'

This is an impressive continuation of the strong belief in Arthur that we hear of in Cornwall from at least Medieval times.

Tourism is one of Cornwall's few industries and

the Arthurian connection is often shamelessly exploited. However, for me the ultimate offence was to be found in Tintagel at the entrance to a rough patch of ground and written on an untidy piece of board - 'King Arthur's Car Park!' Reminds me of Stratford-on-Avon, Colin, they even fry fish and chips in Shakespeare's name there.

(PS: Yes, I understand *Tavas yn Gruth* which is almost the same in Cornish *Taves yn Grudh*, but I mustn't be cheeky.

Esoteric!

#### PENDRAGON

♦ From Frank Whately, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey.

Many thanks for mentioning our Edinburgh performances in the Summer edition. We had a marvellous time, as you can probably tell from the enclosed reviews. We played to packed houses in the 500 seat George Square Theatre and the production won a Fringe First Award, along with a great deal of publicity in the papers, on Radio and Television.

*Pendragon* will be seen at Edinburgh's new Festival Theatre in February (21st-25th). I hope it will be at the Lyric, Hammersmith at Easter (not yet confirmed) and then in the Far East in August. It is to be published by Josef Weinberger during the course of next year. Frank is co-author and a director of the National Youth Music Theatre's splendid production. (See *Talking Head*) He is also a member of our Society. We're keeping our fingers crossed for Hammersmith, Frank!

#### RECRUITING PENDRAGONS

♦ From Susan Gaitley, Castleford, Yorks.

I am writing to give you some news about advertising *Pendragon*. I made 20 photocopies of the Society leaflet with enrolment forms and placed them in our local library. A couple of weeks later they had all disappeared. I made enquiries and was informed that they had all been taken, so I hope this leads to some enquiries. I will place some more in the library as the librarian says that 'this sort of thing' goes well.

You will recall that a leaflet was enclosed with each copy of XXIV/3 and members were asked to try to help recruit a new member. Two members have done so (they get this edition free as a thank you), others used the form to renew their own membership. I will send Susan a supply - and any one else who can place leaflets usefully - please get in touch if you are interested in helping us to keep *Pendragon* going. Thank you Susan.



# BookReviews



#### CELTIC MANDALAS

by Courtney Davis with text by Helena Paterson

London: Blandford Press

46 colour & 48 black and white illustrations

£9.99

Another beautiful collection of work by Courtney Davis with a commentary by astrologer and herbalist Helen Paterson. To name this group of images *mandalas* is clearly to invite a particular reading of them and the book begins with a short text exploring what's at stake in using the word.

First, a mandala is to be seen as a representation of the universe, intricately constructed but by nature orderly and contained within an 'eternal circle' which is identified, in the East, with the Wheel of Life. Such images have been produced in a wide variety of cultures (Tibetan Buddhism and mediaeval Christianity and Islam are mentioned). The doctrinal details vary cross-culturally but the central idea of the ordered cosmos is constant and this is certainly a compelling reading of the traditional designs in which Courtney Davis's work is grounded: the intricate complexities of never-ending knots, sometimes wholly abstract, sometimes incorporating life itself in the stylised forms of animals, birds and reptiles. Not that the designs are purely traditional: Courtney Davis emphasises that he has "revised and reconstructed" the art of the Celts and some of the mandalas set more contemporary styles of mythological landscape or figure within these symbolic patterns. In *Conla's Well*, for example a clear, rocky spring is pouring over the geometric border and out of the mandala, a salmon leaping at the foot of the fall. In this context Helena Paterson's concise and lucid text becomes particularly interesting, drawing out the specifics of the Celtic world-view and explaining the allusions in the illustrations clearly and succinctly. The leaping salmon, for example, is an Irish wisdom-symbol and Conla's well the source of poetic vision pouring, here, from the centre of the cosmos. Furthermore, some of the purely geometric images, *The Golden Wheel*, for example, are explained in terms of particularly Celtic cosmology: the journey from Annwn to the golden circle of Gwynnvyd. Symbolism from the Christian period of Celtic history - cross and grail - is also embraced, the text identifying a constant spiritual nature which develops through the concepts of Pagan and Christian religion and finally, the book presents a cycle of astrological mandalas, again examining the Celtic manifestations of more universal images.

Mandalas are not merely pictures, however. They are also objects for contemplation with the purpose of bringing about change and growth. In this sense the work is located in the developing Western mystery tradition and the reader is invited to use it in a practical sense as the point of entry to a personal journey through the landscapes of Celtic mythology. How the reader uses the works is clearly up to her but certainly the designs are rich and complex, combining visual styles into beautiful, balanced compositions with much to explore on every page of this cosmic atlas.

Richard Stedman-Jones

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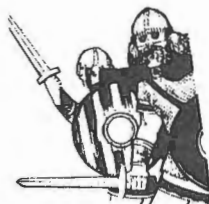
## THE ENGLISH CONQUEST

by N.J. Higham

Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994.

ISBN 07190 40809

220 pages, softback, 5 maps; about £12



This new book from historian N.J. Higham is devoted specifically to the work by Gildas entitled *De Excidio Britanniae*, which is the only text known to have come down to us from fifth century Britain. The document has been quarried for information about the period by scores of scholars from Bede to Geoffrey of Monmouth and later mediaeval Welsh writers. It is the source of much of the speculative writing abounding today on the subject of Arthur and references to the siege of Mount Badon which, Gildas wrote, was the final victory of the British and heralded in a period of peace from that time, forty years previous, to the present day (i.e. about the time of his writing the *DEB*). There has been a great deal of speculation about Badon, its location, the nature of the battle there and the identity of the British leader. The date of Badon is always assumed to be in the mid- to late 400s, say 460; heaping speculation upon speculation, conjecture upon conjecture, this *obsessio* has taken on crucial importance for those who wish to demonstrate that the British managed to contain the Anglo-Saxon advance.

What the writer has done is to take a fresh look at the *DEB* as a whole, as a work of literature rather than just as a quarry for historical data. The purpose of the book, *in context*, is quite clear – it is to draw parallels between the current plight of the British nation and the Old Testament Jews, and to show that the only way for the British to regain control is for the leaders of the British to reform their characters and take up Christian virtues in order to win God's favour, and hence his assistance against the foe; Gildas saw himself as a latter-day Jeremiah preaching to the dissolute leaders of Israel. In this light, the document takes on a new meaning. The author shows that Badon, far from being the 'final victory of the Britons over the Saxons' was simply the last (most recent) victory the Britons had had, some forty four years before. The period of peace ensuing was effectively due to the Britons having accepted a peace treaty with the English (who continued to hold most of the lowland zone), something they would not have been obliged to do if they had achieved 'final victory', surely?

