pendragon

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EDITORIAL

Gornemant taught him
how to play the harp. Sweetly.
And would allow words
only in music.
So Perceval learned to pour
all his mind's passion
and heart's suffering
into the control of art.
(Harold Morland)

Our suggested theme of 'Arthur and the Arts' has focused into 'Arthur Centre Stage' because of an emphasis on Arthurian dramatic writing in the articles received.

It has been a great pleasure to discover Harold Morland's poem *The Matter of Britain,* which is reviewed by Steve Sneyd, himself a Northern poet. Morland is featured in our Booknews column together with Moyra Caldecott, a novelist based at Bath, whose titles include *The Green Lady and the King of Shadows*, which tells the story of the struggle between St. Collen and Gwynn ap Nudd on Glastonbury Tor and *The Winged Man*, a tale of Bladud, legendary founder of Bath and father of King Lear.

Our list of contributing writers is expanding continually and we are particularly pleased to print Mark Valentine's article on Merlin. A longtime Pendragon member, Mark was founder-editor of the prestigious holy wells magazine *Source,* which has recently been resurrected under new editorship. His book on Arthur Machen will be published later this year.

Professor Russell of Reading University is represented by an article on folktale and the theatre, an extract from a radio talk he gave on BBC3. Dr.Russell appeared on TV in February when he commented on the werewolf syndrome in the *Magic Animals* series narrated by Miranda Richardson.

Keith Pickett, Librarian of the Library of Avalon at Glastonbury, was with us on the Arthurian Day at Cardiff last October. He makes his Pendragon debut in splendid style with his witty *Pulp Fiction.*

My gratitude to the Production team members, as always, for their talented support.

Our thanks also to all those who have entrusted their creative writing to us; there is obviously considerable talent among our membership and we have been impressed by the range and standard of the poems and stories we have been privileged to read. It is still our firm intention to publish an anthology soon.

Special thanks to those subscribers who renew promptly and a warm welcome to those who have joined us since December.

As we go to press Professor Alcock's long-awaited report on the Cadbury excavations has appeared - incentive enough to look back on thirty years and to look forward to the next thirty years of putting Arthur firmly

CENTRE STAGE

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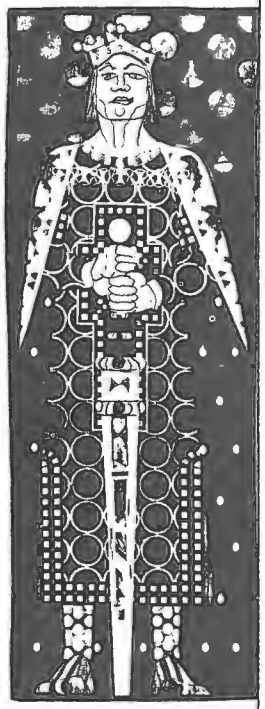

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WORDPLAY

For four Characters and a Chorus

First:
How to describe our innocent vice?
What noun collectively composses us?
Can terms be unearthed from any thesaurus,
Some synonym, acronym, marginal gloss?
Is there a lexicon, cryptic compendium
For Dark Age scholastics to open and wander in?
Second:
I have turned over pages and sought after words:
portmanteau words maybe, just like Pendragonry
(appealing by analogy with macho words like weaponry,
catching distant echoes of high magic and knighterrantry).
Third:
Then what about Pendragondom, or even Pendragoria?
(It's getting almost farcical, but hell! the more the merrier!)
The problem is they don't exist, they're just phantasmagorical,
although you must admit they sound as if they're allegorical.
Fourth:
To be frank, I much prefer the term Arthuriana,
rhyming with but vastly older than Victoriana.
And Arthurianophile's a good word to define us;
like a file we're full of facts, a phial of human kindness...
Epigram:
This wordplay's like swordplay:
verbal fencing
but beyond the pale.

Chris Lovegrove

prof. w.m.s. Russell Sir Gawain in Reading

The following article is a short extract from the transcript of a talk given by Professor Russell on BBC Radio 3 on 9th January, 1982. The Producer was Piers Plowright.

On the 30th June, 1979, while shopping in Reading, I happened to see a poster advertising a Summer Pageant, held in the ruins of Reading Abbey by Centra, a local organisation for promoting the arts. Having a few minutes to spare, I made my way to the Abbey ruins. When I arrived, an open-air play had just started. It was performed, I learned later, by the Reading Street Theatre. A sinister Black Knight was threatening to do terrible things to King Arthur and his court, which included ladies and children. They shouted back at him, but he finally left, assuring them of utter disaster unless they could solve a riddle: what does a woman want most? The courtiers went round the audience, collecting suggestions from the ladies; they included a washing-machine and a husband. None of it sounded very convincing. Just as Arthur and his people were despairing, a woman of horrifying ugliness appeared - it was really a very effective mask. She introduced herself as the Lady Ragnell, and offered to solve the riddle if one of the knights would marry her. The King's nephew, Sir Gawain, was elected. She then revealed that what a woman wants most is power over a man. The king and his people were now able to drive away the Black Knight, after tantalising him first with the wrong answer. But while they were celebrating, the ugly lady reappeared, and Gawain had to marry her. Left alone with him, she begged for a kiss and he finally gave her one, whereupon she turned out to be a delightful girl. She now asked whether he wanted her beautiful by day and ugly by night or vice versa. He left the choice to her, and thus completely freed her from the enchantment.

This little play was performed with great verve and enthusiasm. Considering the lack of a fixed script and the rather impromptu proceedings, it was surprisingly coherent and well coordinated. I greatly enjoyed it, and wished I could have stayed for the whole day.

Now the transformation of an ugly hag into a beautiful girl is a well-known folktale motif, called by folklorists the Loathly Lady. It goes back to early Irish legends, and crops up in Scottish, French, German, Scandinavian, Indian and Turkish folktales. In medieval Europe, it got attached to another motif, that of saving one's life by solving a riddle. In this sort of tale, the hero is himself saved by learning from the Loathly Lady the answer to the riddle: what does a woman want most? This version of the tale was used twice in medieval English literature, by John Gower in his *Tale of Florent*, and by Geoffrey Chaucer in his much better and better-known *Wife of Bath's Tale*. At some later stage, the Loathly Lady was fitted into the great cycle of legends about King Arthur, specifically the legends about Sir Gawain. In this version, it is King Arthur who is in danger, and Gawain saves him by marrying the Loathly Lady, who provides the answer to the riddle. This legend is found in two medieval English written sources. The first is a 15th-century verse romance surviving in a manuscript written in about 1500. This is called *The Wedding of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*. Here, slightly modernized, is King Arthur, reporting the answer to the riddle:

Here is our answer and that is all
That women desire most special,
Both of free and bond.
I say no more, but above all thing,

Women desire sovereignty, for that is
their liking,
And that is their most desire;
To have the rule of the manliest men.

The second source is a ballad, Bishop Percy found fragments of it in his 17th-century manuscript and printed it in his famous *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. But it is certainly older than the 17th century, and may be older than *The Wedding*. This ballad is called *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*. Here is Gawain, mulling over his final dilemma:

To have thee foul in the night
When I with thee should play –
Yet I had rather if I might
Have thee foul in the day.

But he ends up by leaving the choice to her,

Because thou art my own lady
Thou shalt have all thy will.

In *The Marriage* the Loathly Lady is unnamed, but otherwise the plots of the ballad and the romance are virtually identical. I needn't outline the plot, because it is the plot of the play I saw on that sunny June day in 1979, in the ruins of Reading Abbey.

The ballad is firmly located in a specific setting in Cumberland, and the romance was written in a dialect of the East Midlands. It was unlikely this tale was widely known in recent times in the South of England. So how did it get from the old sources to the delightful and spontaneous performance I saw? What was Sir Gawain doing in Reading?

Before I tell you of my search for an answer to this question, I want to say a little about a much wider question, which was occupying my mind at just that time, and still does. I was just preparing my first Presidential Address to the Folklore Society, which I duly delivered in March of the following year. I had taken as my subject the relations between folktales and the theatre. The performance in Reading Abbey was certainly not the first or last example of a play based on a folktale, or a folktale transmitted to a new public by a play. Reflecting on this, I was led to wonder how widely we can trace the influence of folktales in the history of the theatre. By folktales, I mean traditional narratives, handed down in speech and nearly always in writing. As Theodor Benfey wrote in 1859 in his translation of the *Panchatranta*, the great collection of Indian folktales, 'out of the literary works the tales went to the people, and from the people they returned, transformed, to literary collections, then back they went to the people again'. H.R. Ellis Davidson has called this 'the two-way traffic between written literature and oral folk tradition'.

Despite the large part played by written versions, spoken tradition at some stage is essential to the concept of the folktale. It's not enough for a tale to have been told before it is written. We know of one tale, with unusual precision, that it was told to a clergyman and three little girls in a boat on the Isis on July 4th 1862, before being written down and later printed. But we don't actually consider *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* a folktale. So at some stage in its life, a story should have been told orally to a considerable number of people, preferably far more than one generation, if it is to qualify as a folktale.

Now folktales are a very fundamental part of human culture; they transmit symbols and images over long periods. I believe all worthwhile works of drama, indeed of literature, have points of contact with folktales. But as I explored the connection, I realised how often folktale plots have been used quite directly as the plots of plays or operas: sometimes they have even been transferred direct from spoken tradition to the theatre.

There was even one **professional** folktale collector who made his mark in the history of world theatre. In July of the year A.D.1862, this collector was gathering folktales in the Gudbrandsdal, a long valley north-east of Bergen in Norway. His trip was financed by a very modest grant from the Norwegian Academic College. He found and made notes of a number of local legends. On his return, he wrote up four of these in a periodical, but he never completed a planned book on the subject. However, his collecting trip was not wasted. In 1867, he wrote the play that first established him as the greatest dramatist since Moliere. He was Henrik Ibsen, and the play was *Peer Gynt*.

As Ibsen told his publisher, Peer Gynt was a real person, who had lived some decades earlier in the Gudbrandsdal. Ibsen had heard him talked about, but hadn't been able to get much more legendary material about him than was already to be found in Asbjornsen's *Norwegian Fairy Tales*. However, it's clear that *Peer Gynt* was at least partly inspired by what Ibsen heard in the Gudbrandsdal. And it wasn't the last time Ibsen made use of folktales transmitted by spoken tradition. The *Lady From the Sea*, for instance, is based on legends Ibsen heard from local people while on holiday in the little fjord town of Molde, including one about a man with troll-power in his eyes, who bewitched a clergyman's wife to leave husband and children to go away with him.

I've shown that folktale plots have sometimes been transferred direct from spoken tradition to the theatre but of course dramatists have far more often taken them from written sources, especially from collections of folk tales. We've just seen that Ibsen himself used Asbjornsen. In Germany there have been at least one hundred and fifty dramatizations of tales from the Grimm collection. The story of Cinderella in Charles Perrault's collection of tales inspired seventeen operas, including Rossini's delightful *La Cenerentola*. The many Russian operas with folktale plots nearly all derive from the versions by Pushkin, including four *Rusalkas* and three *Tsar Saltans*.

It was against this panoramic background that I set about answering the question that met me in the ruins of Reading Abbey: how did the tale of Gawain and his loathly lady get from the medieval ballad and romance to the lively performance beneath the Abbey walls in 1979? Was it through spoken tradition or a written source? And if through a written source, was that in turn derived from the medieval poems?

I managed to find the director of the Reading Street Theatre, Chris Bertrand. He very kindly wrote and later talked to me at length, answering all my questions. The Street Theatre had been formed that year, almost entirely from members of the Reading Progress Theatre, both children and adults, attending his drama workshop. He called this particular production *Lady Ragnell* or *The Loathly Lady*. He told the story to the cast, and they then improvised it scene by scene and put it together. Finally, his source for the plot was a book he had read in his childhood, a paperback book for children about Arthur and his knights, by Roger Lancelyn Green. He had thought, rightly, it would make a good idea for his spontaneous kind of production.

I now had all the information I needed. To close the circle, I obtained Green's book. According to his opening note, his chapter on Sir Gawain and Lady Ragnell 'is based on a Middle-English poem and a ballad, and seems not to have been retold'. So there we have it. Several centuries after the legend took literary shape in the Midlands or the North, it has been transmitted by Green's book through Chris Bertrand to the members of the Reading Street Theatre themselves and to all their audiences. It must be becoming part of the folklore of Berkshire.

This is surely a fascinating new kind of transmission process. I'm glad to report that Chris Bertrand has continued to direct his Street Theatre. His more recent productions include plays about Perseus and the Pied Piper. Perseus came to him from such ancient sources as Apollodorus, as he came to most of us, through Charles Kingsley's *The Heroes*, remembered from his childhood. The Piper had a long history in German chronicles and European scholarly works before it got to Browning, who made him world-famous, and has now supplied him to Chris Bertrand. I'm sure Bertrand has introduced both these tales to many people for the first time; and I hope he'll continue long to transmit folktales to the people of Reading, along with a great deal of fun. But Perseus and the Pied Piper have been getting around the world in other ways for a long time; and I feel the Street Theatre's most spectacular achievement so far has been to bring Lady Ragnell to Reading, and so, in the fullness of time, to Radio 3.

Fred Stedman-Jones Arthurian Plays

Arthurian drama has not proved to be as fruitful as other literary genres, why this should be is debatable. Perhaps the scope of the material is too wide, dispersed and repetitive for the confines of the stage. Perhaps the scale of the action is better suited to the wide screen, which seems to have taken over in our own time: the stage can hardly compete with the visual impact of films like Boorman's *EXCALIBUR* - though the 19th century stage certainly did its best to provide spectacular productions of just about everything, from Charlemagne to the Indian Mutiny.

It may be significant that some of the more promising Arthurian dramatisations have narrowed their focus to the love triangles: Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere, and Tristram, Iseult and Mark. Merlin, too, has been observed occasionally with sympathy and insight: as something more than just a magician and a soothsayer (see: 'A Lost Classic : Binyon's Merlin' herein).

Critics of the playtexts tend to agree that few Arthurian plays have any great literary merit and this is probably true to a degree, but these pejorative judgements too often seem to be those of academics who write from the study armchair and have little interest in the theatre for which the plays are intended as blueprints of performances. It might be profitable for readers to analyse the content of a contemporary week's TV drama before we decide that our ancestors were naive to thrill, laugh or cry at the dramatic fare offered them by the theatre of their times: much of what we watch on the small screen today is melodrama or farce.

And this leads me to another qualification: the art of the Drama is wedded to the Art of the Theatre, which includes the power of the actor who shares with us the space, the very air we breathe. This is a very potent dynamic of the live theatre: there is ample evidence that great actors can elevate what may seem second-rate on paper to something magical in performance, (e.g. Henry Irving in *THE BELLS:* contemporary accounts by theatre historians make your toes curl!) Melodrama as a genre ranges from the naive and banal to merge with the spectrum of tragedy, as farce forms a continuum with comedy.

I'm making the argument that we do well to acknowledge that lesser-known scripts from other periods may still have the power to excite, move, amuse or elevate us when they are unlocked by skilled theatre practitioners. Contemporary theatre has 'rediscovered' a surprising number of 'dead' plays that I was studying in specially provided manuscripts as a drama student some 25 years ago. Looking back, we were fortunate in our tutors who could distinguish between what was good literature and what was good theatre. They might be the same, but not always. We should remember, too, that thinkers from Aristotle through Milton to Brecht have seen the functions of art as twofold: to instruct and to delight. A good performance may do both, it may just delight, but it tends to be very dull indeed if it merely instructs.

A last point and my lecture is done. Theatre makes its statements through complex images using combinations of visual and/or aural signals (costume, mask, decor & setting, colour, light and shade, gesture, grouping, mime, movement; sounds, tones, speech, song, tempo, character, narrative). Reading a play entails trying to hear and visualize the action, as though you were producing it. A silent figure in silhouette, a cry in the distance, a silver chalice, an impressive robe may all be as eloquent as a speech within the context of the dramatic action. Music, especially, can heighten a performance, as the article on Dryden and Purcell's *KING ARTHUR* reminds us.

It is not the aim of these articles to summarize the history of Arthurian drama, that has been done elsewhere. My aim is to bring to your notice some interesting texts and to give a little background information about them, in the hope that you will wish to know more about the presentation of Arthurian material on the stage. References follow to help guide you to further information.

PART 1: C16th - C18th

It is strange that the Tudor period didn't give rise to more Arthurian plays. The legend was popular at the time as pageants, ballads and chapbooks bear witness. It appears that there was a group of closely related plays, now unfortunately lost: Valteger', Dec. 1596, followed by apparent sequels:'Uter Pendragon', April 1597; and 'King Arthur', April 1598, by Richard Hathaway.

1. THE MISFORTUNES OF ARTHUR

Thomas Hughes, 1587/8.

The first surviving play about Arthur. Hughes was a Cheshire man, M.A. of Queens' College, Cambridge - also T.H.White's College. Written with 7 collaborators, Francis Bacon contributed to the 'dumbe showes'. Performed by members of Gray's Inn before Queen Elizabeth I at Greenwich. A highbrow play for a highbrow audience; one of a few neo-classical plays written by university men following models of C1st Roman writer Seneca. Based on Geoffrey of Monmouth, it shows Arthur's fatal revenge on Mordred after his seduction of Guenevora. The play stresses the dangers of civil war.

Seneca's influence : his plays were written for reading and recitation rather than the public stage and are more like moral debates: they are rhetorical, formal and emotional in style. Purple passages of high-sounding utterances abound: laments, reflections, warnings, threats, vows of vengeance, deathbed speeches. There are anachronistic Classical references: The Lake of Limbo, Stygian Pool, Charon's Boat are all mentioned in the first 4 lines. Themes include adultery, incest, revenge, purging of crimes by further bloodshed. An atmosphere of doom, of fate hangs heavily over everything and ghosts urge revenge on the living.

Unity of action is a feature: the staging has three locations onstage together (Italianate scenery): Arthur's 'house' (domus). Mordred's and a cloister; action is continuous in the space before the 'houses', the precise locality is determined by which one.

Written in blank verse in 5 acts; 5 Dumb Shows introduce the acts - mimed actions which are expositions of plot. A Chorus speaks in judgement after the scenes. The play is crammed with direct quotations from Seneca.

Scene 1: The ghost of Gorlois demands vengeance and the annihilation of Pendragon's race. Arthur's speech on his arrival in England: 'So has Fortune dealt with me, and now misfortune has free reign/ Apostrophe to the earth and to the realm/ Fortune, be thou my protector'.

