pendragon

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The Journal of the Pendragon Society

EDITORIAL

Pendragon
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Welcome to the Summer edition,

This, unfortunately, will be my last issue as editor, however, I will be putting together further material for the next issue which will be out in December. Due to a number of reasons, including starting a job in Japan (which will take me a way from the UK for at least a year) I am resigning from the positions of editor and secretary. I would like to thank all those who have supported my efforts over these three issues and hope that I will be able to continue to contribute articles and letters in future issues.

Putting the above aside for the moment, we must began with the sad news of the death of Granville Calder and we are sure that all members would like to express their condolences to the family and friends of Granville. It is hoped that in a future edition it will be possible to expand on the short piece that appeared in the last issue concerning Granville's interesting research about Wychbury Hill.

The topic of this Summer edition of Pendragon is **Arthurian Topography**. This is without doubt an extensive topic and some interesting material contributed for this issue may well flow over into a future editions. Articles included have a definite Cornish bias with two on Tintagel, one on Cornwall and a fourth looking at the West Country with reference to Tintagel, Cadbury Castle and Glastonbury. Following the introduction, the premier article, by Aad van der Geest, comes over the Channel (or should I say through the Channel Tunnel) from Holland and our third article winged its way across the Atlantic from Dan Nastali, Kansas City in the United States – Pendragon is truly an international journal.

This edition welcomes the return of our letters section under a new name **Pen-Dragon** (though strictly speaking it should be typewriter- or PC-Dragon, however, they don't sound as good), but **Quest** and **What the Papers Say!** are not included this time as there is little to report!

The topic for the next issue will be **Relics of the Past** and so if you have any articles or letters for the journal ready before the end of September, please send them directly to me, but from October onwards pass them to Fred Stedman-Jones. Further news concerning changes in the production and administrative team of Pendragon will be announced in the Autumn/Winter edition.

Finally, before I let you get on with reading the articles, I would particularly like to thank the team of proofreaders who volunteered to take some of the weight from my shoulders. Many thanks to Wolfe von Brussel, Eric Fitch and Chris Lovegrove for their help – most appreciated. (Any errors that find their way into this issue are my own and were added after the main body of this journal had been proofread.)

Mae drwg gen i, ond . . . . all the best for the future, *tara 'wan*, fare you well.

PENDRAGON

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ARTHURIAN TOPOGRAPHY

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Arthurian Topography

The legend of King Arthur extends from the Isle of Avalon, in the far west, to Nagoya University, Japan, in the far east. And in the centre is Britain. Here we have the possible origin of King Arthur, whether it be ancient god, Dark Age warrior or Medieval king. Throughout the British Isles there are places that have connections with King Arthur, Merlin, Lancelot, Guinevere, Tristan and so on. Though, strictly speaking we should also look to France for Arthurian sites, for though it is more than likely that the origins of King Arthur can be traced back to Britain, there can be no doubt that France contributed a considerable amount to the legend.

From the Orkneys to Totnes in Britain and to Sicily in Europe the legend of King Arthur has left its mark. Earliest tales place Arthur in Cornwall, while the oldest historical material seem to indicate a northern area for the hero. Whatever the earliest evidence shows by the seventeenth century Arthurian sites had sprung up in almost every part of the British Isles. Ireland, also, may have contributed something to the history and the legend, though it can not claim any sites on Emerald Isle. The east coast of England equally has few sites and those that do have some Arthurian connection are north of the Humber. Nevertheless, from the time of **Culhwch and Olwen**, the **Triads** and Geoffrey of Monmouth's writings, Arthur and his companions have appeared in most parts.

In **Culhwch and Olwen** a considerable number of sites are mentioned and they are far from limited to Wales. The palace of Arthur is said to be at *Celli Wic y Gherniw* - forest grove in 'Cornwall' - where he has companions from all part of the British Isles, Europe and the Otherworld. The writer of this tale seemed to have some geographical knowledge and mentions when listing Arthur's companion one Drem mab Dremidyd, whose vision was so acute that he could see from *Celli Wic* a fly rising in the morning sun at *Pen Blathaon ym Predein* - from Celliwig to a point, possibly John O'Groats, in far off Scotland. The adventure to accomplish the tasks laid down by the giant Ysbaddaden took Arthur and friends to many places from the Pembrokeshire coast to the Valley of Grief in the Uplands of Hell. Apart from the latter most, if not all, of the places recorded can be found. Some show that the Welsh had names for places outside of Wales - many forgotten - for example *Cilgwri* is The Wirral, Cheshire/Merseyside.

The Welsh **Triads** also give many places connected with Arthur. Some of these are taken from tales like Culhwch and Olwen while others relate to such archaic material such as the Stanzas of the Graves, which lists the last resting place of many heroes, and villains. One interesting Triad is the first one listed by Dr. Rachel Bromwich in her translation of **Trioedd Ynys Prydein**:

"Three Tribal Thrones of the Island of Britain
Arthur as Chief Prince in Mynyw, and Dewi as Chief Bishop, and Maelgwn as Chief Elder;
Arthur as Chief Prince in Celliwig in Cornwall, and Bishop Bytwini as Chief Bishop, and Caradawg Strong-Arm as Chief Elder;
Arthur as Chief Prince in Pen Rhionydd in the North, and Gerthmwl Wledig as Chief Elder, and Cynderyn Garthwys as Chief Bishop."

There is unlikely to be historical material here but we are shown an Arthur as Chief Prince of Wales, Cornwall and the North - the Celtic fringe.

Much of the Welsh material was kept in Wales, written in Welsh and unlikely to have been known outside of the country. However, with **The History of the Kings of Britain** by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Arthur - now King - began to spread not only beyond the Celtic fringe but over the Channel and into Europe. If when writing about an Arthurian topography we limited ourselves purely to the earliest material then there would be precious little to record. However, following the success of Geoffrey's masterpiece, the geography of things Arthurian became widespread and makes for plenty to look for and much to research. From the Round Table at Stirling to the Slaughter Stone at Camelford.

These numerous sites may not be able to shed any light on the origin of Arthur but they do create the great tapestry of Arthurian topography.

Tintagel

by Aad van der Geest

THE NAME TINTAGEL

There seems to be little unity in the outcome of the placename derivation of Tintagel in north-west Cornwall, King Arthur's supposed birthplace. (Whenever, in this article, Tintagel is mentioned it refers to the island, not to the modern Tintagel village which was even at the turn of the century still called Trevena < Tre-war-vena < Tre-war-menydh = farm on a hill.) Examples, over the years (random authors, no offence!), include: St. Degla's Fort (<Din Degla) - C. Blackie - **A Dictionary of Place-names** (1887); safe fort or castle (dun or din + diogl [corn]): Tintagel , Tintageol (1205), Tyntagel (1275), Tyndagell (1536) also Dundagel - J. Johnson - **Placenames of England and Wales** (1915-1994); the impregnable fort (Dundagil) - W.S. Shears - The Face of England; Tin, Din or Dun = hill or fort, the second element is obscure: <Tintagol (c. 1145), Tintaieol, Tintageol (1205), Tintagel (1212), Tinthagel (1229), Dundadgel = local form - E. Ekwell - **English Placenames** (1974); fort + (?) personal name: <Dindajel - J. Holmes - **1000 Cornish Placenames Explained** (1983) and Din + tagell (Corn.) - (probably fort by the neck of land: <Tintagol (c. 1137) - A.D. Mills **English Place Names** (1991).