Gildas himself is often placed in the North of Britain, away from those nasty Saxons, but the author suggests that his perspective is actually only congruent with someone writing in central southern England. The *DEB* is also the source of the famous 'groans of the Britons' – letters allegedly sent by the British leaders to the Continental Roman authorities asking for assistance; analysis of the content discloses the possibility that these famous source documents are actually the work of Gildas himself! Further, the 'traditional' dating of the Saxon revolt (AD 449), based on Bede borrowing from Gildas, is consequently undermined and a date nearer to AD 443 is shown to be more plausible. Gildas's remarks about a 'father devil', whom the British princes seem to be imitating when they should be fighting him, are indicative of an overlord of the various Germanic nations in Britain, whose efforts were aimed at consolidation of his people's gains.

The book is extremely closely argued, as one would expect in a text which overthrows contemporary opinion on this crucial document, and the summary above does not do justice to the author's well-reasoned and often cautious approach to the subject. Where there are speculations or inferences, he is careful to indicate this clearly. In fact, there is little with which I could argue here, although it will probably not be well received in those circles where the existence of a historical Arthur is taken to be self-evident fact, since one of the mainstays of belief in such a figure is the putative British resurgence in the late 400s – which this book convincingly undermines.

For my money, it would have benefited from more and better maps, and from a bibliography. However, copious endnotes direct the reader to source material. The book is said to be the first of three volumes forming an analysis of the origins of England; it is to be hoped that the other books are of an equally high standard to this one – if so, they will doubtless form a major contribution to the understanding of the subject and the period. Recommended.

Steve Pollington

## THE SIGN AND THE SEAL

by Graham Hancock

Mandarin Paperbacks, 1993 (Heinemann, 1992)

£6.99



I experienced a sense of *déjà vu* when I first picked up this paperback: black cover, red titles, a yellow band with the legend "the explosively controversial international bestseller" emblazoned across the front. Back home, I realised why. The design was a rip-off (or homage to) *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Baigent *et al* from a decade ago. Oh dear, more hype and more tripe, I sensed.

In essence the book is, as its subtitle proclaims, "a quest for the lost Ark of the Covenant." This artefact, popularised by the first of the Indiana Jones films, was ordered by Moses to be built near Mount Sinai after the exodus. Modelled on Egyptian royal furniture, it functioned both as a container for the stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments and as the seat of the invisible Israelite god, Yahweh. Ensuring victory in battles for the Promised Land, it was placed in Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem around the middle of the 10th century BC. And, after some subsequent references in the Old Testament, it simply disappears.

It is at this point that most crank theories begin. It is a giant storage battery. It is an alien spacecraft. It is hidden in Atlantis. Or any combination of these. And it is then that I lose interest.

Graham Hancock's book is different. There *are* speculations about the Ark's function, about Atlantis and so on, but it seems to me that this ex-journalist has his feet firmly on the ground. His research suggests that in the reign of the apostate Manasseh (who flourished in the mid-seventh century BC) the Ark was removed from Jerusalem and taken to be housed in a purpose-built temple on the Egyptian island of Elephantine, on the Nile near Aswan. Two centuries later, it was transported south into Ethiopia to an island on Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile. For eight centuries it remained there in the midst of a long-established Jewish community (the Falasha people) until the country's emperor converted to Christianity in the fourth century AD. Then it was removed to another Ethiopian town, Axum, and placed in a new structure, St Mary of Zion, where it remains as a vigorous and living tradition to this day, despite famine and civil war. And at the Ethiopian New Year (January 18th-19th) replicas of Moses' stone tablets, normally housed in the most secret part of every church, are carried in procession by the priests to tumultuous receptions.

As far as I can see there is nothing inherently implausible in this reconstruction, and much to recommend it. History, archaeology and common sense are not distorted by it, and the thirteenth-century legend that it was brought to Ethiopia by the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba can be seen as an enthusiastic attempt to explain its undoubted presence there. But, even if this reconstruction is true, what possible relevance does this have to *Pendragon's* terms of reference.

You will not be surprised to learn that Hancock suggests that the Ark of the Covenant is also the Holy Grail.

I must confess that my heart sank when I saw paraded the list of interested parties: the builders of Chartres, St Bernard, Wolfram von Eschenbach, the Knights Templar, the Freemasons and a few others besides. Haven't we met these characters frequently in decades past, and doesn't each new theory claim to unite them all into an integrated secret history?

But perhaps we might like to consider, and re-assess, some similar motifs contained in the following historical summary. In the eleventh century the Templars spent more time on archaeological activity on the site of the Temple than in protecting pilgrims, though with little result. Then they appear to have shifted interest from Ethiopia, at a time when the Christian emperor of that country was establishing diplomatic relations with the Mediterranean world. Their emblem, the *croix pattée*, now appears there for the first time. At the same time, elaborations of the Grail story (*Parzival* and *Der Jüngerer Titurel*) not only have Templars as guardians of the Grail, but also set its last resting place as in the land of Prester John, an eastern Christian emperor. The sacred object is most often described as a stone, particularly one that had "fallen from heaven," and Moses' tablets of stone, scholars have suggested, may well have been part of a meteorite.



There's more. After the downfall of the Templars, continuity was maintained by two traditions, it is claimed. One is the Order of Christ, who were Portuguese Templars under another name, and the other is represented by the Freemasons. Prince Henry the Navigator, Grand Master of the Order of Christ, was very keen to establish diplomatic relations between Portugal and Ethiopia, while Vasco da Gama's pioneering voyage around Africa in 1497 was in part an attempt to make contact with "Prester John" by a different route. Meanwhile, it is often argued that the Templars survived in Scotland to pass on their secrets to another clandestine organisation. It is noteworthy that the eighteenth-century Freemason James Bruce of Kinnaird travelled to Ethiopia, allegedly "to discover the source of the Nile" even though the Portuguese had already achieved this goal a century before. And it is significant that Bruce was instrumental in bringing copies of the Ethiopian Ark legend back with him to Europe.

This précis does not do justice to this intelligent and, it seems to me, largely honest book. Here is an author who, by his own account, has risked his life to travel in war-torn Ethiopia and other parts of the Middle East. Why? All he wished to do is to ask the guardian of the Ark if he might have a glimpse of what obsessive research tells him is the prototype of the Grail. What little I know of the subject matter he covers suggests that there is more to this than just another sensationalist claim bolstered by hunches, and the way it is presented is certainly more reader-friendly than, say, Andrew Sinclair's *The Sword and the Grail*, which explores similar territory. If you want to be stimulated by a new evaluation of the mediaeval Grail legends, then this may be the book for you.

Chris Lovegrove



#### KING ARTHUR: KING OF KINGS

by Jean Markale, translated by Christine Hauch  
Gordon and Cremonesi Publishers, London and New York, New River House, 34 Seymour Road, London N8 OBE, 1977, 242 pages.  
First published as *Le Roi et La Societe Celtique* by Payot, Paris, 1976.

Jean Markale, author of this book, has been called the world's greatest authority on the Celtic past. When this book and his *Women of the Celts* were published, he was Professor of Celtic History at the Sorbonne in Paris. A man with strong Breton roots, his studies of Celtic law, religion, literature, and society have been recognized as the definitive works in their field.

*King Arthur: King of Kings* is divided into three parts: Part One gives the origin of the medieval stories. Part Two gives Arthur's place in the Celtic world. Part Three sums up the specific qualities of the Celts and Arthur's legacy.