Guenevore appears only in the first 3 scenes. She detests Arthur, gives her love to the traitor Mordred. She threatens to kill Arthur but is dissuaded by a confidante; she decides to commit suicide, is dissuaded by her sister. This is the excuse for much passionate raving before she retires to a convent:

'Come spitefull fiends, come heaps of furies fell/ Not one by one, but all at once: My breast/ Raves not enough: it likes me to be filde with greater monsters yet, My hart doth throbbe:/ My lieur boyles'). Such moments illustrate the antithesis between 'will' and 'wit', between 'reason' and 'passion' : a constant theme in Elizabethan writing, including Shakespeare who usually puts it better!

Arthur & Mordred are the chief characters. The king philosophises endlessly about life, fate, chance and death. His counsellors are always instructing him about his reponsibilities, they urge him to punish the arch-traitor. The king is anxious to follow 'right action', he has dignity and shows magnanamity in his love for his traitor son. Gawain is the king's faithful supporter, he and Mordred have arguments expressed forcibly in alternating single lines, this is a classical device called 'stichomythia' and is effectively used.

In Act 5 the Chorus encroaches on the fatal disaster when father and son kill each other. They reflect mournfully, taking up the theme in turn, responding antiphonally to each other.

The play is a museum piece now but worth looking at as part of the perspective of how Arthur's story has been presented. Who knows what Peter Hall could do with it still?

2. THE BIRTH OF MERLIN or The Childe Hath Found His Father

William Rowley, 1620.

Not published until 1662, ascribed to Rowley and collaborators. Once listed in the Shakespeare Apocrypha. Performed with success at Theatr Clwyd, Mold, North Wales in June 1989.

Set during the Saxon invasion of England, the play emphasises themes of lust, intrigue, treachery. Written in the 'English' mode, the action is free to wander over time and space and clowns have liberty to speak with kings. The ribald sub-plot interweaves with and comments upon the main plot directly, making ironic and amusing contrasts.

The Saxon general Ostorius, his wicked sister Artesia and their evil magician Proximus are negotiating with Aurelius and his brother Uter. Joan Goe-to'et, an accommodating country wench, bears a boy child to a stranger who she describes as being 'horrid and horned'. The child is Merlin and he develops at a phenomenal rate, at Mold he wore a beard while still in napkins (diapers). Joan sets out in search of the father accompanied by her brother who is named 'Fool'. She is a simple soul who finds it impossible to distinguish between one 'gentleman' and another, so when she meets up with prince Uther she suggests that he may be the child's father which prompts him to call her 'witch and scullion hag.' (Fool observes, 'I see he will marry her, he speaks to her like a husband'.) Uter, obsessed with the Saxon princess who is engaged to marry his brother Auerelius, cannot see that she is the truly wicked woman. Artesia exploits the situation to cause enmity between the British brothers, eventually poisoning Aurelius - when Uter at last recognises that she is, 'a witch by nature, a devil by art'.

There are processions and councils, visions and magic spells, together with much amusement from the two bucolics who overlook and comment upon the action. This was beautifully handled at Mold by Roy Hudd, a splendid example of how a comic actor can use what seems unpromising material to great effect, in a disciplined way that did not threaten the integrity of the play. Merlin's father turns up, a comic devil from the Miracle plays, and is given his just deserts. Merlin displays his powers, correctly interpreting the meaning of the red and white dragons and helping to combat the evil Saxons. At the end he predicts the coming of Arthur and his death at the time of his glory. No doubt king James approved: through his Tudor blood he considered himself to be of Arthur's line and the restorer of Arthur's empire.

3. KING ARTHUR or The British Worthy

John Dryden & Henry Purcell, 1691.

A Restoration Dramatik Opera: a hybrid form which combines the resources of the theatre/ opera/ and the masque. It has little to do with the Arthur of history or romance but is based on the concept of Arthur as one of the three Christian Worthies (the others were Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon) : heroic champions of European legend - hence the sub-title.

Dryden intended 'King Arthur' to be a political allegory, flattering Charles II as a modern Arthur. Unfortunately the king died and William and Mary came to the throne before it was produced so he had to adapt the material to suit the new political climate.

In the play Arthur contests with the pagan Saxon Oswald for control of the land and for the hand of Emmeline, the beautiful blind daughter of the King of Cornwall. Arthur has to undergo a series of trials like those encountered in the epics of Spenser and Tasso, including an enchanted forest where he is tempted by Sirens. Merlin works on his behalf and also opposes the Saxon magician. Arthur defeats Oswald in single combat and Merlin cures Emmeline's blindness. He then goes on to forecast the union of the Britons and the Saxons, 'In one common tongue/ One common faith.'

The opera was lavishly staged, with wonderful music by Purcell; it features many songs, dances and choruses. The material is varied and includes Druid ceremonies, pastoral festivities and the institution of the Order of the Garter. A concert version of the music is more often heard today though there have been productions of the play in Britain and America.

4. TOM THUMB and THE TRAGEDY OF TRAGEDIES

Henry Fielding, 1730.

Written as an 'afterpiece', Tom Thumb was an overwhelming success from its first performance, it ran 40 nights to full audiences of 'persons of quality'. A much-revised version appeared in 1731 and it was adapted by Thomas Arne in 1732 as the Opera of Operas', with 33 'airs'. The various versions were popular throughout the C18th and a hugely amusing and imaginative production was mounted by Bristol University years ago - friends of mine who took part in it still remember it with obvious pleasure. It is a delightful farce, a delicious parody of the heroic drama of the period and a satire of bombastic theatre in general. Like all melodrama and farce, it has to be acted with conviction, taken 'seriously' by the players: archness in the playing is death to such

writing.

The 'Tragedy' is set in the Court of King Arthur and reveals the misfortunes of its tiny hero ' by Merlin's art begot'. Tom arrives and is greeted by the King thus, "But, ha: the Warrior comes, Tom Thumb approaches;/ The welcome Hero, Giant-killing Lad, /Preserver of my Kingdom, is arrived./ O welcome, ever welcome to my Arms." The Queen's aside points the way things go awry for Tom, "Was ever such a lovely creature seen!" Arthur wishes to reward Tom's victories (we never actually see or hear details of any heroic acts he has carried out) with the hand of his daughter Huncamunca - in later versions she is Glumdalca, Queen of Giants. His love is returned but the Queen, Dollallola, jealously thwarts the King's plan.

Tom is later swallowed by a cow but his spirit comes back to haunt the Court, only to be killed by the Queen's confidante Lord Grizzle, much as Indiana Jones wipes out the scimitar-wielding Arab at his moment of ferocious display. A farcical series of motiveless killings ensues until the cast is reduced to the King and Lady Mustacha. Arthur despatches her and then himself with the words, "Ha! Murtheress vile, take that (Kills Mustacha) And take thou this" (Kills himself and falls). Thus the play ends with a burlesque to cap all revenge plots (including Hamlet!).

The political satire in the play is lost now except to scholars but this matters little, the furious action is still amusing in a good production. Valorous action and undying love are the twin themes of heroic drama and Fielding has cleverly scoured the plays of Dryden, Gay and others for their most absurd lines. At least 42 plays are mocked directly though, again, the targets of this literary burlesque are largely lost to a modern audience but not the recognition of 'over-the-top' language. The jokes, doggerel rhymes and bathetic reduction are verbal features recognisable in any age. Interestingly, another constant in the history of playwriting appears in the play of Tom Thumb: the ridicule of physicians. Like Moliere and Plautus, Fielding had a lifelong contempt of quacks.

Fielding's 'Tom Thumb' and Hughes's 'Misfortunes' are the head and tail of a single coin from the currency of early Arthurian drama.

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(For a photocopy of two reviews of the Mold production of 'The Birth of Merlin', send a stamp)

(Part 2: Will appear in our next issue. It describes some 19th century versions and features Henry Irving's 'King Arthur' performed at the Lyceum in 1895. With illustrations.)

PENDRAGON SOCIETY

Mark Valentine
A Lost Classic — Binyon's Merlin

Verse drama now seems to be an irretrievably unfashionable form. While we may still be prepared to attend Elizabethan and Jabobean plays written in heightened language, we do not expect it of modern works. This was probably already the case when Laurence Binyon was working on a three part verse drama devoted to the figure of Merlin.

Binyon (1869–1943) is himself unfashionable now, his name recalled only as the author of *For the Fallen*, the poem quoted on so many war memorials and at remembrance day commemorations. While he had a career as an art historian, ending as the Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, he was also a poet of distinction. His careful, meditative work was never allied to any particular school, not the Decadents of the Eighteen Nineties, nor the pastoral Georgian coterie of the Nineteen Twenties. Perhaps partly because of this, he seldom receives much attention in literary studies or anthologies. As early as 1935, when he was still working on *Merlin*, his reputation was regarded as somewhat faded. Frank Swinnerton, writing in *The Georgian Literary Scene, A Panorama*, referred to him only as "enjoying wide respect but a slightly suspect eminence" and bracketed him with a number of other poets who are now largely forgotten too: Alice Meynell, William Watson, Sturge Moore, and his friend Gordon Bottomley.

Binyon's poems often draw on legendary themes. He won the premier poetry prize, the Newdigate, in 1890, with a poem on Persephone, and wrote a thousand-line epic on Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, (1905). He also used Arthurian themes, such as his *The Death of Tristram* (1901). This habit of thinking in mythological terms was apt to make him seem more of a Victorian relic than was the case, especially as some critics thought it gave his poetry too much distance. "His poetry is always a little remote from its subject" remarks Harold Williams, in a distinctly lukewarm appreciation in *Modern English Writers* (1918). Nevertheless, Binyon had some success with his play *Arthur*, performed at the Old Vic theatre in 1923, around the same time as Rutland Boughton's attempt to sustain at Glastonbury a festival devoted to musical drama, often with Arthurian themes. Binyon's *Arthur* was set to music by Elgar.

From 1923 until his death in 1943, Binyon worked on a major poem in which he intended to use the life and legends of Merlin to illuminate, as Bottomley recorded, "the ardours and agonies, and doubts and dilemmas of our contemporary life, by reference to the timeless factor common to all generations".

Unfortunately, all he succeeded in completing was an early draft of Part I, *The Madness of Merlin*, of his intended trilogy, though he left fragments of the remaining parts. This first part was published in 1947, with an introduction by Gordon Bottomley telling how the work was meant to progress. Despite its formalised and rather dated nature, it seems to me that *The Madness of Merlin* does succeed in giving a fresh perspective on the Merlin myths, and ought to be better known. Drawing on Geoffrey of Monmouth and some Welsh poems, Binyon portrays a Merlin who is a desperately human figure, harrowed by a Lear-like tragedy. In this first part, his prophetic and magical skills only just begin to emerge, and they are shown as only gained at the cost of great personal loss: loss of identity, family, reputation, origins.

Binyon's Merlin is a Welsh prince who accompanies Rhydderech, King of Cumbria, and others, in battle against the Picts. Slaying three enemy champions, "the three sons of Mor",

single-handedly, Merlin suddenly turns and flees from the field, into the depths of a great forest. Lamenting, Merlin recounts what drove him away. It was a Voice:

"And suddenly all my strength was annulled
And my arm dropt helpless
And nothing was as it had seemed before,
Changed in the opening and the shutting of an eye
Didst thou not show me all flesh as my flesh?
Didst thou not show the world's wound?
Didst thou not accuse me?"

The nature of the Voice Binyon does not here reveal. It is not necessarily divine; it may be individual conscience or some sudden revelation from another source. Lost in the forest, Merlin experiences strange visions, briefly but vividly evoked. These include a creeping darkness, the mating of two fiery forms, and an arm holding a sword, which sunders a vast star-reaching grape vine: finally, a black sun sending dark beams onto a dead and desolate world. We can discern echoes here of several enduring legends and symbols: the Grail and the Waste Land; the union of mortal and immortal; the Dionysian mysteries; the Eucharist.

Changing scene, Binyon shows us Merlin's wife, sister and fellow kings speculating on his flight, which most presume was caused by cowardice. A minstrel is sent to find Merlin and beguile him back to the court. But once there, he remains bewildered, and cannot recognise anyone. His derangement inspires hatred and fear. His wife asks,

"Have you eaten of horrible roots in the dead of night?
Have you lain with a witch?
Drunk poison, or covenanted with the dark ones
That wander and tempt and corrupt?
Have you cast away judgement and honour?"

Shunned and disowned, Merlin is left to wander until he is sought out by Taliesin, a friend of old whose songs propose a brighter vision than the darkness haunting Merlin. He persuades Merlin to try once more returning to the court, where for a while Rhydderech is convinced that Merlin "by some special grace" has

"pierced beyond
The ranging of our eyes, and the gross sense
We others use,
To pluck a flower of light in a strange world".

But in fact Merlin's is a nihilistic and gnostic vision, which sees evil and injustice as the mainsprings of the world. In the final scenes of this, the only completed part of the work, Merlin retreats to a cave "hollow like a monstrous skull" where he can find isolation from the fatal and hateful cycle of engendering and death which makes up human life. He recognises that he has been torn away from the rest of humanity by his insight into its futility:

"I am a stone broken off from the living rock
A fragment that cannot rejoin its own nature,
Cast upon the earth without portion in the earth."
He seeks instead
"The invisible innermost secret reality,
The Law that upholds the stars in their own places
And orders the motions of my hands and my feet..."

A girl, Himilian, who had previously retrieved Merlin's sword from where he flung it as he fled to the woods, joins him in the cave, seeking to share the wisdom she believes he has found. In some memorable images, Binyon's Merlin tries to convey how he receives visions: "Sleep is not peace. It is a wanderer's world, Where we begin journeys that never end."

And,

"Is there a memory that has found no lodge
In any brain, yet lives?
The world becomes transparent, and it breathes
Up into the air, as from a cauldron, fumes
That dizzy me; they coil, falter, ascend
In cloud on cloud.
My spirit is besieged with images
That are not mine."

At the conclusion of this scene and the play, as dawn breaks, we learn that Himilian will have a son by Merlin, refuting his attempt to break out of the succession of the flesh.

Himilian is a version of the Nimuë/Vivien figure of the legends but Binyon has made her a more alluring, warmer character than the traditional pale and bitter enchantress. She is, as Bottomley notes, almost "a creature of nature herself", faunlike and vital. We sense that there would have been some greater depth and significance to her role had the work been completed.

Binyon's plans for parts II and III were given in letters to Gordon Bottomley, which he quotes in his introduction. The theme of Part II was to be "Merlin's discovery (after his failure to make himself invulnerable and independent of every one in part I) that he needs the experience of love and suffering to be complete; and this might be brought home to him through the son whom Himilian...is to bear him." This would take place twenty years later, when Merlin's son finds the hidden sword of his father. Part III was to be a meditation "about Utopias (the search for happiness) - Atlantis, the Fortunate Isles, etc." when Merlin is in his old age.

Binyon's depiction of Merlin, even in the unfinished first part, is strikingly original and insightful. Here we have a completely unpageanted figure, scarcely seen in literature before, no great mage nor wise counsellor, but a wild and ragged hermit. Most of all, he is not some demi-god but a human figure at the edge of his humanity, driven to see himself and his fellow beings fundamentally differently. The visions he does begin to piece together are hard-won from days and nights of spiritual anguish, not sudden magical intuitions. And much of what Merlin thinks and says is drawn from doubt and despair, and may not be true: he is not an infallible prophet but a searcher, a questioner. I do not think that any other writer has yet equalled Binyon's recasting of Merlin in this way. Gordon Bottomley, in his concluding valedictory remarks on Binyon, praises his "steadfastness and beautiful integrity". These are not perhaps the qualities associated with the Romantic notion of the fiery and fevered poet, and they probably suggest why Binyon is not better known today. Yet the careful craft of his poetry can convey as much as the more colourful and incantatory effusions of more celebrated poets, and in *The Madness of Merlin*, so long in the making, and in the unfinished fragments of the trilogy, I think it is clear we have a lost classic.

COME WITH ME MY FRIEND

Come with me my friend,
his shield glistened in the sun,
his sword held high.
We would have followed him
to Annwn or further.

Come with me my friend,
the enemy stood in line,
chanting the war cry.
Their leader plain and clear,
ready, waiting and patient.

Come with me my friend,
swords drawn, steed ready,
the flag of our clan flying high.
The archers in the forefront,
the riders ready for the onslaught.

Will you be with me my friend,
in life in death in sorrow,
in joy, in triumph, in defeat.
Will you support me,
will you be my shadow.

I will come with you my friend,
at your shoulder I will stand,
I will support you all I can.
For life , for death, for sorrow,
I will be with you my friend.

Susan Gaitley

Brendan McMahon
Purcell's "King Arthur"

King Arthur, or The British Worthy, A Dramatic Opera, the text by John Dryden, with music by Purcell, was produced in May 1691 at the Queen's Theatre, Dorset Garden. According to a contemporary account, it 'pleased the court and city, and being well performed was very gainful to the company.' In fact the work is a 'semi-opera', a combination of drama, poetry, music, dance and elaborate scenic architecture, a hybrid born of French court ballet and the native Jonsonian masque tradition, rather than a true opera, of which the only contemporary examples were John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. Purcell composed some of his greatest music for these 'semi-operas,' which include *The Fairy Queen, The Tempest*, and *The Indian Queen*. They are all characterised by: 'the great importance of the chorus, and abundance of instrumental numbers (ritornelli, dances, preludes and descriptive pieces), spoken dialogue, very few recitatives, (all of the arioso type), elaborate sets and stage machinery, and the fact that none of the principal characters in the drama sing'.(Harman & Milner, 1983).

Dryden wrote the text as 'the last piece of service which I had the honour to do for my gracious master King Charles the Second,' although Charles was dead by the time it reached performance, and William III was leading the Grand Alliance against the French in the Netherlands. In 1685 Dryden had collaborated with the French composer Grabu to produce *Albion and Albanius*, a work which prefigures *King Arthur* in its thematic concerns, but which proved a flop with the theatregoing public. Blow and Purcell did not conceal their opinion of the Frenchman's awful score, and this seems to have led to a temporary coolness on Dryden's part. By 1691, however, he was prepared to acknowledge that 'music...has since arrived to a greater perfection in England than ever formerly: especially passing through the artful hands of Mr Purcell, who has composed it with so great a genius that he has nothing to fear but an ignorant, ill-judging audience. These words display both generosity and a sound critical judgement, though elsewhere in the Preface he does complain that 'the Numbers of Poetry and Vocal musick are sometimes so contrary, that in many places I have been obliged to cramp my verses, and make them ragged to the Reader, that they may be harmonious to the hearer. 'One may reasonably conjecture that Dryden was uneasily aware of the contrast between his own rather pedestrian libretto and Purcell's delightful score.