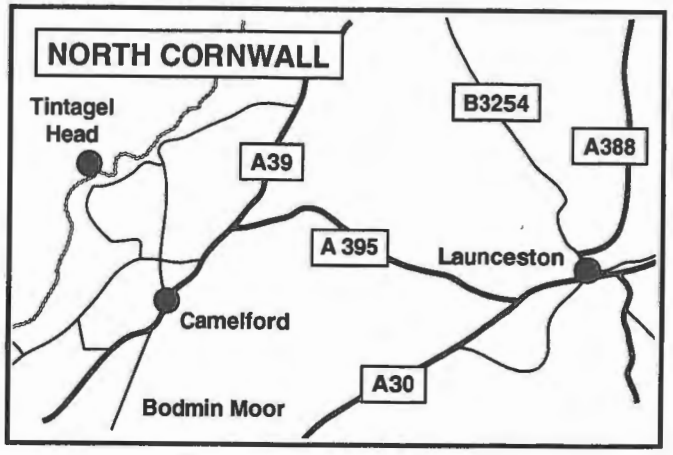
ARTHUR

As anyone can see the name Tintagel has no connection with Arthur's name. In fact, it has not even been confirmed that Arthur was ever king at all. Apparently shortly after his death his name was mentioned in the so-called **Annales Cambriae** (a part of the "Easter Annals", written in the Welsh language) regarding his victory at Mount Badon. We also meet him again in Aneirin's **Gododdin** (a Welsh lamentation from the end of the 6th century), concerning the death of many nobles fighting against the Angles at Catterick in Yorkshire. In his **Historia Brittonum** (829) the Welsh monk "Nennius" called him "Dux Bellorum", which means "army chief" or "warleader", since he fought together with some British kings or in their name ("Cum regibus Brittonum, sed ipse dux erat bellorum"). He is also mentioned in the **Historia Regnum Anglorum** (1125) by William of Malmesbury.

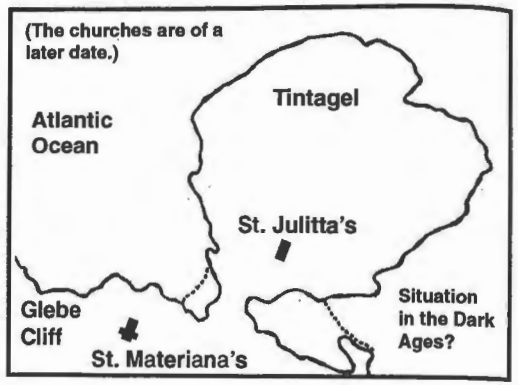
The Arthurian legends must have been born and greatly enlarged in the years following his death on account of increasing and tremendous Anglo-Saxon pressure, because of the need of the Celtic inhabitants of Britain to cling to somebody glorious and victorious in their struggle for freedom (Arta, ef a-dhe). The late medieval writers should also be mentioned and their influence on the original stories. Arthur was in fact more or less one of the first "working class heroes" since he was first referred to as "the soldier" and later on as "warleader".

THE OLDEST RECORD

The oldest record of Tintagel comes from Geoffrey of Monmouth's **Historia Regnum Britanniae** (c. 1137), written as "Tintagol" which shows us almost the same form as today. It also occurs in the Tristan romances, which are younger than Geoffrey's **Historia**. In Charles Thomas' **Cornish Studies** (1981), O.J. Padel suggested in his appendix on Tintagel, that "the common source from which both Geoffrey and the



Tristan romances may have obtained the name Tintagel is from Cornish folklore." This would be an example of sound into spelling! If so, it seems most likely that Geoffrey used the Cornish pronunciation of those days, which translated into his own spelling must have looked like "Tintagol". It may be noted that the present pronunciation differs from the old one , in which the "G" as in Gol sounded like the "G" in present words as goal, gulf, gold, etc. The local forms Dundadgel/Dyndaiel are on account of Anglo-Norman influence at a later date.



TIN-

Most Cornish placenames which began with a T in the old days also do today, for example all the Cornish Domesday "Tre" names. The modern"Tin" names should also be compared with the way they were recorded in the 11th and 12th century. These include from the Domesday Book: Tinten, Cornwall, Tintehalle (now Tintinhull), Somerset, Tincladene (now Tincleton), Somerset, Tintentone (Tinton), Kent, Tingrei (Tingrith), Bedfordshire, Tineslawe (Tinsley), Yorkshire, Tingehele (Thinghill), Hereford and Tinguelle (Thingwall), Cheshire. Other "Tin" names are Tinterna-Tynterna (Tintern) in Gwent, c. 1131 and Tindale in Cumbria (12th. century). To Thinghill (assembly hill) and Thingwall (assembly field) may be added Tynwald in the Isle of Man and Tingwall in the Orkneys and Shetlands.

Tintern is often used in comparison with Tintagel concerning provection (transition from one type of sound into another) from din to tin, because the forms Dindyrn and Dindirn (1150), but it is hardly a suitable example. The oldest forms show Tinterna and Tynterna (1131) and (if they are correct) may well mean cottage or small farm - Tyn < Tyddyn + Tern < Tigerno = the King's house or farm instead of the King's hill or fort. Tintern is therefore not very useful as a comparison with Tintagel. To me it seems only natural that the first element "Tin" cannot be derived from "Din" at all, or for that matter the entire name Tintagel will have a completely different meaning than all the examples.

MONASTERY, CASTLE OR SOMETHING ELSE

For a long time it was suggested that there might have been an early Celtic/Christian monastery at Tintagel. But some technical, archaeological objects contradict this suggestion (Charles Thomas). There seems to be no real evidence of a pre-Norman Christian site of any importance. It is even most doubtful if there was a castle at Tintagel before the 13th century. The present castle ruins probably go back to the days of Reginald, Earl of Cornwall in the 12th century (died in 1175), but may be more safely connected with Richard, earl in the 13th century (died 1272). It is not very likely that there was any residence at Tintagel in Geoffrey of Monmouth's days. Cornish folklore mentions however that Celtic kings had their royal seat in this place. In the Tristan stories King Mark had his government at Tintagel. Geoffrey suggests that Arthur was born at the very place. For the Norman earls of Cornwall all these facts must have made Tintagel a very interesting place to build a castle. In order to gain respect, or to be regarded as real Cornish rulers, Reginald or Richard might have selected Tintagel just for this purpose. Robert of Gloucester was Geoffrey's patron and Reginald's half-brother, but it is most unlikely that the castle was built before his **History of the British Kings** and the various Tristan stories became well-known. Otherwise Robert, Count of Mortain, who was the main landholder (according to the Domesday Book) in Cornwall in the late 11th century, might already have had a similar idea, but this was not the case. He held the Manor, named Bossiney (< Bodcinni = Cyni's dwelling), which belonged to the Monks of St. Petrock of Bodmin. The entire Manor comprised 7 house-holds and in Bossiney there are still the remains of a typical Norman Motte and Bailey. The island was not mentioned separately, because of its non (agricultural) importance at that particular time. Besides, it was held within Bossiney. It must have been a more or less useless piece of land, only containing a small pre-conquest chapel. Possibly there was a secluded oratory for the Monks or a place for meditation. Robert of Mortain

had built his personal stronghold at Dunheued, the modern Launceston, or he improved King Harold's stronghold at that particular place. In fact it is the same strategy which Richard used later on: selecting a place for a personal residence of a certain importance to impress the local people.