Markale contends, and few of us would disagree, that the original Celtic stories of Arthur were interwoven with Christian beliefs and the politics of the day (many of them during the Plantagenet era) to become a popular form of propaganda. However, the resulting "mix" turned Arthur into an ineffectual "king", naively betrayed by Guinevere and Lancelot. Markale calls it "one of the silliest tales medieval literature has given us." His concept of Guinevere, arrived at through study and evaluation of the original Celtic tales, is one that reveals a "snarling bitch of a woman, but one who symbolized a specific concept of sovereignty." This is a strong departure from Mallory's lovelorn female. Markale's Breton Lancelot "was a man of quite different mettle" from the lying, cheating knight that lusted after a king's wife.

As Markale himself says, without trying to push the comparison too far, King Arthur has something in common with Jesus of Nazareth. Although there is ample evidence of the actual historical existence of both men, there are no authentic documents to prove it. Markale carefully gleans all available sources for his Arthurian foundation. Archaeology, along with myth, history, literature - whether Christian or Pagan, written or oral - all of these contribute to this well documented piece of work.

The Arthur that emerges from this book is a Celtic war lord. He hunts deer and boar, and fights invaders who encroach on traditionally Celtic territories. He sits in a circle with friends, family, and fellow warriors. Whatever his Roman roots, Arthur is much more Celtic than Roman, more Pagan than Christian in his way of life and death. His is a nobler, more

uplifting tale than that which the medieval writers found. The "real" Arthur emerges as a Celtic hero who lit a flame in what is called "The Dark Ages", but what was really a flowering of the Celtic way of life. When Arthur died, his exploits and the people's yearning for a return to things Celtic spread out of Britain and into Europe where, eventually, "The Bear" became a medieval "king" with all the trappings.

Markale is passionately Celtic to the extent that he contends that a return to the Celtic way of life would benefit us all. Whether or not one agrees with him, a return to the Celtic would be, in essence, a way to bring back the spirit of Arthur, our once and future king.

Rosemary Longworth



#### A PRINCE AMONG MEN

by Robert W. Charette  
Warner Books, New York, 1994, pp.302.  
\$5.50 (available from Forbidden Planet Bookshops)

What would happen if Arthur were called back in our own time is a question that has been asked again and again in recent years, by authors as varied as Martyn Skinner (*The Return of Arthur*) to Mike Barr (*Camelot 2000* comic series). Robert Charette is the latest to ask the question, and to answer it in this readable novel - the first in a trilogy - in which Arthur is brought back from the otherworld by the sorceress Nym (can't think who that might be?) for rather vague and undefined reasons. In the world of the 20th century USA, Artos (or Bear as he becomes known) is befriended by a dreamy youth named John Reddy, who himself turns out to be an Elvish changeling, and promptly becomes a leather-wearing gang-leader! Opposed by various factions, including the CIA, a multi million-dollar corporation (isn't it interesting that such organisations have increasingly become identified as the bad guys in modern fiction?) and some elves with as yet undisclosed agendas of their own, the quest begins for Caliburn, defined as a weapon of awesome cosmic powers. The way leads out of this world and into the other - where gun-toting agents are at a loss and magic rules.

I found this a readable and occasionally exciting venture into Arthurian fantasy. Charette knows his stuff and makes none of the blunders perpetrated in some recent Arthurian fiction. He tells a good story in fast paced prose and intrigues us enough to want to read on. The blend of ancient magic and modern techno-shamanism is interesting and makes for all kinds of speculation. I personally will be awaiting the next volume *A King Beneath the Mountain* with expectation of the story becoming at once clearer and more exciting.

John Matthews

#### DOWN THE LONG WIND

by Gillian Bradshaw  
Methuen, 842 pages.  
First issued in 3 volumes: Hawk of May, In Winter's Shadow  
ISBN 0-413-17610-X



The novel begins in the Orkneys and the story unfolds through the eyes of Gwalchmai. He describes his family, his childhood and the politics of Britain including Arthur. Gwalchmai finds it a struggle to keep up with the other boy warriors and becomes entangled in his mother's (Morgawse) black magic. Eventually he escapes her clutches and eventually after some adventure he joins up with Arthur but is rejected and the tale of Britain's and his struggle continues through his eyes.

Kingdom of Summer is told through a young boy's eyes, a farmer's son. It tells of his meeting with Gwalchmai, his life in Arthur's Britain. Lastly in *Winter's Shadow* Gwynhfwfar is the narrator of the story. She tells of the downfall of Arthur and her part in it.

I found this a wonderful book with the characters and places brought alive. Gillian Bradshaw weaves together romance, mystery, witchcraft, battlecraft and gives even the minor characters depth.

Susan Gaitley



# THE ARTHURIAN TAROT COURSE, a quest for all seasons

by Caitlin Matthews

The Arthurian Tarot Course takes the reader on an inner journey to follow the cycle of the seasons, exploring the paths of the Tarot in search of sacred treasures, guided by figures from Arthurian legends.

Described as a "path to renewal", this series of meditations, practical work and Tarot readings acts as a key to the harmonious interplay between the inner worlds and everyday life. It is a true Quest.

One is dealing with the Arthur of the heart, the Logres of imagination; encountering people, creatures and landscapes from myth and romance, a poetic and magical approach to "the matter of Britain" in which the healing of the wasted lands extends through all creation.

If one were to follow the suggested time-scale, the quest would last for a year and a day; although there is no limit on the length of the quest. Having reached the halfway stage at the Autumn Equinox, I have found this course informative, insightful and yes, a path to renewal. The quest has opened new doors to understanding of both myself and of the Arthurian and Grail mysteries, and of the traditions which underlie them.

Those familiar with "The Arthurian Tarot" and "Hallowquest" by the same author will find new material here. Speaking as one who was never lucky enough to attend the "Hallowquest" course, now, people are doing it for themselves, thanks to Caitlin's book. Get it, and begin to enjoy the terrors and the mysteries.

Wolfe van Brussel

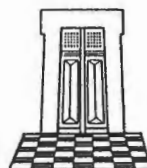
# IN SEARCH OF HERNE THE HUNTER

by Eric L. Fitch  
Capall Bann, 1994,  
ISBN: 1-898307-237,  
167 pages, softback, £9.95.

Herne is the ghostly antlered rider of Windsor Great Park and is the subject of much fun in Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*. He was the bogeyman used to frighten children of the Windsor district into obedience in the past. What else is there to say? A great deal it seems, and the author of this book takes his reader on a fascinating quest through history and prehistory, through literature, reportage and hearsay, and through folklore, myth and legend in search of this enigmatic figure.

On page 138 is a web diagram which shows the four main areas of investigation: the oak tree and its associations; antlers and prehistoric religion; the wild hunt; and Woden and self-sacrifice. A cornucopia of topics spill out from these main themes and the diagram illustrates their interrelationships: ley lines, fairy paths, ghosts, shamanism, stags, masks and disguises, the Green Man and the Tree of Life to name a few. This disparate material is kept under tight control and all the strands lead back to the main subject. Remarkable modern sightings of Herne and the Wild Hunt are recorded and the appendices present interesting extracts from poetry and an opera of 1887 in which Herne appears. There are well chosen illustrations: line drawings, photographs, a map and a splendidly evocative cover. A chronology and extensive bibliography complete an excellent study of this shadowy archetypal figure which has lived in our monarchs' backyard for centuries. It is to be hoped that the Queen's plans to drill for oil in Windsor Great Park will not rouse the Wild Hunt in protest!