The plot of the piece has a chaotic fatuity which makes it difficult to describe. It opens at the point when Arthur, having won his ten famous victories, has recaptured most of his kingdom from Oswald, the Saxon king, who is also his rival for the favours of Emmeline, the Duke of Cornwall's blind daughter. Oswald's court magician, Osmond, employs two spirits, Grimbald and Philidel, in support of the Saxon cause. Merlin persuades Philidel to go over to the British side, he also restores Emmeline's sight. Osmond is also attracted to the Cornish heiress, and betrays Oswald. He further attempts to trap Arthur who, instead, captures Grimbald, who has been disguised, for reasons into which we need not inquire, as Emmeline. In Act V Osmond and Oswald patch up their differences, and the latter fights a duel with Arthur from which, of course, he emerges the loser. Arthur, with

characteristic magnanimity, releases Oswald and restores him to Emmeline. There is a storm, followed by a tableau depicting Brittania rising from the azure wave , and, in conclusion, a fulsome eulogy of Britain, her people and monarch.

None of this matters very much. What one remembers about *King Arthur* is Purcell's glorious music: the 'Frost Scene' with its strange harmonies and remarkable tremolandos, the seemingly endless succession of excellent ensembles and solos, and the virtuoso display of Act V, which includes such fine songs as 'Ye blustering brethren," Far folded flocks' and, particularly, 'Fairest Isle,' in which Albion is the recipient of hyperbolic praise:

Fairest Isle, of all isles excelling,
Seat of Pleasure, and of Love:
Venus, here, will choose her Dwelling
And forsake her Cyprian Grove.

And it is this song which brings us closest to the underlying political and social purposes of the piece: 'By the 1690's the Arthurian legend was in the doldrums.' (Knight, 1983) There are two principal reasons for this. Post-Reformation England associated the once and future king with a medieval Catholic past, a past which the Protestant middle-class was anxious to forget. Moreover, the astute use of the legend for propaganda purposes by the Tudors, which created its finest flowering in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, rendered it too monarchistic for the taste of the rising bourgeoisie, particularly, of course, during the Commonwealth. Charles I was executed in 1649, and the murder of God's anointed was accompanied by a wave of hooliganism against the remnants of Popery (witness the vandalism of a thousand parish churches) and the supression of music and the licentiousness of the theatre. Even after the Restoration, the fictitious 'Popish Plot' of 1678 uncovered a depth of anti-catholic prejudice, and it was James II's pro-catholic sympathies and authoritarian views of the monarchical office which led to his demise and the Glorious Revolution, which swept William of Orange to the throne.

It is this background which allows us to understand the first performance of *King Arthur*. England in 1691 had endured two major constitutional changes and a vicious civil war was within living memory. The king was engaged in a continental conflict the consequences of which could not be foreseen; while at home two generations of dispute had created a nation ill at ease with itself. In Dryden's libretto we find a sentimental affirmation of personal relationships, a natural response to the uncertainties of the time:

Cupid from his Fav'rite nation
Care and Envy will Remove:
Jealousie, that poysons Passion,
And Despair that dies for Love.

along with appeals for unity:

Britons and Saxons shall be once one people;
One common Tongue, one Common Faith shall bind
Our jarring Bounds, in a Perpetual Peace.

and affirmations of national greatness:

Retire, and let Brittania Rise
In Triumph o'er the Main.
Serene and Calm, and void of fear,
The Queen of Islands must appear.

The fragility of this Arcadian imagery which studs Dryden's verse betrays a deep ambivalence. Hope that the Williamite Settlement will heal England's social and psychological wounds is undermined by fear that it will not, and the fantasy is tinged by desperation.

But it is for Purcell's lovely music that *King Arthur* will be remembered.

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1. Harman, A. and Milner A (1983) *Late Renaissance and Baroque Music.* Barrie & Jenkins, London.
2. Knight, Stephen (1983) *Arthurian Literature and Society.* Macmillan, London.
3. Matthews, John & Stewart, R.J. (1995) *Merlin Through the Ages.* Blandford, London.
(This anthology volume contains the text of 'Merlin, or the British Enchanter' which is the title given to Dryden's play 'King Arthur,or the British Worthy' in its later 18th century performances. The text is printed in its entirety, except for the Prologue and Epilogue, from the Curll edition of 1736.)

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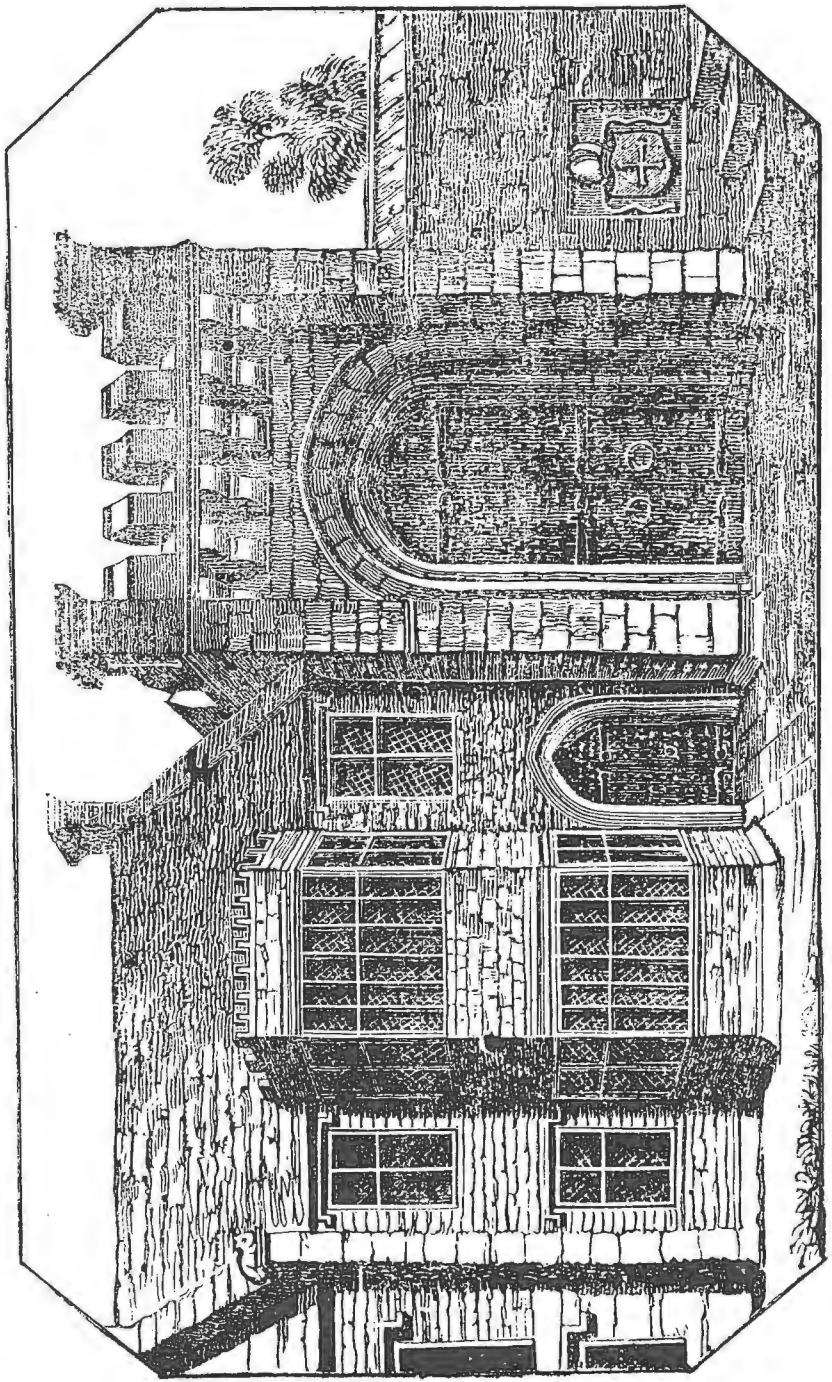
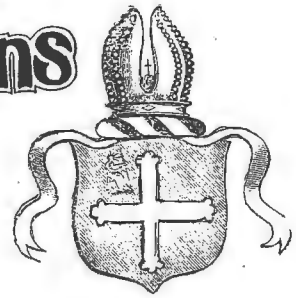


Glastonbury Abbey Gate.

Chris Lovegrove
The King And Icons



The Armorial Bearings of Glastonbury Abbey: Field, vert. A Cross botonneé, argent, in the first quarter, the Holy Virgin, with the Infant Christ on her right arm, a golden sceptre in her left hand. Being the Coat of Arms borne by the British King Arthur.

Computers have given us a new meaning for the term *icon*, but most of us still have an inkling of its more traditional usage. Derived from the Greek *eikon*, it signified the image of a saint or other religious figure. Now, the question is this: could a Dark Age warrior (let's call him Arthur, for the sake of argument!) have historically carried an icon of the Virgin Mary on his shield, as claimed? Or is this concept anachronistic, a pious distortion of later times? The discussion is a little involved, but we start, first with a little architectural diversion.

The Abbey Gateway

The modern visitor to Glastonbury Abbey, like his or her medieval counterpart, passes from Magdalene Street through a large gateway. Until earlier this century, and for at least two centuries before that, it was blocked by a two-storey bay, an extension to the adjacent Red Lion Inn (1). The modern restoration lacks much that would have been evident even as late as the nineteenth century. The battlements have disappeared, as have the mounting steps with, above them, the arms of the Abbey carved in stone (fig.1).

These arms adorning the right side of the 14th century gateway would have been painted. The medieval pilgrim would have seen a silver cross, of a type called *botonny* in heraldry, superimposed on a green shield. And in the top left corner an image of Mary would have been visible, seated, with the child Jesus on her right arm, and a golden sceptre in her left hand. Above the shield, a mitre announcing the episcopal claims of the abbey (fig.2). In this form the details survived into the 16th century on the arms of the last abbot, Richard Whiting.

Arthur at Beckery

Shortly before the disaster of the Black Death, a 14th century chronicler gave an explanation for the origin of these arms. This is what John of Glastonbury wrote about the events following Arthur's momentous visit to St. Mary Magdalene's hermitage and chapel at nearby Beckery:

A venerable old man came to him, dressed in black vestments, with a full beard and with long white hair, and greeted the king...
The aforementioned old man began to put on priest's vestments, and immediately the blessed and glorious Mother of the Lord was there, with her son in her arms, and she began to minister to the said old man.
And when that old man began mass and had got as far as the Offertory, at once the goodly Lady offered her own son to the priest...

There followed the Consecration, but instead of a mass wafer the child is elevated. At the Communion the old priest eats the child, who then reappears whole and entire, this grotesque act being designed to explain the doctrine of the Real Presence. And then

the Lady, the glorious Mother, as a sign of the said events, gave to the king a cross of crystal which, donated by the king, is to this day kept and guarded with honour in the treasury of Glastonbury...(2)

As a result of this miracle, Arthur changed his arms to those later adopted by the abbey; previously they displayed three red lions on a silver field. Presumably the red lions echoed the name of the inn on the other side of the medieval gateway, just as the name of the chapel echoed Magdalene Street from which the pilgrim entered the abbey grounds.

Now, some of this tale is paralleled in the opening of the early thirteenth-century Grail romance *Perlesvaus*, otherwise known as *The High History of the Holy Graal* (3). Missing however, in that romance are the details of the crystal cross and the change to Arthur's shield. It is quite clear that the later episode, whether or not it derived from *Perlesvaus*, has been adapted to explain the origin of Glastonbury's arms while also retaining a link with Arthur.

But the image of Mother and Child had in fact been used for many centuries at Glastonbury, particularly on the seals of several abbots, and without reference to Arthur. Usually the image was reversed, with the infant on Mary's left arm, a bouquet of flowers

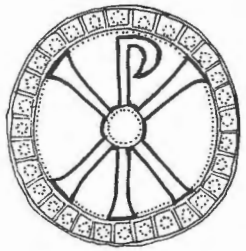


Fig.3. Shield with Chi-Rho monogram (from mid-4th century silver plate)

(probably roses or lilies) rather than a sceptre in her right hand). It is this figure of Mary, standing not seated, and derived from a 13th-century seal, that has been revived by the modern Catholic church in Glastonbury.

Arthur's battles

So, the 14th century abbey, in an official history, would have had us believe that Arthur carried an icon of Mary and child on his shield, which later became their part of their armorial bearings. But the tradition of the shield goes back further than this.

In the 12th century, the imaginative Geoffrey of Monmouth described Arthur at the siege of Bath donning his armour to fight the Saxons. In Thorpe's translation, he placed

across his shoulders a circular shield called Pridwen, on which there was painted a likeness of the Blessed Mary, mother of God, which forced him to be thinking perpetually of her (4).

Now, in Welsh tradition, Prydwen is the name of Arthur's ship, not his shield. Is there some deliberate confusion between the manufacture of shields and coracles, say?

This reference, however, is still not the oldest. In the early 9th century, a cleric (let's, for the sake of argument, call him Nennius!) brought together documentary material on Arthur, which he then tried to patch together into his narrative history of Britain. The eighth battle fought by Arthur was said to be at Castle Guinnion

in which Arthur carried the image of Blessed Mary Ever Virgin on his shoulders. And the heathen were put to flight that day, and there was great slaughter of them through the virtue of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother...(5)

Several points are obvious here. First, the contexts are different. Geoffrey has Bath (his interpretation of Mons Badonicus) and Nennius has Guinnion, which is not easy to identify (romantics favour Winchester, capital of Wessex). However, there is no contradiction here: what was first worn at Guinnion could also appear later at Bath.

Secondly, Nennius describes the image as being *super humeros suos*, on Arthur's shoulders. Linguists suggest that Nennius mistook the Early Welsh word for shield as shoulders, which is very similar; perhaps both derive from (or are cognate with) the Latin for shield, *scutum*. Geoffrey, you will have noticed, hedges his bets and includes both in his account.

Thirdly, the terminology used is strongly religious. Nennius' list of contents emphasises this:

About King Arthur the warrior and the twelve battle he had against the Saxons, and about the image of the Blessed Mary with which he triumphed, and the number of enemies he brought low with once charge.

This might simply be because writers then tended to be clerics. There is however a possibility that the insistence on a sacred image had a more urgent and immediate reason.

The breaking of images

The 8th and 9th centuries are notable for being a period of iconoclasm, or the breaking of images. From 726 to 787, and then from 815 to 843, the Byzantine Empire, already menaced by Moslem expansion, suffered a cultural revolution, with paintings, sculptures, mosaics and textiles being destroyed, and official sanction being given to deliberate vandalism.

The respite from 787 to 815 was exactly the time when Nennius, or another like him, was collating the British documentary material. It could be that the news from distant Byzantium, of a halt in the frenzy of image-breaking, encouraged him to assert the efficacy of a holy picture against the heathen Saxon foe. The pattern for such a victory already existed: Constantine the Great had employed the symbol of the cross in just such a way in the 4th century (fig.3). And of course the Welsh Annals were also to assert that Arthur carried "the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ on his shoulders" at Badon. So it is tempting to believe that the whole episode was a pious fabrication, with Nennius fondly imagining that Arthur, like a latter-day Constantine, was persuaded that "In this sign, thou shalt conquer." Because naturally, the argument might run, we cannot trust an assertion made three centuries after the event.

But is it inconceivable that an Arthur-type figure, in distant sub-Roman Britain, could have used an icon of Mary and Jesus in this way?

And that despite a gap in the written record the memory of such an incident survived to be incorporated in Nennius' History of the Britons? Furthermore, does the medieval perception of this act provide a reliable guide?

The medieval image

As we have seen, John of Glastonbury's chronicle derived that abbey's arms from the shield of King Arthur. How did his early fourteenth-century contemporaries picture this shield? An illustration in the chronicle of a cleric at Bridlington priory, Peter of Langtoft, shows us almost exactly (fig.4).

The king stands, staring out at the reader. He has a surcoat over medieval armour and mail, and a crown on his head. A lance is grasped in his right hand, and a scabbarded sword hangs down his left thigh. On his left arm is a triangular shield with, painted on the wood or on a canvas covering, an image filling most of the available space.

Mary is depicted as Queen of Heaven, for she sits crowned and enthroned, a nimbus behind her head. Her left arm crosses her body diagonally, and appears to rest on her right knee. She gazes at Jesus, a tiny robed figure who stands at her right hand. His own right hand is raised, perhaps in blessing, but the detail is not clear. The throne itself is curious, resembling an altar more than a seat.

Something similar appears to be what Geoffrey of Monmouth, nearly two centuries before, had in mind when he described Arthur's circular shield "on which there was painted a likeness of the Blessed Mary, Mother of God." And yet there was not a concensus about this. His contemporary, William of Malmsebury, had earlier written

At the siege of the Mount of Badon, relying on the image of the Lord's mother which he had sewn into his armour, he overthrew in a single-handed attack nine hundred of the enemy, with unbelievable slaughter (6).

Quite what William meant by the idea of the image *quam armis suis insuerat* ("which he had sewn into his armour") is not clear. The Latin plural noun *arma* means armour generally, and obviously could include the shield, but William is not specific. And if the image is sewn, whatever its medium it then cannot refer to a picture painted directly onto the shield.

It is now time to examine what may have given rise to the notion that Arthur carried a Christian picture into battle. In trying to reach a conclusion we will have to consider not only the historical and geographical contexts, but other personages who might have done the same, the different forms and functions of early icons, and even the subtle niceties of theological debate (7).

References and notes

1. James P. Carley (1988) *Glastonbury Abbey*, The Boydell Press. The illustration on page 153 shows the gateway as it was about 1785, with the inn adjoining.
2. John of Glastonbury, ed. James P. Carley (1985) *The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, The Boydell Press, 77f. Translation from Latin is mine.
3. Nigel Bryant (1978) *The High Book of the Grail: a translation of the thirteenth century romance of Perlesvaus*, D.S. Brewer. This is more recent and scholarly than the classic Everyman version, *The High History*.
4. Geoffrey of Monmouth, trans. Lewis Thorpe (1966) *History of the Kings of Britain*, Penguin.
5. Nennius, ed. John Morris, (1980) *British History and the Welsh Annals*, Phillimore (my translation).
6. E.K. Chambers (1927) *Arthur of Britain*, Sidgwick & Jackson, Record xii (my translation).

Fig.4. King Arthur, from Peter of Langtoft's *Chronicle*, c. 1300.

Keith Pickett Pulp Fiction?