In my opinion there is little doubt that it must have been the Celtic tradition of story telling that came up with tales about Royal Seats at Tintagel, which at a later stage suited Geoffrey of Monmouth just fine.

THE IMPREGNABLE CASTLE

Most likely it was Richard, Earl of Cornwall, who started building a castle at Tintagel. He must be considered to have made the right choice, gaining the respect of this subjects by choosing the location at Tintagel and creating a really strategic residence in more than one way. But did he? Once under siege, the sea is the only possible escape route. The impregnability of the site is beyond any doubt, but there would be less to rule than the island itself. Richard was not a regular visitor to Tintagel. Since the construction of the castle was completed, he might have been there only once or twice. Whenever he was in Cornwall he favoured the more important site at Launceston, like Harold and Robert did before him. Tintagel was not a glorious place for the capital of a county, it was merely a place of refuge in wartime.

The well-known expert on the Tintagel, the previously mentioned Charles Thomas, rules out any real occupation between ca. 800 and 1150 A.D. There is just one conclusion that can be drawn. The name Tintagel must have existed before Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote about the place in his history of the British Kings. Before this time there was no castle or early Celtic/Christian monastery, though perhaps a small, isolated pre-conquest chapel. This church on the island was dedicated to Julitta.

-GOL

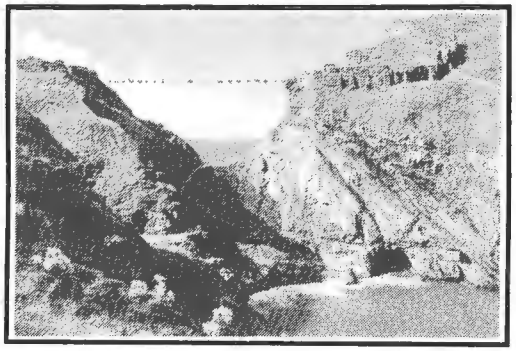
Originally it may have been Tinta-Gol. The second element Gol or Gal is pronounced with the "G" as in modern words like goal, gulf or gold. Originally it must have meant "inhabitant of Gaul" and have been used for immigrants or traders from France and Belgium in Roman and post-Roman times to which the inhabitants of Scotland and Ireland referred as Gal(l). It appears in names like Bordgal, Clonegall, Moyagall, Ballynagall and Donegal (< Dûn na n Gall = fort of the foreigners) in Ireland. In this case we are talking about the 10th century , since the foreigners were Danes or Vikings. In the Domesday Book the name Gol or Gal was sometimes connected with "Tre", which means farm or dwelling. Very often "tre" names were connected with personal names. For example in Cornwall: Treal < Tragol, Tregole < Tregal and Tregaire < Tregel. The last one has the interchange of "L" and "R".

TINTA-

The first element "Tinta" is probably derived from a word, best explained as fire-beacon or lighthouse, but both share the same purpose, guiding travellers, a line of sight communication or even as any early warning system. The Indo-European root "Tep" (being warm) produced a Celtic root "Té" (hot). The Old Irish "Tene" means fire (also "teine") with a genitive "Tened" like "Carn-Teinadh (Gaelic) from the hypothetical "*Tepnet". The Welsh and Cornish form is "Tân" (fire) in proper names also "tanet" like Glan Tanat, Afon Tanat and Thanet. Anyway, this occurs in various forms in place- and fieldnames like Kitinny, Clontinty, Edentinny and Mollynadinta (< Mullaigh na dtaeinte) in Ireland; Ardentinny, Craigentinny, Auchteany, Carntyne (< Carn-Teinadh), Haerne de Tintou, Tyntoch, Tynto, Tinto-hill and Glen Tennet in Scotland; Glan Tanat and Afon Tanat in Wales and also very possibly Tintinhull in Somerset. All these names are close to "Tinto" and "Tinta" like in Tintagel, where it may indicate the site of the island being (Mr.) Gol's/Gal's place or fire, or even better the signal station/fire beacon of the foreigners.

TINTAGEL

Now to be on the safe side of etymology one may conclude that the first element of the name Tintagel, being Tinto or Tinta is more closely related to the Gaelic/Irish branch of the Celtic language than to Cornish or Welsh (Brittonic). In parts of Wales there is evidence of Irish settlements, also in Western Scotland, the Isle of man and Cornwall ever since the 4th century. Perhaps the "Deisi", a tribe from Waterford living in South Wales, since late Roman times, were partly responsible



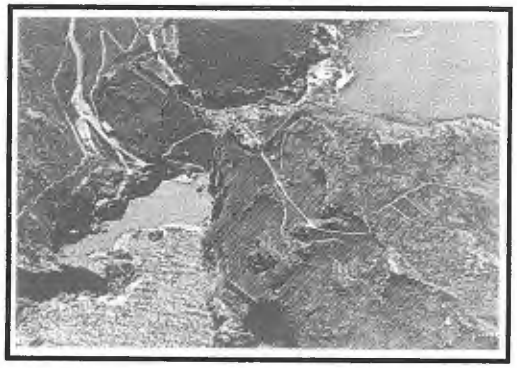
The V-shaped Neck

for the Irish settlements in North Cornwall and south-west Devon, as well as they might be for some of the Ogam stones. The Irish settlers did not leave their language in Cornwall, nor is there any evidence of Irish influence in Cornish placenames (yet), but this will not necessarily exclude it. The Irish-Gaelic "Teinteach" means "place of fire" and appears in forms as: Tintagn, Tyntoch, Tintock, Tintou, Tynto or Tinto and last but not least Tinta. As far as is traceable the chronology of the name Tintagel may have been something like this *Teinteach - a'Gall > *Tinta(gh) - a'Gall > *Tinta(y) - a'Gall > Tintagol > Tintagel.

ROMAN SITE

There are reasons to assume that there might have been some form of Roman influence in Cornwall and also in the surroundings of Tintagel during the 3rd and 4th century. A Roman milestone was found at the entrance to the churchyard of the Parish church on the mainland, another one at Trethevy, just east of Bossiney. A Roman leather purse containing ten bronze coins was found somewhere between the Upperward and the Lowerward (1956). The coins range in date from AD 270 to AD 361. In this period Cornwall was a tin producing area and mineral mining was an imperial privilege, which had to be defended. So it is not at all impossible that there might have been some form of "Litus Celticum" in this part of Britain, like there was a "Litus Saxonicum" in the south-east.

The Devon and Cornish coasts might have had coastal signal stations as early warning systems against Irish and Welsh raiders coming from the sea. The Roman signal stations at Martinhoe and Old Burrow (1st century) and the one at Stoke Hill (3rd century) were created for this very reason. There might have been many more of these stations, which have not yet been found or excavated. There is no archaeological evidence of the once assumed signal station underneath the churchyard of St. Materiana's, but the site on Glebe-cliff would have been most strategic, since it is even higher than Tintagel. On a bright day one has a clear view as far as Port Isaac, from there at Rumps Point, etc., etc. Roman ruins were often reoccupied by newcomers like Saxons and Normans. This might explain the existence of St. Materiana's on the rather remote spot, where it still stands today.



The Neck

If there ever was a Roman signal station, it may have looked like the ones at Martinhoe, Old Burrow and Stoke Hill. The entrance to the churchyard, where the milestone was found, might have been the entrance to the Roman fortlet. Anyway, there appears to have been road systems along both Cornish coasts but the western route sequence might have been only part of a minor road system. This may have been some kind of path along the coast to connect various castrae or fortlets or whatever there might have been. It is not at all sure whether the Ravenna Cosmography indicated the western road also to end on the west coast, it may as well have ended in the Saltash area. Coming from Exeter it might have passed the Dartmoor on the north side, to go south along the River Tamar to end somewhere in the Tamar estuary. The Tintagel milestones might have been part of an independent minor road system along the coast, that never appeared on any known itinerary.