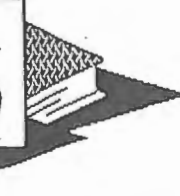
Fred Stedman-Jones



# Book



# Views



This column aims to inform you about new books, publishers' lists, privately printed publications and whatever else is likely to interest Arthurian bookworms.

## SOME TITLES:

1. *The Celtic Druids' Year*, Seasonal Cycles of the Ancient Celts, John King (Blandford). King is a bard of the Cornish Gorsedh; he examines the roots of druidic lore and then the Celtic seasons and festivals. He revises Graves's associations for the tree alphabet and reconstructs the mythical cycle of the Celtic year. Well researched, excellent biblios. A useful aid for those who wish to follow the Celtic tradition. Hbk. 240pp, ISBN: 0-7137-2461-7, £15.99. Pbk. ISBN: 0-7137-2463-3.

2. *Celtic Lore and Druidic Ritual*, Rhiannon Ryall (Capall Bann). The author has also written 'West Country Wicca' and this is where she stands: this book is a system of 'Inner Knowledge Celtic Wicca' spiced with druidic and Arthurian ideas which will appeal to those already following the wiccan path. Put inverted commas around Celtic and Druidic. ISBN: 1-898307-24-5. Pbk. 165pp, £9.95.

3. *The Art of Celtia*, Courtney Davis, (Blandford). This book was reviewed in XXIII/4. Now available in paperback. ISBN: 07137-2307-6. £9.99.

4. *Iona*, Fiona Macleod, (Floris Books). 'A few places in this world are to be held holy, because of the love which consecrates them and the faith which enshrines them. Of these is Iona.' A classic book, it captures the essence of this sacred Celtic isle. ISBN: 0-86315-500-6. 176pp, Pbk. £4.95.

5. *Robin Hood*, A complete study of the English Outlaw, Dr. Stephen Knight, (Blackwell). An analytic account of this mythic figure, the English outlaw hero who has symbolised resistance to authority around the world for over 500 years. Contains a list of all references to Robin Hood from before 1600. Ranges from early village plays and games to Hollywood and TV. Pbk. ISBN: 0631-1948-6, 256pp. £13.99.

6. *King Arthur and the Grail Quest*, Myth and Vision from Celtic Times to the Present, John Matthews (Blandford). In this handsome volume John surveys the dual themes of the hero figure Arthur and the mystic quest object-the Grail, and analyses how these themes changed and developed down the ages, becoming inextricably joined together. He retells five of the stories himself. Illustrated profusely with

maps, colour photographs, line reproductions from the classic Arthurian illustrators and with nine atmospheric paintings by Steven Brown. This is a must for your shelves for Christmas. Hbk. ISBN: 0-7137-2437-4, 159pp, £16.99pp.

7. *The Sacred Ring*, Michael Howard, (Capall Bann). Mike is the Editor of *Cauldron* a well-written magazine covering earth mysteries, myth, and pagan themes at an informed level. This book explores the pagan origins of British folk festivals and customs. These activities are seen as a survival of the ancient concept of a seasonal cycle based on the sacredness of the land and the earth. Thought-provoking, a good read. Pbk. ISBN 1-898-307-28-8. £9.95.

8. *Pilgrim Ways*, The Grand Pilgrimage to St Davids, John Sharkey (from Ancient Landscapes, Teg-y-Pistyll, Glanrhyd, Cardigan, Dyfed, SA43 3PA). Covers the ideas of pilgrimage and relics, and traces the old pilgrim route from North to South Wales, including Padarn's cross, shrines at wells, St Dogmael's Abbey, the road to Nevers (see: *Talking Head*) and the Gwaun Valley crosses. St Davids was considered such a holy place that two pilgrimages there equalled one to Rome. John Sharkey will be known to readers as the author of *Celtic Mysteries* in the Thames & Hudson 'Art & Imagination' Series. 52pp, £5.50.

9. *Arthur, High King of Britain*, Michael Murpago (Pavilion: National Trust). A powerful retelling of the Arthurian legends, I would say for children but the author states that he wishes to avoid "childish writing for children". Described by a *Sunday Times* critic as 'perhaps more of a wallow than a distillation' it will appeal to a wide range-range of people with a taste for fantasy and epic. £12.99.

10. *Sir Gawain & the Lady of Lys*, Arthurian Romances unrepresented in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, No. 7, translated by Jessie L. Weston, (Llanerch Press). This is one of two titles already available from the seven facsimile reprints to be published by this splendidly enterprising publisher. The translations are of Wauchier de Denain's section of the *Conte del Graal*. First published by David Nutt in 1907. We are to have also: *Gawain & the Green Knight*; *Tristan & Isolt*; *Guingamor*, *Lanval*, *Tyolet and the Were-Wolf*; *Le Bisclavret*; *Morien*, *Le Beus Desconnus*, *Cliges*; *Sir Gawain & the Grail Castle* A treasure. Pbk., 103pp, ISBN: 1-897853-34-3, £5.95. Very collectable.

11. *Pendragon*, Stephen Lawhead, (Lion Books).



The fourth book in Stephen's *Pendragon Cycle*. Tells the story of Arthur from his young years as seen through the eyes of Myrddin Emrys. Arthur forges a bond with the Irish through his marriage to Queen Gwenhwyvar, a warrior in her own right. ISBN:07459 27637, £4.99.

#### ♥ LISTS AND LIBRARIES

1.. *Minstergate Bookshop, York*. This catalogue, *The Arthurian Legends*, published in November, lists over 1000 items of rare and scholarly books, including original texts and critical works relating to Arthurian literature, folklore and the historical background. Most of the books are first editions and prices reflect this naturally, this is an antiquarian specialist bookshop. The handsome catalogue is 158 pages and will be sent if you contact: The Minster Gate Bookshop, 8 Minster Gates, York, YO1 2HL. Fax: 0904 622960; Tel: 0904 621812.

2.. *Capall Bann Publishing*, have added quite a few titles to their list recently and they are tending to get more folklore and legend titles in addition to the New Age books. Member Eric Fitch's *In Search of Herne the Hunter* was published recently and Jon Day commissioned a Celtic border for the book from Simon Rouse. This will be available as one of their new range of black and white posters. Address: Freshfields, Chieveley, Berks, RG16 8TF.

3. *The Arthurian Catalogue*, Clwyd Library and Information Service's Arthurian Collection has now been catalogued, thanks to a British Library cataloguing grant. It includes an author sequence and a title index. It is a valuable tool for anyone interested in Arthurian and related material. ISBN: 1859910025. Title: *The Arthurian Collection: A Catalogue*, send cheque for £15.95 and postage (UK: £1.25; International:surface mail £2, airmail £5) payable to: *Clwyd County Council*. Address: Library & Information Service, County Civic Centre, Mold, Clwyd, CH7 6NW.