They met in the hall, as usual.
Such a simple sentence and we're already in trouble.Very well, let me try and be more precise. To begin with, 'they' and 'the hall' do not exist in anv form which we would recognize. And in that place the concept of linear time is considered laughable, so terms like 'met' and 'as usual' are not really applicable either. But for convenience's sake we will assume some sort of three-dimensional reality.
Meanwhile, back to the hall.
Most of them were present: Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere, Mordred, Bedivere, Lancelot, Gawain etc, as well as various petty kings, Saxon chieftains, Irish pirate leaders and a smattering of servants and peasants.They gathered in small groups, chatting amiably enough. Occasionally there would be a shouted greeting across the floor.
One group stood apart from the rest - the main characters, or M.Cs, as the others called them with a mixture of pity and envy. Today they were aware of a stranger in their midst: a servant girl, perhaps seventeen, who was beginning to look confused and slightly tearful.
"What's the matter, girl?" said Guinevere, not unkindly. "And who are you?"
"I'm Elen." Her voice quivered " I was an old woman, telling my granddaughter about my days at Camelot - I finished the story and found myself here."
"Oh no, they must be getting desperate, they're using the bloody servants as M.C.s now!" said Morgause "Who's next - Arthur's dog?" This was accompanied by a baleful glance which upset Elen all the more.
Gawain laid an arm on her shoulder "Dinna fash yersel' lassie, ye'll come to no harm here."
"Doing the rough-but-romantic Scotsman bit Gawain?" said Bedivere "You must fancy her."
"Well I am supposed to be from the Orkneys - in some versions," Gawain's accent had noticeably shifted four hundred miles to the south "Why are you so bothered anyway- jealous perhaps?"
Mordred interrupted "Shut up, you two, there are other things to discuss. We have another version - you know what that means."
A noticeable gloom settled on the company. The silence was broken by Lancelot.
"Remember how we used to be so annoyed with Malory because we felt that he's fixed our characters for so long? - Seems like the good old days now."
"Yeah," said Kay "Nearly five hundred years of knowing where we were."
"And who we were." said Arthur.
"At least you always exist," Lancelot sounded very unhappy "nowadays they tend to ignore me

and give it all to Bedivere."
"Well, you are a later addition to the stories."
"Don't give me all that historical authenticity crap, you know it doesn't matter...that's another reason why I like Malory, he was fairly good to me."
"He had his drawbacks though, all that fifteenth century plate armour...it was a hell of a job to put on."
"And you couldn't get it off that quickly either." said Morgause.
"I like Marion Bradley." said Morgan.
"Now we're in for some trouble" whispered Gawain to Elen "Guinevere hates anyone mentioning Marion Bradley." Sure enough, Guinevere's beauty had become positively murderous.
"Marion Bradley! Don't talk to me about Marion bloody Bradley - I'd have every copy of that book burned!"
"Don't you like it, dear?" Morgause had assumed a quality of wide-eyed innocence normally associated with small children.
"Well how would you like to be a stupid, Bible-obsessed agraphobic? - anyway I don't remember you coming out of it all that well either - didn't you finish up as a pathetic toyboy-chasing old bag?" The others winced. Morgause was not particularly noted for seeing criticism as a positive learning experience.
"At least I had some fun." She glared at Guinevere "*I* always have a great deal of fun - whoever does the writing."
"Unless they make a film - then you're written out and Morgan has all the juicy bits."
"The films are rubbish."
"Oh, I don't know." It was Guinevere's turn to sound girlish " I quite like some of them - I like *Excalibur*."
"Only because Lancelot has a thing about Cherie Lunghi." Morgause was planting her barb with relish." We all know what you're about to do when you choose to look like her."
"I don't understand," said Elen to Gawain "what does she mean by 'choose to look like her'?"
"Because we've been described in so many different ways - character, accent, personal appearance etc. have all varied a great deal over the years - we can assume any one we choose. It was quite fun a while - we'd all turn up as a different version of ourselves a couple of times a day and everyone had to guess who everyone else was. But it became too confusing so we all settled into just one form - except on odd occasions."
"Funny you should say that."said Mordred - "Has anyone seen Merlin today?"
No-one had.
"Well I have." He looked worried."He was wandering around the far end of the hall changing his appearance every five minutes and muttering 'Narrative structure, narrative structure' to himself - do you think he's alright?"
"Oh, the old fool's probably brooding on something." said Bedivere "He'll roll up before long with some abstract idea that's of no use to anyone."
As if on cue there was a slight disturbance of the air, a noise that sounded rather like a small paper bag being popped, and Merlin stood before them.
"I've been thinking."
"Isn't that all you ever do? How about thinking that it might be time to drop that ludicrous magic drama-queen entrance of yours? We've all seen it several times before and it didn't impress us the first time."
"Shut up, Bedivere, and listen for once. The problem we think we all have is that we, and the tales woven around us,exist in so many different versions that we have no sense of stable identity."
"Why do you say 'think we all have'?"
"Because it isn't really a problem - it's an inevitable process. Take Richard III, for example, arguments about his character and motives have been going on for five hundred years - plays and novels have been written, all from different viewpoints. And his existence is well-documented. In our case, it's wide open. That's the beauty of it. You can take any perspective - religious, sociological, psychological etc.- and build your Arthurian tale around it. The truth (if it exists) has proved very elusive. As someone said 'Every decoding is another encoding' - there's no core version."
"What about here - isn't this a 'core version'?"
"No, this is just another version and a short one at that. A magazine article. He'll be wanting to end it soon."
"Rubbish! You're seriously trying to tell us that this could end at any moment without -

BOOK REVIEWS

KITEZH: THE RUSSIAN GRAIL LEGENDS
by Munin Nederlander
The Aquarian Press, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8JB, 1991
ISBN 1 85538 037 4
272 pages, hardback, £17.99

I picked up this volume from one of the second hand stalls at the Arthurian Day in Cardiff last year. I am not sure what I expected of the book and after reading it I have been left with mixed feelings.

The book is divided into five parts, plus acknowledgements, foreword (by fellow member John Matthews), introduction, appendix, glossary, notes, further reading and index. The first three parts deal with early Russian history and the legend of Kitezh and includes a basic verse text for an opera, *the Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and Lady Fevronia*. The fourth part, which although not about Kitezh itself but which I find the most interesting, concerns the heroic legends of the knights of King Vladimir the Red Sun (great-grandfather of the builder of the city of Great Kitezh, Georgi Vesvolodovich) and similar tales and related legends. These stories, like those of King Arthur, have evidently been strongly influenced with Christian sentiments and medieval styling and it is often difficult to see the original stories they have been built on, but are evidently based on mythical lore - such as the character of Mikoela Seljaninovich who seems to me to be clearly an earth god, somewhat similar to the Irish Dagdha. One thing I did note from these stories (called bylini) is that instead of the usual magic swords there are magic whips and often the heroes (called bogatyri and equivalent to western knights), when disarmed or needing a specially powerful weapon equip themselves with cart axles.

With regard to the Grail it is argued that, whereas in Western legends it is seen as an object that has to be searched for, in the Russian legends the Grail is the land itself and not an object which can be found. The Russian knights thus do not need to search for the Grail for the very earth they stand on is the sacred vessel itself.

The main gripe I have with *Kitezh* is the Anthroposophy which runs through the book. Although I went to a Rudolf Steiner school and have made a small study of occultism, explaining legends in such terms as Manas, Self Force, Root Races and cultural eras without reference to myths, history or beliefs of the people who created these legends is naive and undisciplined. However, some of the comments are interesting and the parallels drawn between the legends of King Vladimir and those of King Arthur are intriguing, despite resting on erratic scholarship.

In summary, if you are interested in Russian history and legends and are also an Anthroposophist, the *Kitezh* is the book for you.

Tim Harris

A WELSH CLASSICAL DICTIONARY
People in History and Legend up to about A.D.1000
by Peter C. Bartrum
National Library of Wales, 1993
ISBN 0 907158 73 0

Consisting of over 650 pages, A4 format, this is without doubt a hefty volume. With only a two page introduction and two pages of abbreviations the rest is made up of the dictionary of people and places.

I can not over emphasise the usefulness of this publication. Following on from biographical details in Dr. Rachel Bromwich's *Trioedd Ynys Prydein - The Triads of the Island of Britain*, this adds considerably to the reader's information on characters and places both historical and mythical. There is so much in this book that it would be really impossible to give you an impression of what it contains without your actually seeing a copy.

A Welsh Classical Dictionary Contains a vast catalogue of people and places ranging from St.Aaron to Zennor - mind in both cases you must cross-reference to Julius, St. and Sennara for further information. It not only covers the main characters of Welsh (British) history from the first records but also has a considerable number of references, and cross-references, to

Arthurian characters and place-names.

Peter Bartrum delves into every nook and cranny of Welsh history and legends to produce an amazingly interesting and useful publication. He has in the past recorded, and occasionally discussed, the vast collection of genealogies that have been collected in Wales over the years, but those were the skeletons and now he has given them some flesh. Entries range in size from one liners like: "Aedd, king of Ireland. Father of Gwitard and Odgar (qq.v.)" to eight pages for Myrddin (Merlin). Arthur only gets three! But three interesting pages nevertheless!

Amongst the entries you will find numerous entries of interest including places like Avalon and Camlan (sorry, no Camelot - it doesn't have any place in Welsh history, legend or literature). Every Arthurian character with a Welsh connection will be found in this book from the well known (and later to develop into classical characters) like Bedwyr and Cai to obscure fellows from the Triads to Culhwch and Olwen.

This is obviously not a book to read from cover to cover in a few sittings rather it is a reference book - a volume to be dipped into to find information. I think that anyone who is interested in Arthur and the Dark Ages will find this a most useful publication. Some of the material within can be rather obscure and one such entry started me off on a course of investigation which I hope will come to fruition as an article in the near future.

There can be no doubt that some of the entries in this dictionary will makes some people very unhappy. Bartrum often follows the name with brackets indicating whether the person or place is legendary, mythical, fictitious or otherwise. Amongst the names given legendary or fictitious status, and quite rightly, are characters once considered historical.

This is an expensive item which you are unlikely to find in a general book shop but I am sure it can be obtained by ordering or buying it directly from the National Library of Wales. I think that, unless you are a dedicated researcher of Arthur and Dark Ages, it might be better for you to get it through you local library (I have seen it in a number of reference sections) rather than buying it. Whatever you do you will find this a most worthwhile publication and one long awaited.

Charles Evans-Günther

CORPUS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN INSCRIBED STONES OF SOUTH-WEST BRITAIN
by Elizabeth Okasha
Leicester University Press, 1993
374 pages, £65

AND SHALL THESE MUTE STONES SPEAK?
by Charles Thomas
University of Wales Press, 1994
353 pages, £35

Inscribed Stone from Tavistock

Between the 5th-8th centuries AD, the Celts of Western Britain erected a series of distinctive memorials to their dead, stone monoliths with short Latin inscriptions. Usually these include little more than the name of the deceased and his or her father. Brief as these inscriptions are, however, they speak directly to us from the Early Christian period, in a way the later written sources cannot do. The last full-length book on these monuments appeared in 1950. Now, in quick succession, there have been published two significant academic works on the subject.

Okasha's work is, as its title states, a detailed catalogue of the inscriptions of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, including both the early memorial stones and the later inscribed crosses running right up to the 11th century. Each stone is illustrated together with a detailed history, a reading of the inscription, and discussion. It represents an attempt to provide accurate descriptions of the inscriptions, many of which are now worn and deteriorating. There is also a 60 page introduction discussing in more general terms the inscriptions' classification, texts, influences, and personal names.

Okasha's work presents the evidence; Charles Thomas synthesises and interprets it. His work is an attempt to illuminate the obscure history of South-West England (Dumnonia) and South-East Wales (Demetia and Brycheiniog) between the 5th and 7th centuries using the inscribed stones as a major source. Thomas' book is a work of genuine historical detection, in

which he stresses the dual importance of the stones as both archaeological and historical sources, as physical evidence and written evidence. However, he also makes use of documentary sources, where relevant. To briefly summarise his ideas, Thomas brought to Demetia via Irish raiding tribes who in due course picked up and reflected in the stones. The fashion was then diffused by further migrations from Demetia onwards to Brycheiniog and Dumnonia. The stones name the participants in these migrations.

Although a dense and detailed work, Thomas' book is not difficult to read. It is a work of great intellectual vigour and creative thought. He puts forward a number of rather speculative ideas, and the reader will have to make up their own mind about how convincing these are. Typical of these is an elaborate theory linking early Welsh documents about Brychan, king and saint of South Wales, the excavation of an early Christian tomb-shrine on Lundy Island, North Devon, in the 1960s, and medieval traditions about the mysterious St. Nectan at Hartland, Devon. Fascinating as this speculation is, it is worth noting that Okasha tends to be very much more cautious about the dating of the inscriptions and the certainty of their readings, and indeed Okasha and Thomas disagree on a number of readings.

What both these books do, in different ways, is to bring the inscribed stones to prominence as archaeological and historical sources. Let us, for example, consider a stone from Tavistock in Devon, inscribed 'SABINI FILI MACCODECHETI', meaning '(the stone of) Sabinus, son of Maccodechetus'. Brief as this inscription is (and it is typical), it tells us a great deal. We know the name of the deceased man, the name of his father, where he lived, and his approximate date of death (mid-6th century, by virtue of stylistic and linguistic considerations). The father's name is Irish, and is found also on stones in Ireland and Irish-settled areas of Wales, therefore probably the family was Irish in origin, or at least from an area exposed to Irish influences. However, the son's name is Roman, perhaps reflecting exposure to Christian, sub-Roman influences. As by this date, these monuments were Christian memorials, Sabinus was a Christian. However, we can go further. The inscribed stones are commonly found in two types of location; trackways and early Christian cemeteries. As the stone was originally found near the site of the main church in Tavistock, itself the site of an important Anglo-Saxon monastery, it is plausible to suggest that this site was itself a Celtic church and cemetery. We have already gleaned a remarkable amount of information about this local chieftain of the 6th century.

Although both of these books are for those with a specialist interest, the studies of scholars such as Thomas and Okasha are of considerable significance for historians of the Early Christian period as a whole. We can still hope for continuing illumination of this obscure period of our history.

Nick Grant

THE MATTER OF BRITAIN
by Harold Morland
Cudworth Press, St Anne's-On-Sea (see text)

For a man in his seventies to embark on a major verse retelling of key elements of the Arthurian story is notable enough, particularly when the result is three volumes totalling over 350 pages. For the entire work to be written in the Japanese verse form of haiku (i.e. three line units of, respectively, five, seven, and five syllables) may initially sound like a step beyond challenge into the grotesque.

Yet the first response of the reader, wherever he or she chooses to open these volumes, is one of immediate acceptance of the flowing naturalness of the verse. There is no sense of a straining to fit Celtic matter, English tongue, into an exotic or unnatural strait-jacket Indeed, if any proof were needed, not just that the haiku 'pattern' is as suitable to the deep patterns of our language as if invented for it, but that it proffers, in the right hands, a superbly supple implement of narrative verse, it is Morland's work.

Run-on and linked, the haiku pattern is seamlessly undetectable, and well able to cope with every mode of speech or description, each change of pace or mood; dialogue, landscape, meditation, it, and Morland, take all in easy stride.

The question of form well-handled, however, is a 'necessary but not sufficient' condition of the real test this work has to face - namely, when we already have a myriad verse retellings of elements of the Arthurian cycle, why should a reader turn to this one for anything new? The question gathers force when presented with somewhat daunting length (Book One, *This Mortal Coil*, is 118 pp; Book Two, *The Grail*, is 145 pp; and Book Three, *The Holy Fool*, 122) and a price which, while good value for money in today's terms (£6.50 each post free - the set £15 - from the Cudworth Press, 12 Cudworth Road, St.Anne's-on-Sea, Lancashire FY8 3AE - originally 1990, but still available) still bears considering by all but the deep-pocketed.

Before instancing particulars which lead this reader, at least, to believe that Morland has succeeded in providing fresh insights of both language and interpretation, it is as well to not what portions of the Cycle are in fact manifested in this trilogy.

Book One, more episode than unity, portrays Perceval, Merlin, Morgan-le-Fay, Yseult, and others, while, unusually, giving Kay the central role for this volume's title poem.

Book Two treats the Grail quest alone, as continuous narrative.

Book Three, in many ways the most fascinatingly original, introduces us to Perceval before he becomes Perceval, a nameless child using the temporary alias of 'Nemo' - Nobody, explores his winning of his 'rightful' name at the Siege Perilous, and then shows relapse to unidentified wanderhood again.

Throughout, a particular strength is the luminous clarity, combined with precise observation, with which the natural world which frames and enfolds the events is depicted. This is appropriate to a 'Matter' which, in so many ways, from its origins drew on the landscape-as-numinous element of Celtic religion and myth - and it also enables Morland to explore and reflect his own lifetime's involvement with Lakeland. Here, as much as in "Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight", we have Northern physical settings for, clearly, in Morland's view a Northern 'saga'.

The credibility given by 'poetic shafts of illumination' lighting on an accurately reporting the phenomena of weather and season, the natures and actions of birds and beasts, in this huge poem - no vague glittering fairyland for Morland, but a real, albeit pre-industrial, world - has the paradoxical benefit of making real for the reader, too, those elements which are 'beyond nature'. when a damaged king or sword is 'healed', a broken kingdom or life remade, we accept such phenomena as of the same unified order of things as that which brings the new green back to the bare fells in spring, or new life to be set in animal wombs when winter is still deep.

It is this reflection of an essential, cyclic unity at the heart of the Matter's earliest material which is, I think, the great strength of Morland's treatment. This is not an intellectual exploration - we are not set occult tests or ironic paradoxes, cross-cultural tangles and inter-temporal links to untease for example with Charles Williams' great and challenging *Taliessin in Logres*. What does face us, instead, is a poem which draws to the full on the links that bind Arthurian matter and Arthurian place, and in the process reminds us how deeply the core of the story depends on 'the green fuse that drives the flower', in Dylan Thomas' words, i.e. mankind's attempts, in this northern island, to come to terms with season and change.

If the result is, to some extent, that individuals in this poem are less than their setting, that surely is a truth enforced on anyone who has walked among the Northern hills, where even the most epic of men is tiny at times when, in Morland's words

"the hill seemed to be throwing
an anger of stones,
loudly grumbling down
to curses of rock."

He can move us for his protagonists, but he never exaggerates their scale, or forgets their temporarity; parts of a natural world, bound by its laws and to its wheel, even if its laws are stranger and more various than a strict scientist would accept, as indeed they are in the Matter's earliest arisings.

The links of place are strong, too, in the naturalness of Cumbrian speech the shepherd uses to the wanderer Perceval - and indeed human and setting almost become one at times, as in Perceval's response to Arthur's first words to him - he feels "like a spate of a narrow stream, that had been "icebound all winter."

In her introduction, Kathleen Raine compares Morland to Malory, Spenser, Blake and Tennyson. She has perhaps set unfair peaks for his work to scale but it should be said that, among the many reworkings of the Arthurian story, Morland's work, that of a man in the late autumn of life, succeeds triumphantly in taking the great story back to the first clear upland streams of its arising, and focuses for the reader the beauty and wildness of their plunging music, the hidden glitter of their constricted waterfalls, even if he eschews the wider deeper waters and indeed effectively bottomless oceans to which other facets and implications of the Matter have lured different poets.