TRADING PLACE, WAREHOUSE, STORE

There is evidence of Gaulish and Mediterranean trading contacts from Roman times to the 7th century, concerning Eastern Ireland and almost the entire west coast of Britain including Cornwall and especially Tintagel, where the most significant amount of pottery was found. It was never properly explained why the finds at Tintagel of all places were of such enormous quantity. Since the site was accessible by land as well as by sea, it was a very strategic place for a trading post, which to my mind it was. By way of trade across the sea Dumnonia (Devon and Cornwall) tried to maintain contact with the remains of Roman and Celtic civilisation in Gaul and the Mediterranean.

After the Romans left England, the island was possibly used as an easily defensible store or warehouse. Foreign traders may have created a coastal signal station over here. Fire beacons used to be a normal occurrence, often used by road-builders who maintained direction by using them on hilltops. Roman roads would always follow an absolute straight line from hilltop to hilltop. The Tintagel fire beacon must have been used to guide trading ships to the harbour on the north side of the island. Why the store or warehouse in Tintagel was ever abandoned, supposedly from the 7th or 8th century onwards, leaving an enormous collection of Mediterranean pottery and exotic objects as well as some glass, is still the question.

CORNISH FOLKLORE

I think Cornish folklore about Tintagel begins somewhere in the 8th or 9th century, after the place had been abandoned, but the name still lingered. This may have been the time, when the necessity occurred for story telling to make occasions or events from the past comprehensible to later generations. Fortunately some stimuli for the imagination were at hand: some kind of site in Roman times, a lighthouse used by foreign seafarers or traders and an abundance of the most luxurious pottery and exotic objects, that formed the basis of stories about Celtic Royalty at Tintagel. Common people never owned possessions such as these and the only way to explain their presence at Tintagel was the existence of Royalty. It is obvious that the name Tintagel goes back to the time of foreign trade in the Dark Ages. It survived simply because of the tradition of telling stories, until it was finally written down by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century.

SUMMARY

The first recording of Tintagel (Tintagol) was by Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1137) which is not surprising since he was also the first to mention the stone circles of Stonehenge. There is no evidence of any sound change from "Din" to "Tin" and therefore, it is unlikely the first element of the name is derived from "Din" meaning hill or fort. Richard, Earl of Cornwall, was the first person to gain possession of Bossiney Manor (Tintagel included) but no castle, no "din", was built before this time. Gaulish and Mediterranean trading contacts were established from Roman times to the 7th century. Irish settlers started to invade the west coast of Britain and Cornwall from the 4th century onwards, but probably earlier, and these Irish settlers may have considered the traders of the island of Tintagel as being foreigners. Since the name Tintagel (Tintagol) is an example of sound into spelling a different division should be made, thus "Tinta-Gol". This suits the Irish tradition or development of placenames much better than Cornish or Welsh, therefore, the original meaning of the name Tintagel is best explained as: "Signal station (lighthouse) - fire beacon of the foreigners". The name must have survived from the Dark Ages, thanks to the tradition of storytelling by local Cornish people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Mr. Harry Bourne of London, England, who kindly supplied very useful information and also Mrs. Bep Hoegee-de Nobel of Voorhout, the Netherlands, for typing my manuscript. Also thanks to Yvonne for persuading me to spend part of our 1996 holiday in Cornwall to visit Tintagel in order to do some research on the spot.

(Editor: There was not enough space to include the two and half page bibliography produced by Aad, but if you would like a copy send stamped addressed envelope to the usual address.)

Realms of Arthur

by Ian Forrester-Roberts

. . . Say have you thought what manner of man it is
Of whom they say he could strike giants down.
Or what charysma over time's abyss
Upholds the call of Camelot and the crown.
And why one banner all the background fills
Beyond the pageant of so many spears.
And by what magic over western hills,
His throne has beckoned for a thousand years . . . ?

Searching for Arthur is a fascinating exercise, but it is also a very frustrating one, very much like peeling the layers from an onion. One by one, we discard the layers, hoping to find a core of something substantial underneath, some embryo perhaps of the nobility that has inspired so much high drama and superlative poetry. At length however, we begin to realise, rather sadly, that there is no tight wound kernel at the centre at all. All those soaring ideals that helped symbolise and support the British Empire, and continue to inspire so many brave hearts even today, have somehow been lost in the peeling. The wonderful spirit of Arthurian legend has evaporated along the way. Lost to us even as we turned back the pages of time. Those half seen figures appearing momentarily in old stories, only to vanish wraith-like back into the Celtic mists again.

The truth is that the heart and the majesty of Arthurian legend lies in its layers, not in any historic surmise. Its essence lies in all the coats that have been hung on the hanger down through the ages; the layers of the flesh that have clothed the skeleton, over several centuries. Maybe it all began with the spells woven by Celtic bards in the smoky firelight of some thatched hall, but its blossoming lies in the stories told by medieval troubadours, in the suppressed religious yearnings of would be heretics, in the sublimated sexuality of Pre-Raphaelite artists and the idealism of Victorian poets, all aided and abetted by a host of image-makers from Rackham to Boorman in the present day, each tale-teller with his own vision adding new spiritual inclination to the whole.

Very little of the real stuff of Arthurian legend can be found in Welsh fairy tales. Pursue those stories far enough and you may well begin to wonder what on earth you are doing mentally stuck on a soggy Welsh hillside trying to follow a daft dispute over pigs. Or else you may find your enthusiasm being washed away in the welter of over wordy fantasy and elaborate detail which seems completely unnecessary to the story. As the bardic tradition was emphatically oral, the heirs to the stories had to commit them exactly to memory. Apparently it was the custom of establishing bards to preserve the exclusivity of their tales by swathing them in meticulous detail and only repeating the detail to their chosen heir. And those ancient Britons were great talkers.

Several years ago I listened with amazement as a French professor played tape recordings of an old Breton woman intoning tales told to her by her own grandfather. We sat there with extracts from the Black Book of Carmarthen in front of us, comparing its details with her translated extracts. They were staggeringly identical in details which had been preserved by oral transmission over 800 years.

Despite the paucity of real evidence, there is no doubt in my mind that, if any patch of earth can lay claim to Arthur's ever shadowy figure, it has to be Wales, and in particular, that vague littoral between Wales and England we know as the Welsh Marches. After all, it is logical enough, that, as Celtic Britain was driven inexorably back westwards, its defenders should group and regroup over and over again, always ever closer to the mountain fastnesses of the Welsh hinterland.