#### ♥ LEARNING CORNISH

*Taves Kernewek*, (Cornish Language Board) holds four grades of examinations, including GCSE, and is responsible for the production of dictionaries, grammars, etc.

*Kowethas an Yeth Kernewek* (Cornish Language Fellowship) organises social activities, and a monthly magazine *An Gannas* (The Messenger). They also sell books and language and music tapes. *Kowethas* has published some amusing and irreverent short stories by Jowann Richards called *An Gwirynedh yn Kever Myrddin* (The Truth about Merlin). *Sterlester dhe'n Norvys Nowydh* (Starship to the New World) by Michael Palmer is published by KDL and is a Sci-Fi reworking of Arthur and the Atlantis myth. So, how can you learn Cornish and enjoy these delights? *Kernewek dre Lyther* or KDL (Cornish by letter) is a correspondence

course organised by Ray Edwards, 6 Halton Road, Sutton Coldfield, B73 6NP. Pellgowser (telephone): 021 354 6249.

Thanks to member Colin Ellis, who distributes the Cornish Language Fellowship books, for the above information. List: Colin Ellis, Ashley House, Grampound Road, Truro, TR2 4DY.

9. *THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY AWARDS*: B.T.Batsford were the only publisher to have two books listed among the final five titles: *Timber Castles and The English Heritage Book of Glastonbury* by Philip Rahtz. Quote (Charles Thomas in *British Archaeological News*): '*Glastonbury* is simply a masterpiece'. We told you so in XXIV/1.

#### 9. OHMS BOOKS

This government department publish books of archaeological interest, in Scotland and Ireland as well as England and Wales. A recent title illustrating exciting new techniques is *Patrick, the Archaeology of a Saint*. Metal detectors were used to recover finds from river dredgings and these illuminated the metalworking traditions of Armagh. The book deals with the material manifestations of Patrick's cult. Published for the Ulster Museum, 70pp, 51 pictures, Pbk.£7.95. Write for information about this and other HMSO books: 49 High Holborn, London, WC1 6HB.

#### 9. THE LIGHT OF CELTIA

This is the title of a book of Simon Rouse's fine Celtic Art that will be available early next year.

#### 10. BOOKWORM

Andrew Brenner, the producer of this new BBC1 programme which is currently showing on Sundays, visited us in September to discuss Arthurian books. He also joined us at the Cardiff Day. To date we have no further news of when the programme will focus on Arthur.



#### PENDRAGON ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Publication date for next issue, March 31st. Copy should be submitted by 1st March. Rates: £20 per page and pro rata, minimum 1/4 page. Copy of journal with advert inserted:£1. Reduced rates for Society members: £14 page and pro rata. These rates are for camera-ready copy on A4 size paper reducing to A5 format.



#### ★ ARTHUR OF THE BRITONS

Susan Gaitley reminded us of this TV series last time and asked if anyone has tapes she could borrow. Morgana Le Fay and others have written since with similar queries: it seems the series was much appreciated. I wrote to HTV for information but there are no plans to repeat the series at the moment and no videos have been officially issued: it is copyright material, of course. Here is some information about 'Arthur of the Britons':

Two series of 12 programmes were made, 24 in all, in 1972 and 1973, by HTV West; Executive Producer Patrick Dromgoole, Producer Peter Miller, Chief Scriptwriter Terence Feeley. The series won the Writers' Guild of GB Award for the best original drama script of 1972-3 and was repeated on network tv in 1983. The series cost £500,000 (money was money in those days) and was mainly filmed in the West Country where two stockaded encampments were recreated - one Celtic, one Saxon. The Celtic village was constructed beside a lake at Woodchester near Stroud in Gloucestershire (a site claimed as the true 'Camelot' by some today). Oliver Tobias starred as Arthur and his chief lieutenants were Llud (Jack Watson) and Kai (Michael Gothard). Some familiar faces appeared as guest performers in the episodes; perhaps some were not as familiar then while others may be forgotten now: Peter Copley (Berthold), Ian Cuthbertson (Bavick), Esmond Knight (Athe), Alfie Bass (Trader), Bernard Bresslaw (Saxon Leader), Tom Chadbon (Spy), Rupert Davies (Cerdig), Tom Baker (Brandreth / Gavron), Michael Gambon (Roland), Martin Jarvis (Karn), Brian Blessed (Mark of Cornwall).

The publicity claimed; 'Historians know little that is factual about this period in our history moreso then, of course) but upon one thing they are agreed:the legendary picture of Arthur is a fantasy. The truth was different. Camelot was an unlovely encampment of log and thatch within cunning defences. Arthur's supreme achievement was not in creating an era of untarnished justice:and chivalry, but in holding back for many decades the rapacious Saxon invaders. To do so he had to be a masterly general,

cunning and perhaps ruthless. He had to be a man who could inspire the feuding Celtic tribes to follow his banner and his sword into a series of battles. This is the man HTV sought to create. We do not pretend these television stories are based on fact, they are as fictitious as all other Arthurian myths. They differ only in that they stay firmly within the bounds of historical possibility.'

To give you some idea of the storylines, here are summaries of three of the episodes:

**The Gift of Life:** A Saxon attack leaves Arthur's village in flames. More trouble appears to be approaching when a Saxon longboat is spotted on the river. Its only occupants are two small, frightened children - a situation that is destined to take Kai on a hazardous journey. (The longboat was a faithful 30' replica built for the programme.)

**The Duel:** Arthur, Kai and Llud learn that the Celts are under severe pressure from the Saxons in a big battle far to the north of their camp. They persuade Mark of Cornwall to ride with them to help the Celts. They are ten men only but all experienced horsemen, and ten horsemen are worth 50 men on foot. On the way Llud accidentally kills Mark's battle leader. In a rage. Mark wants to fight a duel with Llud to avenge his favourite warrior's death, but already the ten men have become nine and Llud and Mark are forced to agree to do battle with the Saxons first. Then they will fight to the death...

**Daughter of the King:** When the wildcat Eithna falls into his hands Arthur is confident that he has the trump card that will force her father, the rebellious and savage Bavick to stop murdering his fellow Celts. But, for once, Arthur is outwitted - for Bavick is as cunning as he is cruel.

Arthur's Song  
'Leader of the Celts and bold, Swift of mind,  
in spirit proud, Young in limb in wisdom old,  
Deadly as a thundercloud, What my people have  
they hold, Never will our heads be bowed,  
Arthur!'

The series was seen as a brand-new treatment of Arthur after the armoured knights of contemporary Hollywood epics. Today it may be seen as a lively precursor of 'Robin of





Sherwood' which appeared around the time of the repeat broadcasts of 'Arthur' in 1983. (An Arrow paperback, 'Arthur of the Britons' by Rex Edwards, based on the tv series, was published by Tandem Books in their children's Arrow series in 1975. (ISBN 0426 10540 0). Long out of print, you'll have to hunt in Oxfam shops and car boot sales for a copy.)