Steve Sneyd

DICTIONARY OF MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT
Eileen Campbell & J H Brennan
AquarianPress, 1994, £6.99 paperback
ISBN 1-85538-4
314pp

This publication is a revised edition of *The Aquarian Guide to the New Age*, which appeared in 1990, and includes additions to both alphabetical entries and bibliography. The "ideas, people and places" promised by the subtitle are all well represented, with fair summaries of, for instance, the Matter of Britain, Merlin and Avalon and other non-Arthurian topics. Longtime students of parapsychology and orthodox psychology, mysticism and magic will recognise many of these areas examined, succinctly distilled in thumbnail sketches and longer articles; while absolute beginners will find it a useful reference work to consult as well as browse in.

Chris Lovegrove

YSTORIA TALIESIN (The Story of Taliesin)
Edited with an introduction and notes by
Patrick K.Ford
University of Wales Press, 1992, £25
ISBN 0-7083-1092-3

Consisting of just over 190 pages, a lengthy introduction, copious notes, appendix, glossary and indices - together with a reproduction of the **Ystoria Taliesin** in it original Welsh, this is very much an academic's book. **Ystoria Taliesin** is also a fascinating book - though it does help if you are already intrigued by the story of how young Gwion Bach became transformed into the bard Taliesin and his adventures at the court of Maelgwyn Gwynedd.

Stictly speaking,this is not an Arthurian story but it does have links with the Arthurian scene which are strong enough to justify a review of this publication. To start with, I am sure that the main criticism that will be levelled against the book is that the text of the story (like 'Culhwch and Olwen', also published by the Unversity of Wales Press) is in Welsh and no translation is given. The actual text is taken from Elis Gruffydd's 'Chronicles of the Six Ages of the World' composed while he was a soldier garrisoned at Calais in the early 16th century. Not only is the story of Taliesin fascinating but a look at the life of Elis Gruffydd and his contributions to Welsh literature is long overdue.

The introduction constitutes the greater part of the book and contains some very interesting material that cannot be ignored. Of special interest is the evidence from Ireland which has considerable similarities to the story of Taliesin. I speak mainly of the tales of Amargein and Senchan Torpeist, both of whom are described as being incredibly ugly and yet became great poets. Professor Ford includes some intriguing material on cauldrons and how they may have been more symbolic than real. He shows that it is possible that these stories may have their origins in some kind of ritual that bards had to undergo - later transformed by Christianity.

Though this publication is very much an academic book and is very expensive it does have very interesting things to say about aspects of the bard which make it worth ordering through the library lending system. I would also suggest that if you are unfamiliar with the story of Taliesin it would be worth reading it in one of the following sources: Lady Charlotte Guest's **Mabinogion** reproduces a version of the narrative with notes which, unfortunately, relies on material from Iolo Morgannwg. Patrick K.Ford himself has done an excellent translation, **The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales**, and there is a very nice children's book **The Tale of Taliesin** by Gwyn Thomas and Kevin Crossley-Holland, with illustrations by Margaret Jones. Of course, the Taliesin of this story is not quite that of the Taliesin who wrote poetry about Urien Rheged in the mid to late sixth century but rather a magical Taliesin. However, it must be admitted, there are connections and it is difficult to separate them completely.

Charles Evans-Günther

Tim Harris - The Island At The Centre of the Earth

Gallach of the Black Cross petitioned the court of Queen Nemedia in the Kingdom of Find, and Cedric the White petitioned the court of King Segomaros in the kingdom of Duv, and both asked for leave to travel to the Island at the Centre of the World.

"I cannot stop you going to the Island," the King and the Queen separately said. "But know this; the isle is a wondrous place and not wholly of this world. All manner of priestesses, druids, bards, enchantresses, heroes, gods and goddesses live there. There grow the Apples of Immortality, the Roses of Aonghus Og and the Herbs of Miach. No man has ever gone there and returned."

"Be that as it may," Gallach said to the Queen. "My soul tells me I should make this journey, so I must go." To the King Cedric said, "I do not fear danger. I quest for the honour and glory of this court and think I will find these on this quest, so I will go."

The two knights then set out, each knowing nothing of the other.

One winter morning as Gallach readied himself to continue on his way a voice came to him through the crisp air. "Gallach of Find, whither do you go?"

"I am headed for the Island at the Centre of the World," Gallach promptly replied. "And who is it that asks?"

Glancing around Gallach caught sight of a short but broadly built man emerging from a burrow beneath a holly bush. His hair was long and matted and his cloak, although once brightly coloured and suitable for royalty, was dirty, torn and faded. His eyes, however, shone brightly in his weathered face.

"My name I forgot many years ago and cannot tell you," he said. "But I am called the Madman of the Mountains by some; sometimes I am called other things."

"And how did you know my name?"

"I know much. To reach the island travel the Yellow Path 'til you reach the Pillar of the Philosopher King, then follow the Green Path. You will get to the coast, a boat will come for you."

Later the same day, as Cedric travelled through a starkly bare forest, a voice called to him."Cedric of Duv, whither do you go?"

Cedric stopped and looked about. "Who calls? Present yourself!"

A dishevelled figure sitting in a high branch of a tree, bearded, becloaked and with bright eyes drew Cedric's attention. "I am known as the Fool of the Forest sometimes, but at other times I am known differently; my exact name I cannot remember."

"I travel to the Island at the Centre of the World, not that it's any concern of yours."

To reach the island travel the Red Path 'til you reach the Pillar of the Philosopher King, then follow the Green Path. You will get to the coast, a boat will come for you."

That evening the two knights, just when they were thinking of stopping for the night, arrived at the Pillar of the Philosopher King.

"Hail," Cedric called. "I am Cedric of the kingdom of Duv."

"Well met, Sir Cedric," Gallach replied. "I am Gallach of the Black Cross. I search for the Island at the Centre of the World."

"I also search for the island," Cedric said."Shall we fight for the honour of this quest?"

"Why can't we share the honour and journey together?"

Cedric thought about this. "Mayhap that would be wisest."

So the two knights made camp and ate together that evening, and for the next few weeks they travelled as brothers in arms, fighting side by side unruly monsters that harassed them and supporting each other in the face of all the perils that wandering knights are wont to encounter.

It was early one spring morning, while the sky was still dark, that the two knights reached the sea. The surf broke around their horses' hooves as the sun rose and on the horizon was the Island at the Centre of the World, beautiful in the dawn. Even at the distance the two knights were they could smell the fragrance of the flowers that grew there, hear the chorus of the birds that lived there and see on the tallest hill of the island the half built walls that had been erected by the first people to live on the island, but which had never been finished as the people had realised that on the island they had no need for castles or towers or cities.

As the knights gazed at the island a boat approached the shore and a man both knights recognised cried out. "Ho! I am the Wise One of the Waves and can ferry you to that island. Will you come aboard?"

Gallach spoke first. "I have heard that the island is a wondrous place, that injustice and unhappiness cannot be found there, but I am a knight and it is my task to right wrongs and

raise the spirits of ill-treated people. My presence on the island would be meaningless. I said to my Queen that I would travel to the Island at the Centre of the World - well, I can see it now and believe my journey complete. I will not go with you." "I too have heard of the island's wonders," said Cedric. "And that there is no strife there or discord there, but I am a knight and it is my task to fight for my country and settle disputes between its people. I would have no place on the island. I said to my King that I would travel to the Island at the Centre of the World and I too consider my journey at an end. I will not go with you."

The Wise One of the Waves - who was otherwise known as the Fool of the Forest, the Madman of the Mountains and other things beside - nodded at the knight s'decision and sailed away from the shore.

(This is the winning entry to our Competition in Pendragon XXIV/4 : a response to Anna Clarke's 'Arthurian Tree of Life' illustration)

BRAINTEASER

R	O	N
D	A	G
N	E	P

This puzzle is based on Clive Doig's trackwords in *Radio Times*. The task is to find words of three letters or more by tracking from one square to the next. You may track up, down, sideways or diagonally in order, but you may not go through the same letter square in any one word. Proper nouns, or foreign words not in common use in English are not allowed. You may have already recognised the hidden nine letter word used. An average score is around 60 words, brainboxes should surpass 80.

Chris Lovegrove

Solution :

age, ape, ane, and, ado, ago, ard, aged, ped, dog, don, dean, deer, dap, drag, dragon, drape, dran, dong, dang, end, ear, ego, gonad, gap, gape, gar, goad, gad, god, gen, gear, garden, gaped, nag, nap, nan, neap, near, nape, nor, nog, nod, node, nard, orange, ode, oar, pen, peg, pan, page, pang, pad, par, pand, pard, pane, pardon, pened, paged, pea, peer, rad, rap, rado, rang, range, ranged, ran, rand, rap, rape, raped, rag, rage, raged, rod, rode, road, roan

LETTERS

WELCOME TO ALL

◊ From: Alexandra Clark, Hoddesdon, Herts:

Whilst attending a dinner at the Halls of Chivalry in Tintagel I purchased a copy of your summer Pendragon magazine. It was wonderful to find such an intelligent magazine for real Arthurian fans, do you have any back issues? Also do you know where I could get a booklist on all relevant books available? Could you put me in contact with anyone/group who I could contact to extend my interests?

I had been told that Pendragon was 'difficult' to get into but having contacted your local members Rodney and Eleri Munday and having had a very nice letter from them I enclose a cheque for membership.

Welcome to our Society, Alexandra and thanks to the Mundays for being such good ambassadors on our behalf. Far from being an exclusive group, we are very happy to welcome new members and have a large membership in this country and abroad. This letter raises several points that are reflected in other letters and I'll refer to them as they arise. I wrote to the King Arthur's Halls at Tintagel twice last year, enclosing a journal and leaflets, but have not received any reply. Perhaps Alexandra will be able to tell other members of their fraternity (sorority?) about us now and confirm what a friendly bunch we are.

BACK NUMBERS

◊ From: Ian Shaw, Mirfield, West Yorks.

May I take this opportunity to say how much I enjoy reading 'Pendragon'. As a fairly recent member might I suggest that once a year there is a listing of material dealt with in earlier issues. This would perhaps prompt new members into purchasing previous issues, if they contained articles of particular interest.

Paul wrote in January, his membership number is 962; the latest membership number allocated is 1016. We recruit mainly via other exchange journals as their readers decide to try out journals with related areas of interest. Some new subscribers leave us after one subscription, others are keen Arthurians'who have been looking for a journal such as ours and are delighted to be with fellow-enthusiasts. How ideas get around that we are ' exlusive' is a mystery, but it illustrates how our own members can be our best advertisers. The economics of printing the journal means we have to limit the run to what we are likely to sell in the following four months and this is finely balanced. We now have no back numbers of any journals except for the last, No.XXIV/4. Costs of reprinting small runs are prohibitive. Our plan is to collate an index to Pendragon and offer photocopies of articles and book reviews at cost (4p a page). This will be done when time allows, hopefully this year.

NEWS FROM OXFORD

◊ From: Matthew Kilburn, St.John's College, Oxford.

I'm pleased to tell you that the Oxford Arthurian Society committee have voted to subscribe to Pendragon. Could you send me some more leaflets? I am intending them for Oxford Arthurians who have left the University and might like to join Pendragon, as well as current members.

Many thanks for Pendragon XXIV/4, which was very impresssive. It was good to see articles written with such enthusiasm, the book columns and Talking Head are a very useful service, as well as being entertaining in their own right. As for Chris Lovegrove's 'Little Known Arthurian Facts', I always suspected something of the sort, but Chris's identification of Sir Ron Dearing with Arthur's lance clinches it!

Regarding John Ford's letter, the development of local Arthurian societies would be a welcome one. We may be approaching another Arthurian renaissance, so to speak, with 'First Knight' on the way; there are at least three Arthurian World Wide Webs on the Internet, demonstrating the legend's adaptation to new surroundings once more : local groups would be an ideal expression of and focus for interest in matters Arthurian. as well as (potentially) providing more material for Pendragon to report on...

We are very pleased to renew our contacts with the Oxford Arthurians, Matthew is a committee member of their Society and we are looking forward to a lively contribution to the magazine from its members. Oxford would be a splendid venue for our AGM this Autumn - being geographically and mythically central (see the 'Mabinogion': 'Lludd & Llefelys') Thank you for helping us with recruitment, Matthew, we are looking into the Internet situation.

NIL CARBORUNDUM

◊ From: John Ford, Watford, Herts.

I am sorry to report that, so far, I have had a dismal response to the get-together that I proposed, in fact I have received only one letter showing any interest, which is a great surprise, as at least 7-8 people at Cardiff said they thought it was a good idea and they would attend (including a certain author from North London!). Still, I am not giving up. As I do not know who will attend, I propose to hold the get-together in my home town: 27th April, at the Verulam public house in St. Alban's Road in Watford, at 8 p.m. This is not far from Junction 19 on the M25 and is accessible to most people. If members turn up we can assess a more convenient venue for future meetings. If anything does come of it I will send you a report for future issues.

It would be very encouraging to hear that members have supported John in his attempt to hold a local meeting. His phone number is 0923 440636 (answer phone if not in). I hope the "Latin' title is familiar to all ! Stick with it John, the AGM is coming up in September and' we'll have a drive then to set up some branches.

ARTHURIAN ANNALS

◊ From: Dan Nastali, Kansas City, U.S.A.

Here's a little background information to clear up any mystery about my Arthurian activities. As well as being a long-time subscriber to Pendragon, I was a member of the Editorial staff of 'Avalon to Camelot', a fondly-remembered magazine published by Freya Reeves in Chicago from 1983-1986. I contribued a number of entries on modern Arthurian literature to Garland's 'New Arthurian Encyclopedia', I am also one of the compilers of the 'Arthurian Annals' with Philip Boardman of the University of Nevada/Reno. The 'Annals' are a chronologically arranged bibliography of Arthurian material in English from 1400 to the present 'Bibliography' is here a broadly used term, since entries are by no means limited to published books. The 'Annals', in fact, begin with 15th-century manuscript copies of Middle English chronicles and romances and end with contemporary TV shows and computer games. Along the way, we include everything from Merlin prophecies in Renaissance almanacs to stage treatments of the legend, to children's literature, to thousands of poems, to collectors' editions of major works, to comic books, films - well, you get the idea. We are omitting only formal Arthurian scholarship, which has its own bibliographies, though we include editions and translations of Arthurian material by scholars.

We have enlisted a small network of American, British, and Canadians scholars specializing in post-medieval Arthuriana, booksellers who deal extensively with Arthurian material old and new, and collectors familiar with the whole range of publishing history of the legend.

I can't tell you at this point when the 'Annals' will see print, though a prospectus with some sample sections will soon be submitted to publishers. We now have close to 5,000 entries in our database, but I estimate that the 'Annals will eventually list over 10,000 items when all records have been entered. I'm now convinced that the 'Annals' will appear in a medium like CD-ROM as well as in book form. The CD format would essentially give the user access to the database.

You'll be interested to know that Pendragon will be represented not only with an entry which covers the publication's life, but also with a number of entries on individual articles and poems of more than passing interest which have appeared in the journal. Thanks again for your helpfullness. Every issue of Pendragon informs me of publications and events that I might not otherwise learn of.

*Thank you for taking the time to tell us about this fascinating project, Dan, I'm sure that our members will be thrilled to learn that such a facility will eventually become available; especially our computer-wise members. Best wishes for a speedy publication. Perhaps our own members who write books and make films might find it worthwhile to keep us informed of their activities in future, knowing that the 'Annals' are keeping their beady eyes on Pendragon. **Your** article or poem might be included, too, if you you could get around to sending it to us in time!*

THE DRAGON SPEAKS

◊ From: Charles Evans-Günther, Flint, Clwyd.

1. Steve Sneyd's 'Once and Future Poem' brings to mind the recent S4C Welsh language

comedy **'Ymadawiad Arthur'** (The Passing of Arthur) set in Wales of the early 60's and 2096. Dai Arthur - King of the Rugby Field-disappears from the Wales v England match at Cardiff Arms Park, just as he is about to score, and ends up in a future community organised on the lines of the National Eisteddfod. Hopefully, this film will get a slot on Channel 4 or BBC2 with English subtitles. Watch out for it! The movie actually begins with a cobweb covered old knight, lying with sword on chest, with what could be T.Gwyn Jones reciting his famous awdl, which gives the comedy its title.

2. **Black Horses!** An excellent article from Chris Lovegrove. As far as I am aware, Celtic chieftains rode white steeds. Wildman's 'The Black Horsemen' falls into many potholes, especially when you have a pub of that name in Buckley (Clwyd). (I was writing the rough draft of this letter on the bus from Mold to Chester, passing the White Lion on my right, the Kam Xam Chinese take-away on my left, and the Black Horse a hundred or so yards in front.)

3. From horses to **children**. Arthur is said to have had the following children - Amhar (Amr), Archfedd, Cydfan, Gwydre and Llacheu according to Welsh tradition. Amhar and Llacheu may have their origins in the names of two streams near Caerleon, though there are early poems in which Llacheu is mentioned. Gwydre appears in 'Culhwch and Olwen', being slain by the Twrch Trwyth at Cwm Cerwyn and Cydfan was the child of Eleirch and Arthur as recorded in 'Hanesyn Hen'. Archfedd is the only daughter recorded, appearing in 'Bonedd y Saint' as the wife of Llawfrodedd Farchog and mother of Efadier and Gwrial. Medrawt is not recorded in Welsh tradition as a son of Arthur - the relationship developed at a later date. One son rarely, if ever, mentioned, who should be treated carefully, is Smerve Mor. Embedded in Scottish tradition, he was said to be the son of Arthur and married to the sister of Aidan McGavran.

4.My final comment concerns **'Celtic Mandalas'**. I have always admired Courtney Davis's work but I am unhappy about the text by Helena Paterson in this book. I am highly dubious of the so-called Celtic philosophy quoted. The Circles of Gwynvyd (sic), Ceugant and Abred came from the imagination of Iolo Morganwg and have no basis in the knowledge of the ancient druids. The words 'abred', 'ceugant' and 'gwynfyd' are found in 13th century literature but have no connection with Iolo's fabricated druidic philosophy. Equally, the signs of the zodiac know nothing to the Celts and were probably introduced into this country by the Romans. Julius Caesar did say that the druids studied the movements of the heavens but there is no evidence to tell what images the Celts actually saw. Trying to extrapolate from sources such as Hindu astrology is not much help because it was influenced strongly by Greek astrology. I have not come across anything 'safe' about a Celtic equivalent to the constellations and I have little confidence in Glastonbury's zodiac.