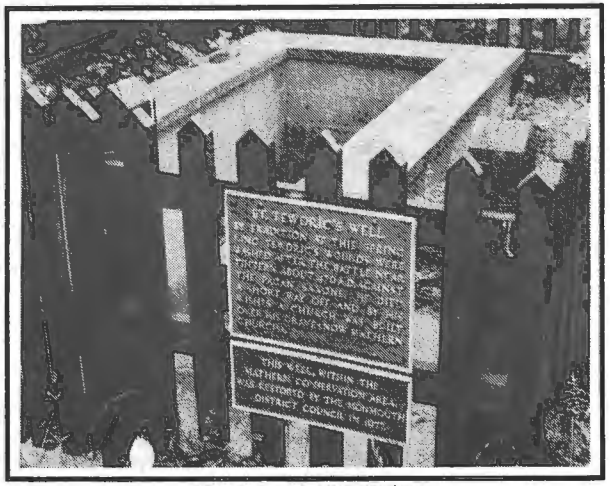
The Tudors recognised this when they claimed Arthur as their forbear. Not for nothing did Henry the eighth, of the Tudor line, order his own likeness to be painted in Arthur's seat on the Round Table which now hangs in Winchester Castle Hall. By so doing, he was emphasising the longevity of his dynastic claim to the whole of Britain. The Tudors traced their line back to King Tewdrig and beyond that, if one dares to accept the Tudor claim, it must follow that

Tewdrig and Arthur were closely related too, and this is where the trail gets interesting.

In Cardiff Art Gallery and Museum there stands an eight foot high magnificent bronze by Charles Evans Thomas entitled 'The Death of King Tewdrig'. No concept could be more Arthurian in the classic Victorian tradition. So much so that it could equally well represent 'The Death of Arthur', but that is by the way. What is more significant is that the life and death of King Tewdrig is very well attested. He had lead the Silures of South Wales successfully against the encroaching Saxons until he felt able to relinquish his throne in favour of the religious life. However, the invaders kept on coming and we was persuaded out of retirement to lead his army once again in battle. A fierce confrontation took place at Tintern on the Wye. The Saxons were defeated, but Tewdrig received a mortal wound in the fight (shades of Arthur once again). He was carried to Mathern near Caerleon, where his wounds were washed in St. Tewdrig's Well (a plaque marks the spring). He died close by and the church was built over his tomb. Mathern is a lovely little backwater and well worth a visit. His queen, Cofen or Govan, went into religious retirement herself and it is suggested that the little hermitage of Saint Govan, squeezed between the Pembroke cliffs, is wrongly attributed to the Irish Saint Gobham of County Wexford, or even more wrongly to Sir Gawain, but that it was the solitary refuge of King Tewdrig's queen. The place where she chose to spend her last days.

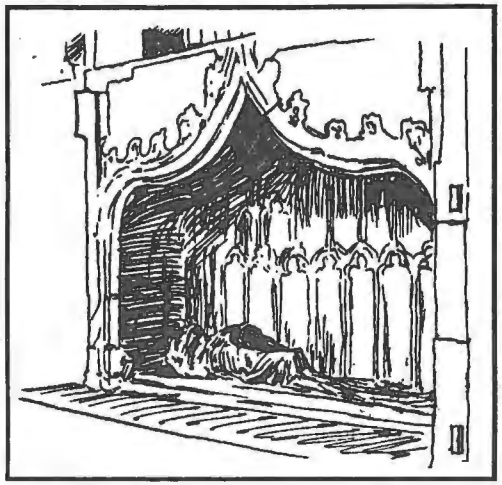
Statue of King Tewdrig by John Evan Thomas 1849

King Tewdrig's line is well enough attested (1), but records show that he was also titled 'Pendragon' and that bring us squarely into the Arthurian realms. King Tewdrig's son Meurig was also called Uthyr Pendragon and it is understood that his chief court lay at Caerleon, until the incursions of invaders forced him to relinquish it for safer quarters in the vicinity of Cardiff. There is an independent legend that both Tewdrig and his son, Uther Pendragon, were the founders and benefactors of the first church at Llandaff from which grew the present cathedral (2). All this benefits the probability that Arthur and his Pendragon forbears held court in or about Cardiff very well. (3) Some remains of the earlier building still form part of the Cathedral.



King Tewdric's Well, Mathern
King Tewdric was Arthur's grandfather, he died of wounds here after driving the Saxons back acros the Wye at Tintern.

More interestingly still, in this fascinating vein of enquiry, is the fact that, the second most honoured resting place in Llandaff Cathedral, that is, to the left of the altar (at the right hand of God), is

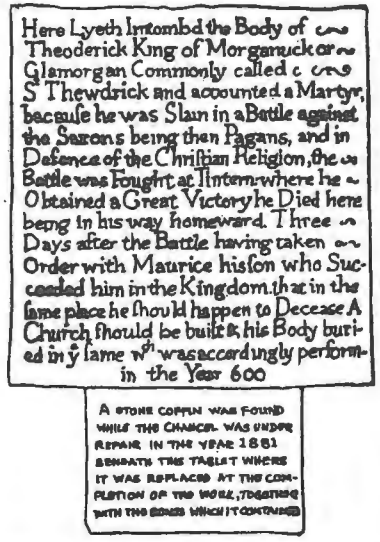


Tomb in Llandaff Cathedral

occupied by Saint Dubricius, whose uncorrupted effigy still surmounts his tomb. According to several sources, it was Archbishop Dubricius who presided over Arthur's coronation. As Geoffrey of Monmouth puts it ". . . Dubricius lamented the sad state of the country. He called other bishops to him and bestowed the crown of the kingdom upon Arthur, who was a young man, only fifteen years old. . . ." (4). According to Geoffrey, Dubricius was Archbishop of the City of Legions, by which he undoubtedly meant Caerleon, which may well also have been the site of Arthur's ninth battle in Nennius. It comes as something of a shock then, to find oneself standing there in Llandaff Cathedral, before the sepulchre of a genuinely historical figure straight out of Arthurian legend. And there is more to come.

If the venerable archbishop lies in the second most honoured place, who could possibly occupy first base? To be sure there is a sepulchre there in pride of place next to Dubricius. It is surmounted by an aged carving of a corrupted skeleton but, no one in the Cathedral seems to have any idea who it represents. How remarkable and odd that this most honoured position in a famous cathedral should be occupied by the remains of an unknown. Who could possibly have taken precedence over Archbishop Dubricius by occupying such a coveted position? Why, who but the founder of the Cathedral, King Tewdrig of course. But, Tewdrig died in transit and had to be buried at Mathern. then surely the occupant of the honoured tomb must be the old church's co-benefactor; Tewdrig's son, variously called Meurig, Maurice and Uther Pendragon who no doubt, died before Dubricius anyway.

Other evidence lends support to this theory. In ancient times, the representation of a corrupted corpse over a tomb, was intended to imply fleshly sinfulness on the part of the occupant, – as opposed to churchmen of course, who were completely above that sort of thing. It is a matter



Dedication to St. Tewdric at Mathern

St. Tewdric's Church, Mathern

of written record that Uther Pendragon was excommunicated for a time for just such sins. . . . His reputation has filtered down to us even today. Could it be then that, in standing to the left of the altar, in that lovely Cathedral, we are looking down at the tomb of Uther Pendragon, father of Arthur and progenitor of the whole Arthurian legend?

It is all very intriguing, but we are still not at the heart of the Arthurian thing. This may well be history, but it is not myth. The fact that this or that petty king was able to snatch a temporary victory against a few boatloads of euro-pirates, and whether he did it at Tintern or Caerleon or some other place, is neither here nor there in the grand scheme of things. We should leave the onion alone. Stop peeling away its layers and accept the idea that, now and again, in the great human drama, a few heroes are able to rise up above impossible odds and charge so fiercely into the storm's black heart, that they catch the spirit of the times. They are remembered, even though they themselves are swept away, to live on in folk memory, inspiring many generations to come. Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans did it at Thermoplylae, two hundred Cathars did it in 1244, when they chose to walk singing into the fire at Montsegur, Davy Crockett and his handful of maverick pioneers did it at the Alamo, and in 1940, a handful of men in a few Spitfires and Hurricanes did it once more over London.