#### ★ PRINCE VALIANT

Morgan le Fay also asks about the cartoon series of Prince Valiant which have been repeated on Sunday mornings on BBC2. She asks if the scripts were taken from a book or from 'various sources'. As I mentioned in XXIV/2, they are based on Hal Foster's newspaper comic strip (1937-). They are a production of Hearst Entertainment distribution Inc. and distributed in the UK by VCI Distribution Ltd, 36 Caxton Way, Watford, Herts, WD1 8UF. The series features the voices of Efrem Zimbalist Jnr as King Arthur and Samantha Eggart as Queen Guinevere. These episodes will be prepared as outlines & storyboards by the production team and any books would be write-ups from the films, rather than the reverse.

#### ★ THE SPACEMAN & KING ARTHUR

BBC1, 20th August, USA 1979 (90 mins). Yet another version of A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur, this time by Disney. A space shuttle goes wrong on its testflight and launches young Nasa technician Tom Trimble on a time trip to you know where. Described by the Radio Times as an 'easy-going comedy for children, attractively cast and harmless', I must have been watching in a sour frame of mind or the reviewer hadn't seen the film at all. Kenneth More, ill and playing his last role, just learns his lines as Arthur and is supported by John le Mesurier playing Gawain as Sergeant Wilson. Jim Dale as Mordred is miscast and even Merlin, played as a villain by Ron Moody, cannot save the day. A vehicle for silliness and

stunt work, it reeks of 'it's only for children' condescension. Misnamed, it should have been called 'Carry on Camelot'.

#### ★ LANCELOT DU LAC

Robert Bresson's film was first seen at Cannes in 1974 and is now on release on the cinema circuit. Alby Stone didn't mention it in XXIII/3 and I haven't seen it, so I must rely on The Sunday Times assessment: 'Bresson creates his own Arthurian world, concentrating attention on the crisis of spirituality which eventually destroys the brotherhood of the Round Table.' The knights have returned to Camelot without the Holy Grail, their numbers seriously depleted, and Lancelot tries to renounce Guinevere because of his oath to God'. Mordred is determined to implicate them and the fall of Arthur's Logres is inevitable. The Times review adds, 'the visual style is austere and Bresson's use of colour detaches the action from reality.' We invite members to write a review for our next edition.

#### ★ THE DEATH OF ARTHUR

Naxos, known for its budget classical music CDs has launched a range of Audiobooks (tape and CD). A total of 25 classics will be available by the end of the year from record shops, stores and bookshops. Already available for Christmas is *The Death of Arthur* (NA300112 - 3 CDs, £8.99; NA3000114 - 3 Cassettes, £7.49.) Gregorian chant introduces Philip Madoc's superb reading of Sir Thomas Malory.

*I am advised by a member that W.H. Smith have produced a series of videos on British history which includes one on The Age of Arthur. If members would help me to bring such information to the notice of our readership I would be delighted to give full details of titles, identification numbers, prices and a brief summary of content. As a private individual living in the country, I am reliant on our membership to cover the Arthurian market. Firms do not automatically send me details of their products but I am always willing to follow up leads.*

#### ★ BRITANNIA

This Arthurian re-enactment society was founded four years ago by Dan Shadrake of Basildon and his brother Matthew of Billericay and it meets at Pitsea Hall Country Park. The Society researches and re-enacts the Arthurian period, focussing their activities on the late 4th to early 6th century. Members are playing royal guards in the film *First Knight*, starring Richard Gere and Sean Connery, which is due to be released next summer. Britannia members have appeared on the cinema screen before, some of them played Celts in the Robin Hood epic *Prince of Thieves*, starring Kevin Costner. Readers of

*King Arthur the True Story* by Phillips & Keatman will recall that an illustration appendix of six line drawings is included in the book. These show Dan Shadrake's research conclusions and reflect accurately the costumes worn by members of the Britannia Society.

#### ★ PENDRAGON

Jeremy James Taylor, the Artistic Director of the National Youth Music Theatre, has sent me the press cuttings of the this wonderfully successful show at Edinburgh in August. (See Letters). Here are some extracts:

**The Stage:** NYMT created pure magic...a marvellous production which kept a full house applauding rapturously until the house lights were eventually brought up. There are no gimmicks in the fantastic staging. It is all done with superb lighting and effects, an excellent multi-purpose set and 26 scenes without a break in just under two hours...Pendragon traces Arthur's life from birth to the Round Table and Camelot.

**Weekend:** Pendragon represents a remarkable company achievement. It is concise, vivid and atmospheric, clearly establishing its parallel narratives of the Arthurian period and of a young king reaching moral maturity and recognising the fragility of political power..

**Evening News:** Mists roll, good battles evil, while above a scaly dragon swoops and hunts its human prey. The plot explores the legends and myths that surround the early years of Arthur Pendragon as High King of Britain and the dark, mystical atmosphere is like an early medieval tapestry come to life.

**Sunday Times, Scotland:** This is a stormer of a show, it races along at speed, carrying all before it...twelve year old Hayley Gelling is a sulky faced delight as the young Morgan Le Fay. When the despot king banishes her baby brother Arthur, and this wee purple-clad waif stands there in a pool of light, surrounded by the forces of darkness clutching her rag doll, she would bring a tear to the eyes of Michael Portillo.

**Times Educational Supplement:** Memorable passages abound: Morgan le Fay was obviously a great hit, she is described as stalking beneath her fantastic stick-puppet raven. The convention of the falcon which carries Arthur from boyhood to manhood is particularly effective and atmospheric music adds to the chill of the Dark Ages...The spellbinding scene in the convent where, working at their tapestry, the girls sing a shimmering version of 'Adam lay y-bounden...Uther Pendragon's last battle is a fine piece of opera and the crucial drawing of the sword from the stone is a consummate piece of theatrical trickery.

**Weekend:** The stage was invaded by huge ragged ravens and a magnificent skeletal dragon.

**Courier & Advertiser:** There were some wonderful moments, most notably the battle scene played in mask, and the slaying of the dragon...When Excalibur flew through the air the hairs on the back of my neck were on end - it was such a magical piece of theatre.

**Times Ed. Supp:** Above all, the audience are left with the feeling that the cast really possess their roles, for they act with conviction and genuinely communicate the passions and fears of these epic characters. Match this fervour with the practised stage-work, and you have a combination of devotion and discipline that makes this *Pendragon* such a national treasure.

*I am sure we are all delighted to hear of the success of these talented young people and their devoted teachers and of the honour they have brought to the name of Pendragon. I hope to see the production next year, either in London or Edinburgh. If the Hammersmith performances take place we'll arrange a Pendragon meet-up.*

#### ★ STORY-TELLING

Hugh Lupton's appearance at Cardiff and his telling of two Gawain stories reminded me that members may wish to know more about this art form. Membership of the Society for Storytelling is open to anyone who has an interest in storytelling, whether teller, listener, amateur or professional. It provides information, stories, storytellers and news of story telling events. Members receive a quarterly newsletter and enjoy reduced rates for society publications. The Society is currently compiling a directory of storytellers. Write to: The Secretary, 8 Bert Allen Drive, Old Leake, Boston, Lincs. (SAE please) Tel:0205 871359.