May Pendragon live long and prosper (to quote a certain pointy-eared SF character).

The heading recalls that Charles ran his own excellent magazine under this title for ten years, it seems a good 'pen name' for his writings and reminds us of his extensive knowledge of things Celtic and Arthurian.

We'd like to hear from readers on the Glastonbury Zodiac - come in Mary Caine !

MYTHIC MOMENTS

◊ From: John Billingsley, Hebden Bridge, W.Yorks.

Re. John Wayne Bobbitt, who can deny that history consists of a series of unanswered as well as unasked questions? If John, like many before him, cannot respond adequately to his 'mythic moment', then America - indeed everywhere that the King remains wounded or maimed - will be forced to face the dilemma again. And again, until the question is both asked and discovered! So look forward, America, to the return of Lorena Bobbitt under a new name! I hope readers enjoyed the food for thought!

From letters we have received, they did, John. Many thanks for an unusual article with depth.

NEWS FROM MONTPELIER

◊ From: Chris Lovegrove, Montpelier, Bristol, Avon

1. I enjoyed John Billingsley's article, well argued and sensitively treated. This might be a good point to respond to his letter about **'living rock'**. Yes, I suppose my approach is broadly cartesian, but I hope that I am not too narrow-minded. Certain stones do command special regard, for a variety of reasons (including as I said a desire to imbue the inanimate with life), but my article wasn't intended to cover all these reasons, and I'm sorry if this impression was given, and if I seemed to be dismissive of others' perceptions; the statement as it stands does need to be qualified in some way.

However, I do feel that we need to be careful when we use metaphoric language that we don't slip into a literal usage without noticing it. One person's 'living rock' need not be the same as another's. All rock at some stage, due to pressure or temperature, has been fluid, some strata even display the evidence of past organisms, and everything could well be in the

melting pot again in the future. But the timescales involved are huge. Current earth convulsions, such as quakes or volcanic activity, involve myriad processes and materials. Some might see in these the manifestation of Yahweh or Gaia or metaphysical entities. I simply don't know. I cannot argue with those who *feel* personages in standing stones, but I wonder whether the nature of that perceived life is as close to that of the human condition as is sometimes claimed.

2. Steve Sneyd's insightful taxonomy has, of course, implications in areas other than science-fiction poetry. As an introduction to his theme it was very good. I shall be pedantic only about one thing: *rex quondam rexque futurus* does indeed mean once and future king, but the *-que* suffix means "and" and is unnecessary when the phrase *rex futurus* stands alone.

3. Brendan McMahon's article neatly demonstrates that the Bear link continues to be vital to our attempts to understand our obsession with Arthur. I still think the Arthur/Beowulf connection is one which will bear more investigation! I also think, and this is not necessarily a frivolous suggestion, that our instinct to pursue the Arthurian question to its roots is mirrored by the extraordinary affection that is given to the common or garden teddy.

The recent TV series Magic Animals featured a half-hour programme on the Bear, but failed to investigate its mythical, especially Arthurian, connections. The earlier programme on the wolf featured Professor Russell, whose article on Gawain at Reading leads in our theme this time.

4. Geoff Roberts has made a valiant effort to examine Arthur's progeny. The point of the song 'King Arthur has Three Sons' was that all three, the miller, the weaver and the tailor, were middlemen widely regarded as being in trades that encouraged their dishonesty, and reluctantly accepted as necessary evils. Similar verses existed about King Stephen, King Henry (probably VIII rather than VII) and Elizabeth the First.

5. David's mysterious sounding **Paimpont Syndicat d'Initiative** is of course not some ancient manuscript but a Breton tourist information office. Bearing in mind the recent less-than-eloquent squabbling of tourist association members in Essex, I wouldn't place too much authority on the Paimpont version of events. As regards Arthur's **Lincolnshire treasure**, I wonder if there is some confusion with King John's lost treasure in the Wash?

BIASED PENDRAGON?

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

I must protest most strongly at Chris Lovegrove's totally unjustified remark about Chris Barber having the air of a prophet rejected in his own country. Chris Barber is a highly respected and popular author in his own country of Wales, and he certainly does not have the air of a rejected prophet...incidentally, there was ample opportunity to ask questions regarding the more contentious assertions made in the book at question time, but nobody seemed prepared to take up the challenge on this occasion...I was under the impression that the Pendragon Society was originally formed to investigate all Arthurian matters with an unbiased approach...I trust that the Society will continue to flourish with a less biased attitude.

To be fair, what Chris wrote was, 'but for most of the evening the presenter had the air of a prophet rejected in his own country', which is not quite the same thing. I think it fair to say that Chris Barber had a challenging task in having to set up and present the lecture on his own in difficult technical circumstances and could have done with some support in presenting your joint book to a large audience. As it was, he managed most creditably.

My own introduction of Chris at Cardiff was full, generous and complimentary and it is difficult to know how you can comment on what went on when you were not there, David. Can we drop the whole subject now? I have no intention of turning this journal into a battlefield, neither do I take kindly to accusations of editorial bias. Good scholarship should be able to stand up on its own without endless bickering argument and justification. Surely it's time to let your attractive book make its own journey to Avalon?

I'm glad to say Chris Barber has promised an article, with photographs, for our 'Caerleon' edition. Next issue?

OUR CORNISH CORRESPONDENT

◊ From: Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall.

Yes, Fred, I think you must indeed have been watching 'in a sour frame of mind' when you viewed 'The Spaceman and King Arthur'. It's a spoof luvvie, a straight send-up, not to be taken at all seriously - I mean what Pendragon could take seriously a story in which Merlin was a villain and one of the knights was Sir Winston, declaiming the old battle-charger's 1940 speeches? Personally I'm very glad I decided to video it when it was shown during the Xmas hols; I think it's utterly hilarious, and have watched it at least three times since! (I cackle like a drain every time the Android tells the cart-horse: 'Giddy Ap'...)

Mia maxima culpa, Beryl, I think I understand

what a 'spoof' is but there is a difference in not being amused by a particular film's treatment and taking it all seriously. The Monty Python parody is adult, clever, often subtle and I watch it annually for a good laugh. One person's joke may be another's headache. The Radio Times reviewed this film as 'an easy-going comedy for children!'

FROM ESSEX TO YORKSHIRE

◊ From: Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W.Yorks.

1. Re.the 'Essex Arthur' "theory", a book called 'East Saxon Heritage - An Essex Gazetteer' (Stephen Pearsey and Andrex Books. 1993, Alan Sutton Press) mentions dismissively the theory that the rough arc of Ambros names across Essex indicate bases of the 'Ambrosiaci' of Ambrose Aurelius against the invader. What might be more relevant is their discussion of the likelihood that the area around Great Chesterford and Saffron Walden in NW Essex remained a Celtic enclave (Walden = Weala-Dunn, Valley of the Britons) centered on the former Roman walled settlement of Great Chesterford, long after areas to E, N and S were in Anglo-Saxon hands.

2. I did attempt to take up the challenge of doing a poem using the page 3 illustration (XXIV/4) as trigger, but the multifloriate, many layered wealth of symbolism depicted is so great it would be embarking on an epic to try to explore it with any fullness.

Sounds like the lost epic that Milton was going to write on Arthur, Steve. Thanks for the book information, which we've put in 'Booknews.' Steve's book on West Yorkshire Castles and earthwork fortifications, 'Giants In Our Earth,' (40pp A5, £2.80 inc.post and packing), is now available - it contains a brief summary of the Utherian matter re. Castle Hill at Huddersfield. Anyone interested: 4, Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, W.Yorkshire, HD5 8PB

ARTHUR'S PROGENY

◊ From: J.D.Norris, Birmingham, W.Midlands.

I too have a fair supply of Welsh blood in my veins. Arthur was close to Welsh aspirations, and I would so much like to give them back their hero, so long dead and in obscurity. Alas! I doubt my ability to successfully transfer all my findings to someone who is truly prepared to believe my surety of claims to the reality of Arthur's ancestry. It has taken years of study time and sacrifice for me to arrive at these proofs. I certainly do not claim to be a highly educated person, but I believe my ancestors were of noble birth, therefore I carry an inherited intellect. I am beginning to wonder if what I know should be kept secret, the situation is this: that Arthur's descendants are existent in this country now, they have been since the Norman invasion for they came over with them back to the country of their illustrious ancestor.The Saxons, deadly enemies of Arthur, deliberately suppressed all knowledge of him, so that he became mere legend, with no reality in historical fact. His people were driven to Brittany where, as you know a King Mark once ruled, Arthur's son or descendant? The Norman invasion sub-jugated the Saxons then, but since, the Saxons and the English have dominated the Keltic races. With the wane of Norman power. German royalty have since taken precedence and held sway, therefore the authorities would not be particularly pleased to have a potential opposition thrust into the limelight, someone who may prove a threat to their position, someone championing Keltic pride. Nevertheless I might still put forth my claims.

This letter was received on 25th February, it is genuine and offered as proof that the Pendragon Society is still prepared to investigate all Arthurian matters with an unbiased approach. Mr Norris is unable to travel but would be happy to speak with anyone who is sympathetic and willing to listen to his claims. Is there anyone who can travel to Birmingham to meet and talk with Mr Norris? Someone living as near as Burton on Trent, perhaps?

DID YOU KNOW?

Early in its history the University of Oxford claimed that it was founded by King Alfred the Great. In the 15th Century the University of Cambridge asserted that its own founder was the even more ancient and glorious Arthur.

Ref: ***Arthur's Britain*** (Brewer & Frankl)

TAVAS EDDIE yn grüth tooke

From the writings of Brother Edgar of Sodbury Abbey

Unity in Diversity' is the reason why interest in the Arthurian genre has survived and continues to grow apace. Approaches to the Pendragon himself may vary from the historical to the hysterical but all is grist to Arthur's mill.

Variety is the spice of life and nowhere is this better expressed than in Tennyson's incomparable verse:

> Solemnity balanced by levity;
> Prolixity set against brevity.
> In Life's university
> We learn that diversity
> Is vital to health and longevity.
> Thank you for shopping at Tesco's:
> Please call again."

These profound lines, scribbled on the back of an ancient supermarket till-receipt, were discovered recently in a shopping basket in Somersby, the poet's early home. Their authenticity then, is not in doubt - though computer analysis does suggest that the last two lines may not have been Tennyson's but a later gloss.

As an aside, one wonders what masterly work Tennyson might have penned had his shopping list been longer; new lyrics, perhaps, for that popular Irish supermarket song: The Rows of Trolley(s)?

But I digress...*Pendragon* is now a prestigious title but 'twas not always so. When Bran returned from his voyage to America, in addition to an aurochs horn full of Coca Cola, he brought back the U.S. slang word 'Goon' - meaning idiot.

Now while fighting in Dumnonia, the Saxons learned the Cornish word for 'village' - 'pendra'. Hence, because they despised the Celts, they addressed Arthur as 'You pendra goon', meaning 'village idiot' - until he clobbered them at Badon, after which they stopped doing it. Mainly because they were dead.

In its modified form, 'pendra-gon', the appellation survived until eventually Arthur called in the C.E.L.T.S. - the College of Etymological and Linguistic Trouble-Shooters - who had the bright idea of moving the hyphen and turning 'pendra-gon' into 'Pen-dragon' - 'Chief Dragon'.

An example of this letter-regrouping is 'Sangreal' (Holy Cup) which some folk split into 'Sang Real' ('Royal Blood' or 'Real Blood').

Still on the subject of etymology, I read with interest Dr.Anne Ross's suggestion that 'Arthur' may be derived from 'Art' (in Gaelic) or 'Arth' (in Welsh) - both of which mean 'bear'.

Now I am loath to contradict someone of Dr.Ross's scholarship, but knowledge is always superior to theory. We **know** how both Arthur and his uncle Uther got their names. In the tradition of Perceval, the 'Fair Unknown' of the Romances, the two great Celtic leaders didn't originally know their own names until they heard - or rather misheard - them from the Saxons.

We also find confirmation of Arthur's superiority of status to that of Uther, in the Saxon attitude to them both. On meeting that of Uther, in the Saxon attitude to them both. On meeting Arthur's uncle they asked brusquely: 'You the Pendragon?' (implying doubt). His nephew, however, they greeted with 'Ah, the Pendragon!' (no doubt at all). And so, to this day, they are known as 'You the (Uther) Pendragon' and 'Ah the (Arthur) Pendragon'.

['Yes, Deidre of Chipping Sodbury; I suppose 'The Cloister and the Arth' might be a good name for your proposed book about the Pendragon's strained relationship with the Church; but the title **does** seem vaguely familiar...]

"The Lady says she's right out of Excaliburs. What'll it be - an Armalite or a Kalashnikov?"

BOOK VIEWS

More news of books and booksellers, writers and publishers for Arthurian bookworms.

♈ ON THE SHELF:

1. ***The Arthurian Tarot Course.*** Caitlin Matthews. We didn't give publisher's particulars in our review last time: Thorsons (Harper Collins) 1993, Pbk. 267pp. £9.99. ISBN 1-85538-258-X.

2. ***Cadbury Castle, Somerset - The Early Medieval Archaeology.*** Leslie Alcock with S.J.Stevenson and C.B.Musson. University of Wales Press, 1995. Hbk. 188pp. £35. ISBN 0-7083-1275-6. The book we've awaited! The 'Arthurian' and Ethelredan phases revealed by the 1966-1979 excavations are definitively described. Sections 1 and 2 give descriptive accounts of the structural remains & artefacts, Section 3 interprets the findings in their wider historical context. Lavishly illustrated with maps, plans, drawings and photographs.

3. ***The Arthur of the Welsh.*** Ed. Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H.Jarman & Brynley F. Roberts. University of Wales, Feb. 1995. Pbk. 310pp, £12.95. ISBN 0-7083-1307-8. Now available at an affordable price, *'Arthur of the Welsh'* offers a fuller, more detailed presentation of pre-French-romance Arthurian tradition than is available in any other single book.' (New Welsh Review). Includes chapters on: the 'historical' Arthur; Arthur in early Welsh verse; the legend of Merlin; *Culhwch ac Olwen; Geraint; Owain; Peredur; The Dream of Rhonabwy* and *Trystan ac Esyllt*. Also evidence for the growth of the Arthurian theme in the *Triads* and in the *Historia Regum Britanniae;* the Breton connection and the transmission to the non - Celtic world.

4. ***David Jones: A Commentary on some Poetic Fragments.*** Christine Pagnoulle. University of Wales Press, 1987. Hbk. 162pp. £17.50. ISBN 0-7083-0962-3. A reader's guide to eight poems, including seven from the sequence *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments.* Elucidates the text, discusses their poetic value and highlights their contemporary relevance. A major study of a major 20th century Arthurian poet.

5. ***The Matter of Britain.*** Harold Morland, introduction by Kathleen Raine. Graal Publications, available from John Matthews, £6. (BCM Hallowquest, London, WC1N 3XX). 'A poetic sequence in the mould of Charles Williams but without his theological obscurity, evokes the ecstasy and magic which fuel the Matter of Britain.' Written in haiku. Reviewed in this issue by Steve Sneyd. Very strongly recommended.

6. ***Merlin Through the Ages: A Chronological Anthology and Source Book.*** Edited, translated and compiled by R.J.Stewart and John Matthews. Blandford, 1995. Hbk. 349pp. £16.99. ISBN 0-71137-2468-4. This book came to hand just as we were sending off our copy to the printer, it will be reviewed next time. It was a pleasant surprise to find that it included the texts of plays I have mentioned in my article and which are not easily obtainable. A hoard of freshly mined treasures for Merlin fans.

7. ***Henry Purcell.*** Robert King, Thames & Hudson, 1995. £18.95. We include this important new book on Purcell, whose tercentenary falls this November, mainly because of his association with Dryden on *King Arthur, or the British Worthy,* but also because it is a beautiful and lavishly illustrated work which brings the whole 18th century alive. At the same time it provides expert analysis of the great composer's music; King has recorded nearly 30 discs of Purcell's work for his Hyperion label. Can our Society musicians let us have details of any 'Arthurian' recordings?

8. ***Sacred Symbols: The Celts.*** Thames & Hudson, 1995. 85 illustrations, 60 in colour, 80pp. £5.95. ISBN 0-500-060142. In Thames & Hudson's new *SACRED SYMBOLS* series. Their note: 'Throughout history humans have developed elaborate symbolic systems to help allay their fear of the unknown and to tap the deep well-springs of spirituality - and today, more than ever, people are discovering the relevance of these belief systems to life in the 1990s'...the Celts are today associated with a particularly rich body of symbolism and mystery. Ritual, omens and signs were central to their religious beliefs, and these were expressed in a variety of beautiful designs and symbols found in Celtic stonework, metalwork and manuscripts...the major symbols of the Celts are here explained and, above all, beautifully illustrated'. This book may be a corrective to some of the more fanciful material on 'Celtic' symbolism that has

appeared currently.

9. ***The Arthurian Tradition.*** John Matthews. Element Books. Hbk. 96pp. £12.99. This is a full-colour version of the original in this publisher's *Tradition* series. 'A pictorial journey into the Arthurian treasure house, this lavishly illustrated book will bring the magical world of Arthur alive for you.' It is certainly a feast for the eye and makes a splendid introduction to give anyone as a present.

10. ***The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends.*** Element have also given Ronan Coghlan's indispensable book the full colour treatment. Hb. £18.99. The trouble is I bought both these books in their original format!

11. ***The Silver Arm.***

12. ***The Book of Conquests.*** Both written and illustrated by Jim Fitzpatrick. Paper Tiger. Limpbacks, £9.95. ISBN 0-905895. and ISBN 0-905895-14-2. Fitzpatrick's work must be known to most Celtic buffs - marrying contemporary illustration techniques with traditional Celtic forms to capture the Celtic spirit, 'its bravery and its pride, which still leaps across from these pages with as much sinew and beauty as those ancient heroes leapt across the battlefields of Éireann'. Tales of Nuada of the Silver Arm and of Nuada and the battles between the Fir Bolg and the Tuatha de Danann. Write for colour leaflets and order form: Dragon's World, 26 Warwick Way, London, SW1V 1RX.

13. ***Celtic Warrior Chiefs.*** Bob Stewart and John Matthews, 1993. Firebird Books, (Heroes & Warriors Series). Now in paperback, 208pp, £9.95. 160 photos & drawings. ISBN 1-85314-116-X. The life and legends of the most famous warriors from over 10 centuries of Celtic history: Cuchulainn, Boadicea, Fionn, MacCumhail and Macbeth.

14. ***King Arthur's Return.*** Courtney Davis & Helena Patterson. Blandford Press, 1995. Hbk. 128pp. £14.99. ISBN 0-7137-2430-7. 40 colour plates and bw decoration. Same author/artistic team as *Celtic Mandalas.* Retelling of the tales with Courtney's fine artistic decoration. Not yet seen by us.