They were so few . . . We know not in what manner
Or where or when they fell – whether they went
Riding into the dark under Christ's banner
Or died beneath the blood red dragon of Gwent.

But this we know; that when the Saxon route
Swept over them, the sun no longer shone
On Britain and the last lights flickered out,
And men in darkness murmured: Arthur is gone.

Frances Brett Young

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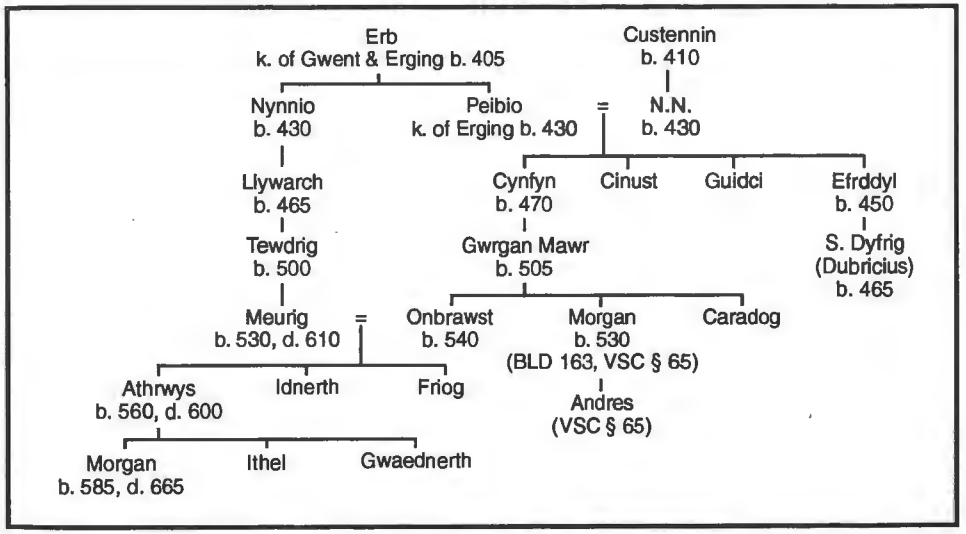

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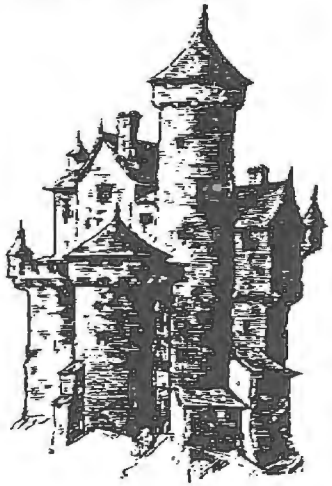
POET'S CORNER

Echoes



Tintagel towering by the Western sea
Guarding the gate to many-coloured Ys
Where mirrors, set to catch the beacons beams,
Brings all the news from distant Naradis,
Fair citadels that sank beneath the waves.
No more the Serpent King greets Cernyw's lords,
The ocean ebbs and swells above their graves
No exiled mage now walks upon these shores.
What strategies rely on its defence?
It seems the ruin guards the sea alone,
This place of solitude for mourning queens?
Where crows and gulls encircle empty stones,
Where myriad feet now trample legends bones,
Still strangely shaping, colouring our dreams

Wolfe vasn Brussel

Ludchurch

In winter
when belief was bright
in shadows of crag, brook and wood,
before the poets with names darkened him,
Gawain came here
to lay his neck under the Green Man's axe
(three times, as specified by folklore)
in this nick in the world.

And still it turns
and still
Waiting
Sheer vulva yawning
depleted sperm-count of wonder
trickling through,
travellers in an unsuitable season.

Mist, mystique,
dispirited zeitgeist, metres in half-lives
Postmodernist imagery languishes at
drizzled
bus stops.
All that jazz.

That old beheading game.

Phil Emery

Victorian Visitors to Tintagel

by Dan Nastali

"Rainy and bad, went and sat in Tintagel ruins, weird-looking. Old castle darkening in the gloom."
Tennyson, 1848

However satisfying it might be to imagine Alfred Lord Tennyson steeping himself in the atmosphere of the ruins of Arthur's birthplace, the terse remarks above constitute all he had to tell us of his first visit. He had little more to say in 1860 (at least in the letter-diary of his second trip to Cornwall) when he again encountered stormy weather at Tintagel and wrote of defying the elements in his "weather-proofs" on his daily ten-mile walk. Called "Tennyson's Arthurian Journey" by Francis Palgrave, who accompanied him much of the way, the trip was taken shortly after the publication of the first four *Idylls of the King* to provide the poet a sense of authentic Arthurian landscape.

Tennyson was far from the first writer to seek out the places associated with Arthur, of course. Giraldus Cambrensis had done so as early as the 12th century, and so did John Leland in the 16th century, Richard Carew in the 17th and William Borlase in the 18th. But as railroads and improved highways provided easier access to the far corners of Britain in the 19th century, sites associated with the Arthurian story became places of pilgrimage. Those travellers of a century ago might have had difficulty comprehending the modern tour groups seeking spiritual experiences at Arthurian sites – their motivation more often tended to be historical curiosity, however coloured with the romance of contemporary literature. The accounts of their experiences, often reported in the periodicals of the day, tell us both how much and how little the Arthurian world has changed in a hundred years or so.

Dinah M. [Mulock] Craik, author of *Avillion or the Happy Isles* (1854), one of the earliest Arthurian prose works of the era, vacationed in Cornwall in the fall of 1866. Although drawn to the Cornish coast by the prospect of seeing "King Arthur's Land", Mrs. Craik held few illusions about the historical Arthur, whom she supposed to be a "Cornish king, whom we conclude did live sometime but was probably a very barbaric sort of personage." Her report for the most part displays a greater fascination with rural life in a remote region than with "Arthur and old romance', but on an excursion from the town of Bude to the ruins of the castle, even the sensible Mrs. Craik was moved by Tintagel's dark presence:

> Being neither skeptic nor believers, and, perhaps, not caring much to prove either side, all we could say was, – after having climbed the winding steps into the sheer face of the rock, with the dizzy waves boiling and foaming many feet below, and passed through the little modern door out on the green platform at the summit of the Head, – that if Arthur did not build the castle, whosoever did build it, and live in it, was undoubtedly a hero. Nothing small, or cowardly, or luxurious; nothing after the pattern of Regent Street loungers, or Pall Mall club-ites could possibly exist here, on this wild inaccessible rock, facing, day and night, summer and winter, that awful lonely sea. No man could voluntarily make his dwelling here without being daring, self-contained, prudent, and strong – qualities exacted by the very necessities of his life. And no woman – call her Guinevere, Ysolte, anything – could sit here on this rock, with this sublime desolation around her, without feeling strange thoughts come unto her, strange passions tear her, strange experiences teach her.