#### ★ CELTIC MIST

Member Hilary Rushmer (see advert on back cover) reports that recordings of her harp music have been used extensively on radio programmes recently: by the World Broadcasting Service to







Russia, by Radio Scotland for a programme on the Celts and on the BBC1 holiday programme. Sales of her cassettes and CD are booming and members are advised that it is more economical to buy these recordings from Hilary direct than from other agencies and shops. Why not fill your house with Celtic harp music over Christmas/Yule?

#### ★ ARTS & CRAFTS

A few suggestions for smaller items for Christmas/Yuletide presents - yourself?

1. **Twelve Celtic Bookmarks** by Co Spinhoven. Dover publication, 90p. ISBN 0486-279448. Published by Constable & Co in this country.
2. **Celtic Gift Boxes** by Muncie Hendler. Also from Dover via Constable. Easy to assemble punch-out boxes, pre-scored, with matching gift tags. £4.40. Try art and novelty shops.
3. **King Arthur's Camelot** pop-up book and four colourful mini-books of Arthurian stories for children. All for £1.95 when you join The Red House children's bookclub. Ring: Freephone 0800 406040.
4. **Guinevere, Queen of Camelot, goes a'Maying Jigsaw**. An attractive circular, 500 piece jigsaw. Diameter 19". £3.99. From Studio Cards & Gifts, Preston. You'll have to ring up and register as an 'agent' to get their colourful catalogue of cards and gifts before you can order it, but that's no problem. Information: 0254 302222. (Item code no is: 21-34-97W)
5. **Arthurian Bookmarks, banners, posters, pencils**. These are by Library Suppliers, LFC Despatch Line, Freepost, Phoenix House, Dennington Road, Wellingborough, NN8 2BR. This is really a wholesale supplier, but readers who are school teachers, club leaders, Akelas, etc, may find buying in bulk to be a possibility. The Society may be able to offer bookmarks to members in the next journal.

6. **Arthurian Sculpture**. This is a reminder that members Rodney and Eleri Munday, who were at Cardiff with a display on October 8th, have some very attractive smaller pieces in their cold cast marble/stone range. The Round Table paperweight is excellent value at £5. Ring: 027984 2154.

7. **Acres Wild Celtic & Pagan cards, prints and posters** of Herne, Runes, Dragons, Green Man, Earth Goddess, etc. A wheel calendar of the natural year is also available. Address: The Maples, Norwich Road, Carleton Rode, Norfolk, NR16 1RX.

8. **1995 Celtic Calendar**. 12 beautiful full colour interface designs and a three page introduction by David James editor of 'Celtic Connections'. £5.00 (UK), £7.50 (Europe). From: David James, Sycamore Cottage, Waddon, Nr. Portesham, Weymouth, DT3 4ER.

9. **Gaulish Tree Calendar**. Delightful lunar tree calendar based on the Coligny system. Each month has a tree assigned and a prayer to the appropriate deity. Published by The Druid Group of Gaul. Write to: M. Pierre Petitjean, B.P.5, 58660 Coulanges-les-Nevers, France.

10. **Green Man T-Shirts, Plaques, Pendants**. The plaque and pendant are polymer cast in green and black and burnished with bronze. Plaque £15, Pendant £4, plus post. From: Stardust Designs, 30 Chadwick Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 1NF. Inquiries: 081-989 5273.

#### ★ COURSES & EVENTS

December 16-18, 1994. **Winter Solstice Celebrations**. Council of British Druid Orders. At Gaunts House, Dorset. A great Yuletide event for all the family: harpists, lectures, ley hunting, bards, dowsers, white oxen, chanting, storytelling, troubadours, circle dancing, crafts, etc, etc.

Ring for details: 0793 644980.

December 21. **Celtic Warriors, Fact & Fiction**. The 2nd Royal Archaeological Institute Christmas lecture, given by Barry Cunliffe. Adults only admitted if accompanied by a child. Ticket only event, from: RAI, c/o Soc. of Antiquities, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1V 0HS. £2 child, £3.50 adult.

January 15th, 1995. **Teutonic Religion and the Northern Tradition**. Open lecture on pagan religions, Odhinism, Asatura, Norse Goddess, Rune Magic, Viking Battle Group, Norse jewellery. 13.00 hrs. The Pavilion Suite, The Connaught Hotel, Tottenhall Rd, Wolverhampton. (On the A41, free parking).

January 27-29. **King Arthur in Myth & Legend**. Weekend Course, Missenden Abbey, Bucks. Michael Spittal. Inquiries: 0494 890296.

25th February. **King Arthur: History & Folklore**. A Saturday school, Dr Juliette Wood. Extramural Office, The University, London Road, Reading, RG1 5AQ. Details & booking:

Reading 318347.

March 18-25. **Ellyllon Knights Campaign**. Gareth Jones (Beaumains) offers 'A Week with King Arthur, or 'an intensive roleplay campaign using Chaosium's *King Arthur Pendragon* game'. Gareth will cook for the group - he almost got to the final rounds of tv's *Masterchef*, so be warned!

Apr. 15-22. **The Western Mysteries - Which Way?** A Findhorn Conference, with Bob Stewart, the Matthews, Marian Green, etc, etc. The Findhorn Foundation, Cluny Hill College, Forres, IV36 ORD, Scotland. Tel: (0309) 673655.

#### ★ ARCHAEOLOGY

**Icewoman**: A woman's mummified body, dating from 500-350 BC has been discovered in a hollowed-out larch tree in a log chamber ten feet deep in the Altai Mountains on Russia's border with China. A Scythian of the Pazyryk culture, she was wearing a long white dress with two red stripes, a matching blouse and a fancy felt hat. Her arms were tattooed with mythological animals. Unfortunately, Russian archaeologists do not have the facilities or resources for long-term preservation of the remains. Why not let those who do have care of her? (National Geographic, October 1994.)

**Phoenicians in Cornwall**: A lively interchange of letters about the discovery of Mediterranean coins in Cornwall appears in edition No.140 of *Current Archaeology* (Sept/Nov. 1994).

**Archaeological Organisations**: Members interested in archaeology and the care of Britain's historic environment may wish to send for information about the activities of the following organisations:

**The Council for British Archaeology (CBA)**, Bowes Morrell House, 111 Walmgate, York, YO12UA. **The Royal Archaeological Institute**, The Assistant Secretary, c/o Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1V 0HS.