15. ***Names from the Dawn of British Legend.*** Toby D. Griffen. Llanerch Publishers, 1994. Pbk. 120pp. £6.50. Professor Griffen uses Linguistic expertise to examine key names from the Dark Ages: Taliesin, Aneirin, Myrddin/ Merlin and Arthur in order 'to discover who these people were, what they did and how they affected the history and legend of Britain.' The final chapter 'History: Actual, Factual, Virtual' is particularly interesting and there is a useful bibliography. Recommended to all Arthurian buffs.

Arthurian fiction reviewed in *'Vector'*, September 1994 (contributed by Steve Sneyd):

16. Firelord. Parke Godwin. Avanova. 400p. Story of Artorius Uther Pendragon, a young centurion who works his way up through the ranks and becomes the warrior-king. No Excalibur, no Round Table nor Kts. in shining armour. Historical fantasy, 'Godwin weaves the Arthurian and Faery legends with the beauty of a Celtic knot.' Available from *Excalibur Books, Rivenoak, 1, Hillside Gardens, Bangor, Co. Down, BT19 6SJ. (0247-458579) £4.95.* (Ask for list of Arthurian fiction).

17. ***Grailblazers,*** Tom Holt. Orbit, 1994. 357pp, £4.99. Hilarious! 'Reconvened in the 1990s, the knights set out on the Great Quest, via the Citizens Advice Bureau, motorway service station, Atlantis, the Australian outback and the North Magnetic Pole'. (William Shakespeare is ghost-writing for Coronation Street.) Some serious moments.

▽ THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY BOOK AWARDS:

.The winner was *In Search of the Neanderthals,* by Chris Stringer & Clive Gamble (Thames & Hudson), closely followed by *Life & Letters on the Roman Frontier* by Alan Bowman (British Museum Publications), and *Timber Castles,* by Robert Higham & Philip Barker (Batsford).

The second title uniquely brings to life the activities of a group of soldiers who lived on the Northern Frontier of the Roman Empire and is written from the correspondence of these native Gallic soldiers from Batavia (Holland) Absolutely fascinating.

The other two finalists were *Archaeology in British Towns* by Patrick Ottaway (Routledge, £37.50) and *Glastonbury* by Philip Rahtz (Batsford, £14.99).

▽ A GOOD READ:

This is the name of a half-hour programme on BBC Radio 4 Fm. Its format is to invite two guests - who are not normally associated with literary interests - to discuss three paperback books of their own choice. Last November Edward Blishen hosted a programme with gardener Geoff Hamilton and MP Ken Livingstone. I had told the *Bookworm* producer myself of Ken's interest in *Refuge in Avalon* so I was not surprised to hear the team discuss Marion Bradley's book. Ken saw it as a powerful attack on Pauline Christianity, set in a period when he would like to have lived. Geoff Hamilton said he enjoyed it but found it 'slightly unconvincing history, a medieval bodice-ripper which couldn't make up its mind'. He also felt the magic was 'overdone' but loved it when Vivienne told Merlin she had seen Arthur in her magic mirror = "I've faxed him!" The Chairman said he liked it because it is 'Mills and Boonery', to which Ken rejoined "That's gross. It's a strong blast against early

Christians, with their rigid rules and disciplines." He said he had found it difficult to come to terms with 'the sight' but, as a rationalist, the book had opened up his mind to 'wisdom of another kind'. He felt the book gave a 'green view' and he saw the Druid/pagan religion as relaxed and 'in touch with nature'. I sensed that Geoff Hamilton felt that the Christian teaching of the need for dominion over nature was nearer his own heart. (Puts one in mind of the old joke: Vicar Cto old man gardeningↃ "How lovely to see you tending God's handiwork". Old Man: "Aye, but you should have seen it when he had it all to himself!"Ↄ It was good to hear some down-to-earth discussion of an Arthurian novel that didn't start from a feeling of reverence!

FEATURED AUTHOR:MOYRA CALDECOTT:

Readers may have come across this author's ***The Green Lady and the King of Shadows, A Glastonbury Legend*** which is published by Gothic Image Publications. It tells the story 'of the struggle between St.Collen and the mighty Gwyn ap Nudd, a confrontation which involves the Earth Goddess, and, ultimately, the highest powers of the universe, in a dramatic climax on the top of Glastonbury Tor. 1989. Pbk. 115p. £4.95. ISBN 0-906362-11-3

. . . . .

Moyra Caldecott has written 19 books and novels, set in prehistoric times, including *Guardians of the Tall Stones* and *Crystal Legends,* and she has devoted much of her life to collecting and examining myths and legends across the world. I have a copy of her *Women in Celtic Myth - tales of extraodinary women from the ancient Celtic tradition.* This book is unfortunately not now in print in this country, although it is abroad! Here is a list of Moyra Caldecott's books still available in bookshops or on order from bookshops. We recommend our readers to support this talented author's work, she also happens to be a member of the Pendragon Sociery.

Guardians of the Tall Stones. ISBN 0-89087-463-8 Published by Celestial Arts, Berkeley, California, USA. Distributed in UK by Airlift. Phone: 071-607-5792. A Trilogy of Novels now in one volume. Set in Bronze Age Britain, 1500 BC, at a time when the great stone circles of Avebury and Stonehenge were still in use though already ancient.

Women in Celtic Myth. ISBN 0-89281-357-1 Published by Destiny Books (Inner Tradition) Vermont, USA. Distributed in UK by Deep Books. Phone: 071-232-2747. Non-fiction. A retelling of the stories of some powerful, interesting women from ancient Celtic myth and legend, accompanied by comments on their esoteric significance.

Myths of the Sacred Tree ISBN 0-8928-414-4. Published by Destiny Books (Inner Traditions), Vermont, USA. Distributed in UK by Deep Books. Non-fiction. A retelling of stories about trees from the pool of world myth and legend, with comments on their esoteric significance.

The Green Lady and the King of Shadows. ISBN 0-906362-11-3. Published by Gothic Image, Glastonbury, UK.

A short novel set in 6th century AD, woven from several Glastonbury legends, including that of St.Collen's confrontation with the Celtic god Gwynn ap Nudd, and the story of Creiddylad and Gwythyr, son of Greidyawl (and Gwynn ap Nudd) from an Arthurian story in the *Mabinogion.*

The Winged Man. ISBN 0-7472-3930-4 Published by Headline, UK. A novel about the great legendary King Bladud, father of King Lear, and founder of the first healing sanctuary at Bath long before the invasion of the Romans.

The paperback is still in the shops at £5.99, but the author has some copies of the hardback (now out of print) at £12 -previously £16.99.

(We had intended to review 'The Winged Man' *in this issue, but have found it necessary to carry it over to our August edition.)*

REVIEWS : From: *3rd Stone,* No.20 :

Pendragon...You can have a bit too much of old Artie at times but this attractive A-fiver has enough variation (and a lively readership) to win your attention.

From: *Celtic Connections,* No.10: Old-established and very informative Arthurian magazine, much fascinating reading.

Talking Head

☆ OUT AND ABOUT

1.Celtica: opens at Machynlleth in Mid Wales on 1st May:'Experience the history and culture of the Celtic people as Nia and Gwydion guide you through a mystical world and take you on an unforgettable journey into the past and back to the future'.The Exhibition includes a 3D dramatisation of life in a Celtic settlement, a journey into the Celtic Otherworld and a theatrical presentation of the Celtic future. There is an interpretative centre dedicated to Welsh and Celtic history, shops , tea room and educational facilities. All this in beautiful parkland two minutes from the town centre. Celtica was designed for Montgomeryshire C.C. by John Sunderland, who created the Jorvik Centre in York, and employs the latest audio-visual technology. Adults £3.95, children £2.95; family ticket available. Phone: 01654 702702.

2.Camelot Theme Park: 'Take a trip in time to the legendary land of King Arthur and his Knights' at the Camelot theme park in Chorley, Lancashire. Marvel at Merlin's sorcery, watch jousting tournaments or take a tortuous ride in the Rack. Location: M6 (Junct. 27 for north-bound, Junc. 28 for southbound) or the M61 (Junct. 8),well signposted. Tel: 01257 453044.

3.Tower Hill Pageant: Award winning dark ride in a computerised carriage which transports you past vivid scenes from London's past: Romans,Saxons and Vikings, to the horrors of the Plague, the Great Fire of London and the second world war blitz. Also, Museum of Waterfront Archaeology: London relics. Situated next to the Tower, open 7 days. (0171)-709-0081.

4.The Museum of London: The new Prehistoric Gallery opened last November, claiming to be *politically correct*: 'we have chosen to humanise the past by focusing on specific sites and people and by giving greater prominence to green and gender issues'. The Section "Owning the Space, 1200-200 BC" speaks of 'British warriors' and 'French cousins' rather than 'Celts', 'Gauls and Druids'. Don't be dismayed, however, there is a splendid display of the Iron Age temple that was excavated during the war at Heathrow Airport (it is now under the main runway). The Victorian Pepper's Ghost illusion ("it's all done with mirrors") is used to dissolve the ancient scene into the landing of a jumbo jet in front of your eyes. Merlin couldn't have done it better himself!

5.The Loch Tay Crannog: A timber round-house, home of Bronze Age people, built on stilts over a Scottish loch: sounds exciting. This project is being developed by the Scottish Trust for Underwater Archaeology in Perthshire and is due to open to visitors in June. Archaeologists have located about 400 such sites in Scotland. Crannogs were built to keep away bears, wolves and other clan warriors. The crannog will house artefacts from the loch bed, including jewellery, tools, clothes, even food fragments. Next year an interpretative centre will open on the shore, where visitors can weave, practise woodwork, make hurdles and paddle a canoe.

6.National Art Collection Fund: Many fine paintings of Arthurian subjects exist in Art Galleries and Collections all around the United Kingdom. It can be costly visiting these treasures. now that so many museums and galleries have found it necessary to charge for admission. The National Art Collections Fund offers you free admission to over 80 permanent collections and discounts to many temporary ones for a subscription of £25 a year. As a member you are invited to talks, private viewings, lectures, concerts and visits to private houses and tours. You also receive ***The Art Review*** and the fine quarterly 80 page colour magazine ***The Art Quarterly***. On top of all this you will know that you are helping to buy works of art of every kind, from bronze-age jewellery to contemporary paintings. (Since 1903 the Fund has helped to aquire over 10,000 works of art for the nation.) Call Kate Porter on 0171-225-4800 or write: National Art Collection Fund, Millais House, 7 Cromwell Place, London, SW7 2JN (In our next edition we shall publish a list of Arthurian paintings and their locations.)

7.King Athur's Great Halls, Tintagel: On Saturday 4th February the National Lottery draw was presented from this venue, probably bringing it to the notice of many for the first time. Professor Thomas has devoted 2½ pages to the Halls and their history in ***Tintagel, Arthur & Archaeology***, Batsford, 1993, (see review, Pendragon XXIV/1). Custard powder certainly financed something very special via an Arthur-struck American in the 1930s. Today it is the home of the 'Fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table' and they have added an audio-visual presentation, with Robert Powell as Merlin telling Arthur's story in laser lights, music and sound. There is also a shop selling Arthurian, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon books, cards, jewellery and gifts. You will love it, so if you're in North Cornwall, the Halls are open 1st March to Mid-January. Tel: 0840 770526. Their leaflet says 'dogs welcome' - which is more than my two letters offering our chivalric friendship to this Society have been! When I win the Lottery I'm going to build a Hall bigger than theirs right next door, and I'll get a real Celt to speak my narration; Sir Anthony Hopkins perhaps! Good luck, Kts of the R.T., I believe you are a charitable organisation that does some good to those in need and there's plenty of these about in our modern wasteland.

☆ VIDEOS AND TAPES

1.British History: W.H.Smith Videos: I am indebted to Stuart Croskill for the following revues.

Arthur: Myth & Reality:The Legend of King Arthur (Video and book. £14.99.) CVI 1802. 55mins. A Castle Communications Release. An accessible and useful introduction (albeit pricey) to The Matter of Britain. Broadly split into 2 parts: the Medieval literary Arthur, and the 'historical' Dark Ages 'dux bellorum'. The film shows the development of the story from the AD 400s, incorporating earlier Celtic sources, through to the Middle Age poets, and eventually to Tennyson and T.H.White. Including actors portraying Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth *et al*, re-enactment footage of Saxon/Celt battles and an informative and focused analysis by Nikolai Tolstoy. Inexplicably, the companion book, rather than mirroring the video content, is a complete version of 'The Idylls of the King'.

Ancient Legends: An Intriguing Exploration of the Legends and Myths of Britain (Exclusive Video + Book, £14.99.) CV1858. 55mins.) A Castle Communications Release. A sequentially and chronologically confusing narrative takes the viewer, in the following order, through: 17th century ghost stories; stone circles/solar cults; Arthur (approx. 15 mins); The Grail; John Dee and lastly, witchcraft. Dr Les Prince's (University of Birmingham) scholarly erudition brings much needed coherence and continuity to this bizarrely structured film. The companion book has no obvious connection with the video, and as such is something of a mystery itself.

Stuart adds: 'I shall be getting a copy of *Arthurian Myths* in the above series and I shall send you a review. Pendragon XXIV/4 was again excellent and very impressive'. *(Ed. I have printed this compliment because any excellence achieved could be improved tenfold by contributions such as this from more members.)*

2.Music Suite - Cenarth: describing itself as 'the alternative music company' this business is run by Adrian Wagner, a descendant of Richard Wagner, himself a composer. In the 70's he created the Wasp Synthesiser and he has produced music for TV, films, environmental projects and his own solo albums. Catalogue: The Music Suite Ltd, Cenarth, Newcastle Emlyn, Dyfed, SA38 9JN. Creditcard hotline: (0239) 710594.

Adrian has naturally developed a deep interest in the Grail mythology and, living in Wales, has tried to include the 'Celtic'side of the Grail myth in his work. He has produced two recordings that will be of particular interest to readers:

The Holy Spirit & the Holy Grail. Available in cassette and CD. This album seeks to express the belief that the 'Grail Cup' is 'the depiction of the feminine aspects of Christianity, and the need for 'balance' in today's society. This is the first of a trilogy of albums that Adrian is working on, the next will be ***The Spear of Destiny***, followed by ***The Sword & the Stone***. Thoughtful and inspired work: CD £9.95, Cassette £7.95.

Sought and Found : A Story of The Holy Graal: This tape is a spoken recording of the Grail narrative, compiled from Apochryphal sources and from the romances and legendary material. Its great interest for me is that it concludes with the story of the Nanteos Cup and its bringing from Glastonbury to Strata Florida Abbey and on to Nanteos in West Wales.(Readers may know of my own research into the Nanteos Cup and its connections with the Stedman family of Strata Florida.) Read by Tom Bowley with musical background from sections of the Grail album reviewed above. Both recordings are highly recommended.

3.Past Times Music Cassettes: Most readers now live near a 'Past Times' shop, there are 48 branches - when we first reported on their goods there were just two! The Summer 1995

catalogue lists **Irish & Scottish Harp Music**, available as cassette (1903: £6.50) or CD (1905: £10.95). Two performers play ancient melodies on the clarsach and wire-string harps, authentic Celtic instruments. 48 minutes. Also available is the **Anglo-Saxon Easter Mass** from Winchester, the royal Saxon seat, sung in Latin as it would have been heard in the 10th century. With translation & notes, 57mins. Same prices as Celtic harp music. Order direct by credit card, Tel: (01993) 779444.

4.'Blaz Keltieg': (taste of Celtic): A clearly recorded one hour cassette which gives an audio impression of what all six Celtic languages sound like; the 4 main languages are given twelve minutes and Cornish and Manx 6 minutes each. About 3 dozen speakers are heard. Within each language short pieces illustrating dialectic differences occur. There is an accompanying book (168pp) with a transcript of all the items, and all the texts are translated into Breton, English and French. This excellent project was initiated in Brittany and has taken 10 years to prepare.

Send 90FF + 18FF for postage, in French Francs or equivalent to: Mesidou, 40 bis rue de la Republique, 29200 Brest, France. Tel/Fax: 98-80-49-70. (Many thanks to ***The Celtic Pen*** for this information.)

☆ HOLIDAYS, COURSES & EVENTS

1.Clwyd Library Festival: The Arthurian Lecture: This will be given at Library H.Q.Mold on May 1st at 7.30 p.m. by Ronan Coghlan, author of ***The Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends*** and proprietor of ***Excalibur Books***. Title: ***King Arthur & the Irish Connection***.. Tickets £3 (£2 concessions) from any library in Clwyd or (01352)-702495; early booking is advised. There will be opportunity to inspect the Arthurian Collection. (Our North-Western contingent are usually there in strength.)

2.Breton International Summer School: International seminars at Lorient University, Brittany. ***Europe of the Celts***, (31 July-4 Aug.) and ***The Arthurian Myth & The Celtic Roots of Europe*** (7-11 Aug.) with The Centre for Arthurian Studies. Information from: Summer School of Brittany, PO Box 251, 56102 Lorient-Cedex, Brittany, France (Phone (33)-97-64-19-90; Fax: (33) 97-64-20-45. (Again, thanks to ***Celtic Pen***, at £1 it is a winner. See: Exchange Journals, p.46.)

3.'Beyond the Border': Summer School of Storytelling, St. Donat's Castle, (what a wonderful venue) Llantwit Major, South Glamorgan, Monday 26th - Fri. 30th June. All enquiries (01446) 794848.

4.The Mabinogion & The Mythological Landscape: An 'exploration retreat' at Taliesin Trust, Ty Newydd, Llanystumdwy, Cricieth, Gwynedd, LL52 0LW. (Isn't Wales beautiful)

Autumn school of storytelling for those with experience, exploring the 'Four Branches' with visits to sites associated with the tales. Talk, discussion, personal experimentation, to investigate what a 'Contemporary Bardic Tradition' might be. Led by Eric Maddern & Hugh Lupton. Bursaries sometimes available. Write: Centre Directors, Taliesin Trust, Ty Newydd, Llanystumdwy, Cricieth, Gwynedd, LL52 0LW. (Tel:(01766) 522822. Fax:(01766) 523095.)

5.Roman & Ancient Wales Weekend : 18th - 20th August. ***A Past Times*** 'Heritage' Weekend in association with Hilton Hotels. Based at Newport, Gwent, two nights'accommodation with full meals. Visits to Caerleon (Isca), Caerwent, Cardiff Castle. Roman Banquet themed evening with the Ermine Street Guard, Raglan Castle. Friday evening to Sunday lunch. Expert guide throughout. Leaflet from shops or Tel: (01923) 246464.