The precarious path from the mainland to the castle mentioned by Mrs. Craik added a dangerous if picturesque character to the Tintagel experience in those days before it had been improved for tourists. As one anonymous visitor described it in 1860:

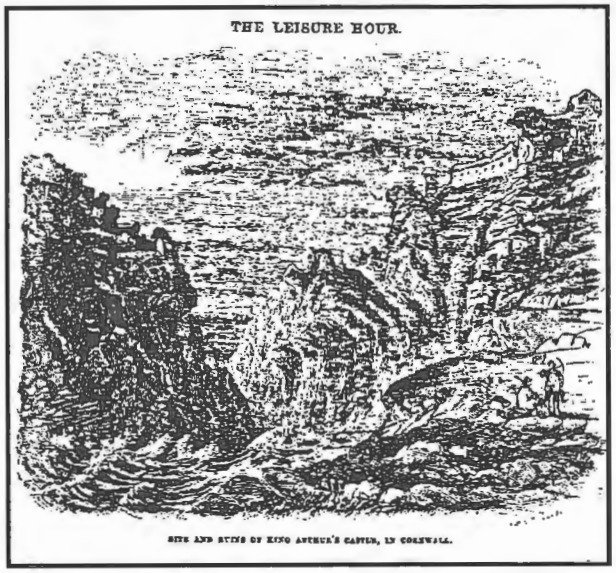
> The rocks and the little patches of matted turf are so slippery and so steep, that he must have a steady eye and a firm step who would venture down upon the natural bridge and up aloft upon the bold castellated rock. The sea-fowl are swooping around his forehead, and screaming shrill defiance into his ear. The booming wind seems bent upon plunging him into the green swell of the sea far below, which is veined like marble by lines of retreating foam-belts, or broken into sudden shivers by the wild reflux of some master wave. His eyes are now blinded by a shower of foam, which is capriciously flung into his face like a blast of driving smoke. A fragment is loosened by his foot, and bounds sharply from rock to rock until it plunges madly into the gulf, which welcomes it with a passing burst of foamy gladness.

Another anonymous visitor described much the same experience in only slightly less purple terms:

> The path scales the side of the tremendous chasm, into which the sea breaks frantic, and rushes out as if in terror; up and up, by stony scrambles and sharp turns, here and there guarded by a hand-rail, but more fit for a goat than for a man, and not wide enough for two goats to pass; up and up, the height more giddy, the dreadful depth, with the waters rushing in and out, deeper and deeper. At length a wooden door in the ruined outworks of the castle is reached, opening on the narrow ledge above the sheer cliff; within are grassy courts, broken battlements, ivied parapets, and a sense of safety. here is a breathing-place, to sit on the fallen masonry and look about for the footprints of legend.

The footprints that the visitor most clearly discerned were those of King Mark's queen on a day in which "the distant capes and points were dim and dreamlike in the summer haze, as if Yseult's reveries brooded over them still." Other visitors on other days envisioned the story of Uther Pendragon and Igraine or felt the presence of Merlin at the postern gate. the stories, after all, are what brought the travellers to Tintagel in the first place.

Tintagel is probably best experienced in solitude – a luxury not afforded the modern tourist who encounters a crowd of sightseers on the castle stairs or has the whole experience soured by the marketing of the legend in the shops of the town. Although local interest in the site's association with King Arthur began to stir at mid-century, the commercial exploitation of Arthurian Tintagel scarcely had begun by the century's end. And although one might think of the 19th century as a time when a much larger body of oral tradition still existed, that seems not to have been the case on the coast of Cornwall. Mrs. Craik remarked that her local driver knew nothing of Arthur, and Robert Hunt, who toured Cornwall in 1863 with the express purpose of gathering folklore, found little about Arthur even at Tintagel: "I sought with anxiety for some stories of the British king, but not one could be obtained.



SITE AND RUINS OF KING ARTHUR'S CASTLE, IN CORNWALL.

The man who has charge of the ruins of the castle was very sorry that he had lent a book which he once had, and which contained many curious stories, but he had no story to tell me."

The great body of Arthurian legend revived for Victorian audiences by contemporary poets was coloured with romantic imagery that was difficult to reconcile with the historical remains on the British landscape. Yet seeking the Arthurian world embodied in the works of Tennyson, the Pre-Raphaelites and the rediscovered Malory, Victorian travellers sometimes found it, and when they did, it was a marvellous experience. To Tennyson, Tintagel may have seemed a cold and dreary spot, but to those who had visited it in his verse, such as William Howitt, it was a better world:

> As the sound of the billows came up from below, and the cliffs stood around in their dark solemn grandeur, I gradually lost sight of the actual place and was gone into the very land and times of old romance. the Palace of Tintagel was no longer a ruin. It stood before me in that barbaric splendour I had only before supposed. There it was, in all its amplitude, with all its bastions and battlements, its towers and massy archways, dark yet glittering in the sun with metallic lustre. The porter stood by its gate; the warder paced its highest turret, beholding with watchful glance both sea and land; guards walked to and fro on its great drawbridge, their battle-axes flashing in the morning beams as they turned; pennons were streaming on every tower, and war-steeds were neighing in their stalls. There was a sound and a stir of life. Where I had seen before the bare green turf, I now saw knights, jousting for pastime in the tiltyard; where the sea had rolled, I beheld a fair garden. many a young knight and damsel paced the pleasant garden-walkways in high discourse or merriment, and other knights in alleys cool were playing at the bowls. . . .
>
> But the bugle blew. The great portcullis went up with a jar. There was a sound of horns, a clatter of horses' hoofs on the hard pavement, a cry of hounds, and forth issued from the castle court the most glorious pageant that the eye could look upon. It was no other than King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, and a hundred knights and ladies equipped and mounted for the chase. O for some minstrel to tell us all their names, and place their beauty and bravery before us. There they were, – those famous warriors of the Table Round, on their strong steeds; the fairest dames on earth on their ambling jennets of Spain, with mantles of green and purple and azure fluttering in the breeze and flashing in the sun. There they went, – the noble, stalwart, and, magnanimous Arthur at their head, wearing his helmet crown as he was wont in battle.

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Cornwall and Arthur

by Charles W. Evans-Günther

I am sure if you ask most people about 'King Arthur' they would probably tell you that he was born in Cornwall, lived in Camelot and is buried in Glastonbury. There are those who would agree and tell you that he was born in Tintagel and that Camelot is Cadbury Castle in Somerset while adding that Arthur was killed at Camelford, in Cornwall. Experts are far from agreement, though some would support a South-West origin for Arthur. And yet what do we know of the area from a historical point of view?

Cornwall played a big part in Geoffrey of Monmouth's **History of the Kings of Britain (Historia Regum Britanniae)**. Corineus was given Cornwall by Brutus; Cloten was King of Cornwall; Belinus constructed a road from Cornwall to Caithness; Asclepiodus, Duke of Cornwall, became King of Britain; Gorlais, the husband of Ygerna (later mother of Arthur), was Duke of Cornwall and many a hero came from the peninsula. Cornwall was virtually Geoffrey's centre of the universe – it certainly was the Alpha and Omega of his King Arthur. According to Geoffrey Arthur was conceived at Tintagel and fought his last battle at the *River Camblam* (Geoffrey's version of Camlan) in Cornwall.

Brittany comes a close second to Cornwall as a place of importance to Geoffrey – Arthur's ancestors came from there and he could almost depend on the Bretons for help. One gets the impression that, despite being born in South Wales, Geoffrey had little good to say about Wales and the Welsh while Cornwall and Brittany were the apples of his eye. What was the importance of Cornwall to Geoffrey?