#### ★ ARTHURIAN TAPESTRIES

The Daily Telegraph for November 17th reported that Sir Andrew Lloyd-Webber had paid £842,000 at Christie's for four tapestries designed by Sir Edward Byrne-Jones depicting Arthurian legends. Woven in silk and wool, the tapestries illustrate Sir Galahad's Pursuit of the Holy Grail. The Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery had raised £45,000 to buy the cheapest of the tapestries, *The Failure of Sir Lancelot*, to match five others from a second set. It sold for £139,000! The Foundation was aiming to secure these treasures so that they could be seen by as many people as possible. Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber is now probably the most powerful buyer of Victorian art in the world. His bid was received by telephone from an

unknown caller in New York. The full set of these tapestries, woven in 1898-99, was last auctioned in 1953 when they fetched 370 guineas at Christie's. Only four of the original six were on offer this time. Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber is a patron of the National Youth Musical Theatre, in 1992 he wrote: "I hope that in addition to financial support I can take more than a passing interest in an organisation that has a thrilling future". Wouldn't it be exciting if his contemplation of Byrne-Jones's wonderful tapestries should remind him of the NYMT's *Pendragon* and inspire him to turn it into a megashow? Quite a small share in the royalties would ensure that this national theatre for young people could survive to serve generations of gifted children still in their cradles. Just a lovely dream?

#### ★ ESSEX-CALIBUR

Amateur historian Alan Goldsmith is vice-chairman of the Essex Tourism Association. He has recently declared that Colchester (Camulodunum) was Camelot. He says that when the Romans pulled out of Colchester in AD407 they left a rearguard under the command of General Arturius whose exploits soon earned him the title of King - hence King Arthur. So, are the Essex folk happy to claim the once and future king as their own? It's difficult to decide.

Stuart Johnson and his friends of the Colchester Historical Enactment Society are furious. They point out that Colchester already has a well-documented historical past which includes Boudicca and William the Conqueror, "while Camelot can by no means be claimed to





people of the West and Wales. But..wasn't that after those beastly Saxons came..?

*Postscript:* National historians once claimed that Old King Coel founded Colchester and in 1076 Eudo the Steward built the castle of Colchester on the foundations of Coel's palace. In 1782 Gibbons dismissed him as fictitious. King Coel of Colchester probably never existed but for seven centuries it suited Essex local patriotism to believe that he did: the good people of Colchester have not always been so critical of the possibility of legendary Celtic kings passing among them.

#### ★ TWO KING ARTHURS ?

Messrs Wilson and Blackett of Cardiff have been pouring over old manuscripts again in their persistent belief that historians have been misinterpreting them for political and religious reasons and thus obscuring the truth about Arthur. They now claim there were two Arthurs, related but living six generations apart in time. The first, a son of Maxim Wledig, lived in the 4th century and distinguished himself in European battles - besieging Paris and killing the Emperor Gratian.

The second Arthur was killed by savages in North America, where many British people had escaped after a comet hit this country, led by Arthur and his brother Prince Madoc in the 6th Century. Arthur's body was wrapped in deerskin and sent back to South Wales where it is buried near Bridgend. (Hitherto a place only distinguished by my having passed my driving test there.) These writers succeeded in getting compensation from the Arts Council of Wales because that body unfairly refused them a grant to help publish their *research*: a fact they could prove because they had glued together certain pages of their manuscript before submitting it and these had not been opened when it was received back from academic judgement with scathing remarks.

But this is not all: these re-writers of early Welsh history have also revived the old legend that Helen of Wales, wife of Maxen Wledig, was also the Empress Helena who found the True Cross in Jerusalem c.325 AD. She toured Wales with a fragment of this holy relic, building the ancient roads (Sarn Helen) in order to do so. Finally she deposited the relic in a sealed chamber in a rockface at Nevern, near the Pembrokeshire coast. There's more yet! The two historians shared this secret with a Reverend Kenneth Long of Phoenix, Arizona and he went to Nevern at night and damaged the stonework behind which he believes the holy relic lies in an inner chamber. He was reprimanded by Cadw and forbidden further access to the site.

*My thanks to Chris Barber for keeping us up to date with this important research, we look forward to hearing more. Meanwhile, to return*

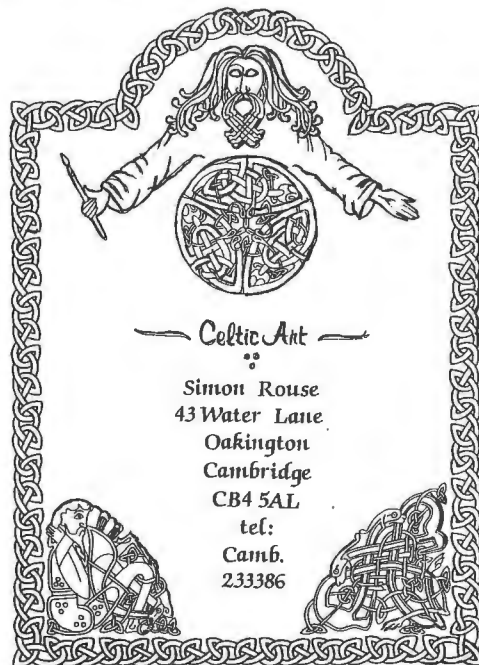
*to an earlier theme, surely there would be a fortune in this material if it were written up as fiction? But the search for truth was ever the scholar's quest: Vincit omnia veritas!*

#### ★ THE MISTS OF AVALON

In talking to Andrew Brenner of Bookworm (see *Booknews*, I told him about Ken Livingstone's interest in Marion Bradley's novel. On Radio 4's *A Good Read*, 23rd November, gardener Geoff Hamilton and Ken discussed the novel with Edward Blishen. We'll summarise the main points of their discussion next time. I also mentioned Anne Rouse's interest in T.H.White and he visited her at Cambridge. If you get a contract I'll expect 10% for our funds, Anne!

#### ★ KING ARTHUR'S MEADERY

Beryl Mercer has sent me the full colour menu of the above establishment which is to be found near Falmouth and Pendennis Castle. On the cover a romantic Arthur figure draws the sword from the stone right opposite what looks like a converted chapel but is labelled *King Arthur's Meadery*. The fare includes these 'Royal Platters': hickory smoked wild bison steaks, applewood smoked wild boar (shades of Obelix!) and mesquite smoked venison (Beryl's comments). Chips feature heavily on the menu: I wonder how these go down with mead? It looks a worthy banqueting hall for Pendragons journeying west. Address: Budock Water, Near Falmouth. Tel:0326 377010.



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**Addendum:** This paragraph is missing from the top of page 44:

"while Camelot can by no means be claimed to have any historical accuracy". Colchester's marketing manager, Karen Elmer, is scornful, too, "Arthur is a figure of myth and legend", she says, "whereas we in Colchester have many historical attractions which people can actually see and touch." Not a very impressive examination of Alan Goldsmith's claim and wasn't there a certain Thomas who judged only by what he could see and touch?

But there is another layer of irony in this rejection of Arthur as Essex man. Elsewhere in this journal we read of *Brittania*, the leading Arthurian enactment society, sought out by Hollywood itself and composed of Essex men. More, King Arthur Pendragon who appears regularly on our tv screens is very critical of the English government's oppression of the poor and needy whom he seems to equate with the 'Celts'. He knows he is Arthur reborn and he is the very personification of Estuarian East Saxon man. Can the County Historian of Somerset, Dr Bob Dunning, be right then when he says that the weakness in the Essex Man theory is that Arthur was a Celtic king and the Celts were the people of the West and Wales. But..wasn't that after those beastly Saxons came..?





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