6.Dorset Weekend: Fri. 23 June - Mon. 26 June. A long weekend programme based at Dorchester, 3 nights, all meals included. Maiden Castle, Poundbury Hillfort, Maumbury Rings Henge, Dorchester Museum. Hod Hill Hillfort, Sherborne Old Castle and Abbey, Cerne Abbas 'Giant', Dorset Coast. Much walking in fine scenery, pub. lunches, lecture and field notes.

Andante Travels Ltd., Grange Cottage, Winterbourne Dauntsey, Salisbury, SP4 6ER. Copy of brochure: Phone: (01980) 610555 ; Fax: (01980) 610002.

7.Excavations at Fishbourne: The Sussex Archaeological Society's research excavations at Fishbourne Roman Palace. 17 July -31 Aug. Advisor: Prof. Barry Cunliffe. Includes a Training Excavation with eight trainee places available each week. Practical training in surveying, excavation techniques, recording and finds processing, with lectures and/or site visits over each 5 day course, Monday - Friday. Write: Director, Fishbourne Roman Palace, Salthill Road, Fishbourne, Chichester, Sussex, PO19 3QR. Tel: (01243) 785859 ; Fax: (01243) 539266.

8.Oxford University Summer School: Open to all. 15 July - 19 August. Week 1: 15-22 July: ***The Lure of Camelot***. Literary studies, Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot*, Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Tennyson's *Idylls*, and T.H.White's *Once & Future King*. Week 4: 5-12 Aug:. ***The Anglo Saxon Church***, the progress of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England from the 5th century. ***Archaeological Excavation***: part of long-term reseach project around White Horse Hill area. An opportunity to study evidence from previous digs and fieldwork. Emphasis on training in methods & techniques of archaeological excavation. No qualifications necessary but the course may become part of Undergraduare Cert. in Archaeology. Tutor: Dr. Gary Lock. Week 5: 12-19 Aug. ***The Crusades***: based around group discussion, fully illustrated with reference to art, artefacts and documents, both Christian and Muslim. Brochure: Oxford University Dept. for Continuing Education, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JA. Tel: (01865) 270396 (24 hrs).

9.Edinburgh University Summer Schools: ***Scottish Archaelogy***, 1-14 July.Lectures & fieldtrips. Very comprehensive: hunters & gatherers, megalithic tombs, cairns, stone circles, henges, hillforts, the Celts, Antonine Wall, Roman forts & roads, Pictish stones. Kingdom of Scots, early Christianity, Vikings, churches & castles, abbeys, cathedrals. Write: International Summer Schools, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Edinburgh, 11 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9LW, Scotland.

10.Canterbury University Summer Academy: Study Holidays. Over 95 courses between 17 June and 16 Sept in many Universities. A selection : ***Irish Studies*** (Cork); ***Celtic Scotland*** (Stirling); ***Celtic Civilisation*** (Cork); ***'The Genius of the Place'*** (Canterbury); ***Hadrian's Wall & The Roman Army*** (Durham); ***The Kingdom of Dumnonia*** (Exeter); ***The Origins of Christianity in Britain*** (Canterbury); ***Alfred the Great & Vikings in the West*** (Exeter); ***Celtic Dawn, Roman Morn & Anglo-Saxon Noon*** (Durham). Full details of courses in a free colour brochure. Request line: (01227) 470402; or Fax: (01227) 784338.

☆ MEDIA

Teliesyn's ***' Excalibur - The Search for Arthur*** has been shown on Welsh SC4 television this year already but I have no news of when we are likely to see it on BBC nor of the accompanying book. The National Youth Music Theatre production of ***Pendragon*** took place at Edinburgh, 21-25 February; I was going to attend but unfortunate circumstances led to a change of mind. I have not received any information about the proposed production at the Lyric, Hammersmith, though I have now read the script and it is obviously a highly theatrical piece; it is to be published eventually.

A half-hour TV programme about the NYMT and featuring the show is on the stocks, I'll let you have details if they come my way.

A television highlight for me has been Terry Jones's ***The Crusades*** on BBC2, the impact of the programmes was outstanding. Every trick in the book was used to bring the material alive and it was amazing how the past was invoked often by images of the present (a car making its way along a ribbon of dusty road through a rocky wilderness was overtaken by ghostly knights on horseback, who emerged out of the dust clouds and rode through the lens into our rooms: well almost! As the ***Radio Times*** said...'watching Jones progress along the route of those zealot hordes from Europe, you will be often appalled, but seldom bored: he comes over like the best type of schoolmaster whose classes were such a relief after double maths'.

A Sunday Times article on Richard the Lionheart (8th January) offered an answer to John Ford's question in Pendragon XXIV/4: 'Richard was a shrewd self-publicist, as his Excalibur prop demonstrated. A stage-managed excavation at Glastonbury had produced the 'bodies'of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, so killing off any notion that the Welsh once-and-future king would return to expel foreign usurpers. Richard was the first English king to draw on Arthur's image, riding off to the crusades with "Excalibur". At the first port of call, however, he swapped it for four transport ships and 15 galleys.'

The return of the ***Time team*** on Channel 4 brought four more very different challenges and another fascinating experience of archaeology for armchair diggers like myself. Like a thousand other viewers, I preened after I had forecast loudly that the site in Wiltshire was probably a provincial headquarters, only to hear an expert say the same thing a minute later. Whether 'we' are right remains to be seen, but when? The programmes could go on into the 22nd century, easily, by which time they'll be taking a trench across my study floor and identifying Newton Smithy as the headquarters of an 'Arthur-type figure', no doubt!

The British Archaeological Award of 1944 for the best TV film on archaeology went to ***Time team*** at the Awards Ceremony last December in York. The series also won the Basle Prize for popular education-Europe at the city's Festival in December. In April they start filming a new

series and one of the programmes will investigate the fogou (an underground Iron Age passage) at ***Rosemerryn*** – the H.Q. of the ***Caer*** Centre, near Penzance (Pendragon XXII/4, p29).A recent Radio Times competition offered the winner the opportunity to take part in that particular programme.

☆ CELTIC RESOURCES

Calling all Celtic craftworkers and suppliers. The Dalriada Celtic Heritage Society are publishing a European Directory of Celtic Resources early in 1995, covering artists, craftworkers, shops, publications, music suppliers, instrument makers, festivals and much more. Copies will be available for £2. Entries should be sent to Dalriada Heritage Society, Dun na Beatha, 2 Brathwic Place, Brodick, Isle of Arran, KA27 8BN, Scotland. (Free entry, not more than 50 words, excluding address.)

☆ 'TREE OF LIFE':

Copies of Anna Clark's illustration on page 4 of Pendragon XXIV/4 are available as A3 prints from her for £1.70 (inc. p+p). Cheques in her name to Anna Clark, c/o Condors, Exeter St, North Tawton, Devon, EX20 4HB. It will shortly be available as a colour print also.

☆ CHATTERBOX

Beryl Mercer has sent in a cutting from the ***Western Morning News*** which says that, 'West Cornwall legend recalls how the Danish were trounced by King Arthur on Vellan-drucher Moor. She says Vellan Drucher is mentioned in Susan Cooper's ***Greenwitch***,...'And the last (beacon fire) was at Vellan Druchar, and there the light gave battle to the Dark', (p.95). Any idea where it may be? And how come Arthur was fighting Vikings?

Beryl also sent us an advert from an American journal for ***Kng Arthur Flour***. It says 'for two hundred years King Arthur has been putting nothing but the best into their flour: No bleaches. No bromates'. Which just goes to show that they had a healthy diet in the days of old! ***Quondam et Futurus***, The Journal of Arthurian Interpretations published by Memphis State Univesity, Tennessee, Spring 1991, has the following entry under 'Other Publications: 'The King Arthur Flour people who so generously advertised in ***Avalon to Camelot*** have just published ***King Arthur Flour's 200th Anniversary Cookbook***. Even more interesting are the head notes on various traditional bread recipes, tracing their histories back in time and legend. The note for the "Hot Cross Buns" recipe suggests that these possibly represent a pagan use of the sugar cross, an equinox symbol that became Christianized. For Baker's Catalogue write to: King Arthur's Flour, PO.Box 876, Norwich, VT 05055.

The University of Avalon is changing its name. The Privy Council has ruled that the name cannot be used 'since they are not an officially recognised university awarding academic degrees.' (Actually, universities are founded individually by Act of Parliament.) They have decided to use the name ***The Isle of Avalon Foundation***, from Spring 1995, which acknowledges that their organisation is founded upon the spiritual energies of the Isle of Avalon. The new title sounds much finer to me. Brochure of courses, workshops, books and tapes: The Isle of Avalon Foundation, The Courtyard, Glastonbury Experience, 2-4 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 8DS.

Finally, Susan Gaitley has recently sent us two articles from journals. The first is from **Prediction**, March 95, and sifts yet again through the Arthurian dates, seeking to place Arthur in an earlier period in an attempt to reconcile Geoffrey Ashe's theory that Riotamus = Arthur. The writer, Paul Harris, then goes on to review Phillips & Keatman's theory that Arthur was Owain Ddantgwyn and suggests that a revised chronology might allow Arthur to have been both figures.

The other article is much more exciting! It comes from an American journal of 1970, ***Exploring The Unknown***, and was written by Paul Johnstone. I shall not say anything more at this time, except to tell you that Charles Evans-Günther was in touch with Johnstone years ago, in fact he talked with him – Johnstone is dead now. I am working on Charles to write us an article. Johnstone recorded his 'conversations' with **Artorius** from the Otherworld and he has answers to the questions: 'Who was your father?" (hold your breath Phillips, Barber, Keatman, Pykitt) and "Do you know of the book I wrote about your life and deeds?. Have I written it rightly? Is the book accurate?" How can you bear to wait, Reader? Do make sure your subs are paid for our August edition – which is bound to sell out overnight – or you may never learn the true identity of King Arthur!

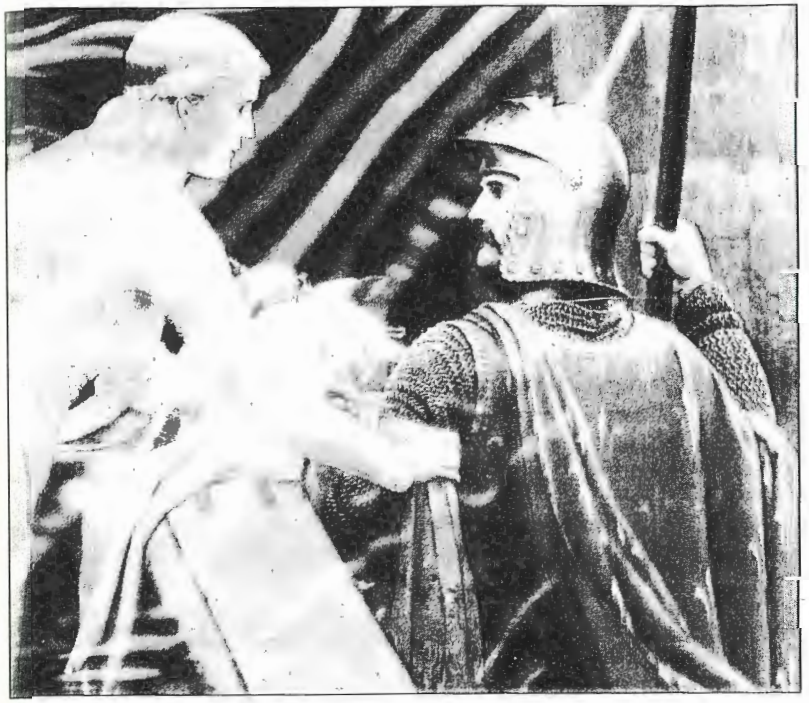
EXCHANGE JOURNALS

BEAUMAINS – Arthurian 'Pendragon' role-play; specialist gamers' magazine. Editor, Gareth Jones, 69 Atherley Rd, Shirley, Southampton SO1 5DT. £2 in UK, (A4). **CAERDROIA** – Editors Jeff and Deb Saward, 53 Thundersley Grove, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB. Mazes and labyrinths.Yearly.Write for details with SAE or phone 0268 751915. **THE CAULDRON** – Intelligent journal of the old religion, wicca, folklore and earth mysteries. £7 for 4, Sample £1.75. Cheques: M.A.Howard, Caemorgan Cottage, Caemorgan Road, Cardigan, Dyfed, SA43 1QU (Don't put 'The Cauldron' on the envelope) (A4). **CELTIC CONNECTIONS** – Editor David James, Sycamore Cottage, Waddon Nr.Portesham, Weymouth, DT3 4ER. Quarterly. All aspects of Celtic culture, especially the arts and crafts. Sample £1.75, add 60p overseas Subscription £7. Cheques: 'David James.' (A5). **THE CELTIC PEN** – Editor Diarmuid Ó Breasláin. Covers all aspects of literature – early to modern times– of the 6 Celtic languages. Primarily in English, also features inter-Celtic translations. £5 for 4, back issues £1.25 each. Cheques: 'The Celtic Pen', 36 Fruithill Park, Belfast, 11 8GE, Ireland. **DALRIADA** – All aspects of Insular Celtic culture, traditions and beliefs-ancient and modern. Also, a Celtic Heritage Society and extensive database archive. Sample £2, Four issues £7. Clan Dalriada, Dun-na-Beatha. 2 Brathwic Place, Brodick, Isle of Arran, Scotland, KA27 8BN. (A5) **THE DRAGON CHRONICLE** – Dragonlore & tradition, paganism, magick & folklore. Sample £1.50. Annual sub £5 for 4 issues. Single £1.50. Cheques 'The Dragon Trust'; PO Box 3369, London, SW6 6JN. (A4). **GWENVA** – Celtic Culture & Traditions of Europe: Music, History, Legends, Ancient Sites. Written in the Catalan language. Editor: Ramon Guinovart, Ventura Plaja 27–29 E1 08028 Barcelona, Catalunya, Spain. (Don't write 'Gwenva' on envelope).(A4). **MERCIAN MYSTERIES** – Alternative studies of past and place in the Midlands. Quarterly, A4 format. £7.00 for 4, £2.00 for sample. From: 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough, Leics, LE12 6UJ. (A4). **MEYN MAMVRO** – (Stones of our Motherland) Editor Cheryl Straffon, 51 Carn Bosavern, St.Just., Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX. Earth energies, ancient stones, sacred sites, Cornish prehistory and culture, legend folklore. Sample £1. 90, Annual sub £5.50. (A5). **NORTHERN EARTH** – Earth Mysteries, Antiquarianism and Cultural Traditions. Editor: John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W.Yorkshire HX7 5NP. 4 issues £5.00, single £1.50. (A5). **ORE** – Editors: Eric Ratcliffe (Managing), Brian Louis Pearce (Advisory). Irregular 2–3 annually. Longstanding journal of poetry, articles, reviews – often biased to Arthurian and New Age thought. No.48, 188pp. £2 post free, 7 The Towers Stevenage, Herts, SG1 1HE. (A5) **THE RENNES OBSERVER** – Journal of the Rennes Group: The Mystery of Rennes le Chateau and its priest Saunière. Meetings, visits. Editor: 'Cilhaul', Tylwch, Llanidloes Powys, SY18 6QX, £6 for 3, Sample £2, (A5). **THE ROUND TABLE** – Journal of Poetry and Fiction edited by Alan Lupack and Barbra Tepa Lupack. Strong Arthurian interest, including special editions. Editors: The Round Table, Box 18673, Rochester, New York, 14618, USA (Inq: Enclose IRC)(A5). **THE SHARKTI VANGUARD:** Non-profit-making imprint aiming to re-create ageless values of beauty, truth & love:associated by many with the Arthurian mythos. Quarterly journal: The Sharkti Laureate, 104 Argyle Gardens, Upminster, Essex RM14 3EU. Cheque (£5) to ' P.Page.' (A4 format). Also: The Crystal Gate, a poetry and fantasy magazine, £1.25p copy, £5 per annum. **SILVER WHEEL MAGAZINE** – Journal of the Native British Tradition, Craft/ Shamanism/ Druidry. Articles, poetry, path-workings. £2.00 sample, £7 four issues. Published at the fire festivals. Cheques: 'A.Franklin', PO Box 12, Leicester, LE9 7ZZ.(A4). **SOURCE** – The Holy Wells Journal, a forum for the discussion of these fascinating, often enigmatic survivals from our past. £8 for 4, Back Issue £2.25, from Pen-y-Bont, Bont Newydd, Cefn, St.Asaph, Clwyd, LL17 0HH. (A4). **THIRD STONE** – Formerly Gloucestershire Earth Mysteries. (Earth = 3rd Stone from the Sun). No nonsense approach to ancient sacred sites and symbolic landscapes. £6 for 3, Sample £2.50 **GEM**, PO Box 258, Cheltenham, GL53 0HR, (A4). **TRADITION** – Editor Paul Salmon, Tradition, PO Box 57, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 1DU. Quarterly publication devoted to traditional custom and culture. 4 issues for £6.00. Cheques payable to 'Paul Salmon.' (A4) **WISHT MAEN** – Editor Tracey Brown. Devon Earth Mysteries, Legends, Folklore, Ancient Sites, Earth Energies. £7 for 3 issues, Sample £2.30: Condors, Exeter St, North Tawton, Devon, EX20 2HB (A5)

(Editors: please check your entry to ensure accuracy. Readers: please mention Pendragon when writing to editors and advertisers and include an SAE (IRC abroad) for their reply.)

King Arthur: the Irish connection

Ronan Coghlan



This year's Arthurian lecture will be given by Ronan Coghlan, editor of the *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Arthurian Legends*, and author of *Dictionary of Irish Myth and Legend*. Ronan Coghlan now runs Excalibur Books which specialises in Arthuriana. There will also be an opportunity to view the Arthurian Collection.

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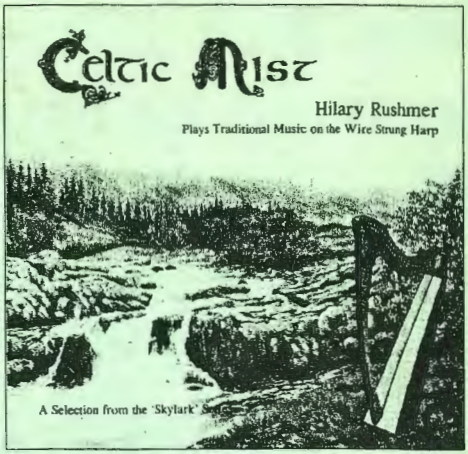

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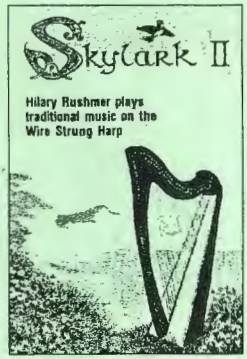

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