It cannot be doubted that there was some sort of tradition of Arthur being connected with Cornwall. He is linked with Celliwig in Cornwall in Culhwch and Olwen, the Triads and some early poetry. However, the earliest material about Arthur seem to locate the hero in another part of the country. The **Gododdin** is set in the North of Britain with warriors riding from Din Edin (Edinburgh?) down into Yorkshire to fight the Angles. In the poem a warrior called Gwawrddur is likened to Arthur. Later references are the **History of the Britons** and the **Welsh Annals**. The latter gives two entries to Arthur - a battle at Badon and his death at Camlann, said to be Castlesteads – Camboglanna (once thought to be Birdoswald) – on Hadrian's Wall. The former lists a series of 12 battles in which Arthur is the 'battle leader' and victor. One of these sites can be located in Scotland and another can be cross-referenced with early poetry as also being in Scotland. Other battles are hard to locate but suggestions tend to be to the North except for Badon, which most experts place in the south of Britain. In recent years doubt has been thrown on Badon and it has been suggested by Professor Thomas Jones that this battle was added to Arthur's credit.

So at a really early period the location for Arthur may have been considered to have come from the North of Britain. This is supported by certain scholars like Dr. Rachel Bromwich (who goes for an Arthur in Yorkshire) and Peter Beresford-Ellis (Arthur in Elmet, which was near Leeds). However, soon after this period – say around 950 – Arthur finds his way to South Wales and Cornwall. Equally, some modern scholars support a South-Western Arthur. The earlier Arthur seems to be historical but the later Arthur may belong to folklore and legend. I find myself unable to make up my mind when placing Arthur, though I feel that we should be looking in places where one would not expect to find him – if, of course, Arthur is more than legend!

Cornwall, like Cumbria and Scotland, is one of the last areas of Britain to have been conquered by the Anglo-Saxons and it was the English who gave it the name. Earliest English references call this part of Britain West Wales. It was not until 891 that we can find the name "Corn walum" - the Welsh of the Corn. It is not usual for the English of this period to make use of Celtic names - such as Kent from the tribal territory of the Cantii, however, most English placenames with 'Corn' as an element indicate either the cereal corn or the bird crane. Meanwhile, the Welsh gave Cornwall the name Cernyw, for example Celliwig in Cernyw – "Forest grove" in Cornwall. This was the palace of Arthur in Culhwch and Olwen and the Triads. Another Welsh reference to Cornwall, in the Welsh Annals, has Dungarth "rex Cerniu id est Cornubiae" – "king of Cernyw that is Cornovia".

It has been suggested that Cornovia is based on the Celtic tribe of the Cornovii. However, there are only two places which can be linked to tribes with this name – one is in the Cheshire-

Shropshire-Powys area while the other is in the far north of Scotland. Earliest indications are that Cornwall was, with Devon, part of the Dark Age kingdom of Dumnonia. John Morris in his **Age of Arthur** put forward the idea that Cornovian settlers came from the Midlands to Cornwall, but interesting as his work may be it is full of guesses which lead to a lot of inaccurate conclusions.

One possibility is a tradition grew up, during the Dark Age, in the land of the Cornovii about Arthur. This may have led some to believe that Arthur was a Cornovian. In that case one should be looking for Arthur in the Midlands and though there are some legendary connections, no historical material can be found to substantiate this (whatever Messrs Keatman and Phillips have to say). What is more likely is that tales were told by bards in the area at an early period. It is possible that the great poet of the late sixth century – Taliesin – may have come to Powys (the successor of the Midland territory of the Cornovii) from Cumbria late in life. He had been, according to tradition, bard to Urien Rheged and his son Owain but also wrote poetry to Cynan Garwyn of Powys. The latter was the grandson of Cyngen, whose daughter Sanan married Maelgwn, King of Gwynedd in the mid sixth century. Tales of the warrior Arthur, I would postulate, were brought to Powys and from there spread to Wales, Cornwall and Brittany.

Returning to Geoffrey, I have not yet suggested an answer to why he linked Arthur so strongly to Cornwall, and interestingly, also South-East Wales. Geoffrey dedicated his History of the Kings of Britain to Waleran, Count of Mellent, and Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the natural son of Henry I. Later editions had dedications to Robert of Gloucester alone and to King Stephen and Robert. It is without doubt that Robert played an important part in Geoffrey's life, and Robert of Gloucester was one of the most powerful men of his time! It is interesting that Geoffrey ignored the Arthurian connection with a Celliwig in Cornwall (wherever it was) and moved the Cornish born Arthur from Tintagel to Caerleon in South Wales. There may have already been links with Arthur at a site known as the City of Legions and Geoffrey decided it was Caerleon upon Usk in *'Glamorgantia'*, in the territory of his patron Robert of Gloucester.

Prof. E.M.R. Ditmas has shown that there were a considerable number of Breton families in South Wales and Cornwall. He writes "*If, before he went to Oxford, Geoffrey had been a clerk in the earl's household, it would explain the choice of Robert as the patron to whom his early dedication of the Historia was made. It would also provide a link with Cornwall, for at least five manors in that county were attached to the honour of Gloucester.*" It cannot be proven than Geoffrey of Monmouth travelled in Cornwall but it is interesting that the places he seems to have a familiarity with were near to manors held by Robert. Geoffrey, some say, was of a Breton family settled in South Wales and so it is possible that his preference for Brittany was influenced by his ancestry while his liking for Cornwall is connected both his patron and Breton families recorded to have lived in this area.

There are a good number of Breton links with Geoffrey's work. Many of the names used are of Breton rather than Welsh origin, such as Gorlais, Ulphin and Britael. There were, and are, similarities between the two languages but Britanny had developed it own culture by the 11th century and many Bretons followed William the Conqueror over in 1066. Two leading Breton knights took part in the conquest of Devon and Cornwall in 1067 and 1068. These were Judhel son of Alured and Brient son of Eudon, Count of Penthièvre. The latter seems to have been awarded the lordship of Cornwall and when he died in 1086 it was passed on to Robert of Mortain. According to Prof. Ditmas many Bretons settled on the northeastern coast of Cornwall.

Tintagel lies only one or two miles from the manors of the Breton family of Blohin, including Delamere, Dawnant, Trefreock, Trewethert and Truthwall. One of Robert of Gloucester's manors was Menelidan, three miles north of Tintagel. Less than two miles from Delamere is the River Camel and near the manor of Trevornak, held by the Breton Brient, is Dimelioc. Tintagel, *Camblam* and Dimelioc make up a triad of Cornish sites important to Geoffrey. Tintagel being the site where Uther fathered Arthur, Dimelioc where Gorlais was at when his wife Ygerna conceived Arthur and *Camblam* the place where Arthur defeated Mordred but received mortal wounds.

Maybe the links between Arthur and Cornwall are not as simple as originally thought. Once one starts to look into the period of the writing of the such material as the **Triads, Culhwch and Olwen** and **the History of the Kings of Britain** other solutions may be found. Was the historical Arthur a Cornishman, a Cornovii or a Northern? The adventure of finding out goes on!

(Editor: To to see this article's list of sources send a SAE to the usual Pendragon address.)

The Forgotten Badon

by Gwilym ap Iorwerth

"An. CCXXI Primum Pasca apud Saxones celebratur. Bellum Badonis secundo. Morcant moritur."
Annales Cambriae (Welsh Annals)

According to the Welsh Annals in the year 665, when the Saxons first celebrated Easter and Morgan died, there a second battle of Badon was fought . A previous and more famous battle of Badon is recorded has taking place in 516. The credit for winning this battle was given to Arthur, who carried the "Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ" on his shoulders for three days and three nights. The site of the Battle of Badon has been hotly disputed for years. Is it possible to locate the second battle and if so would it shed any light on the first?

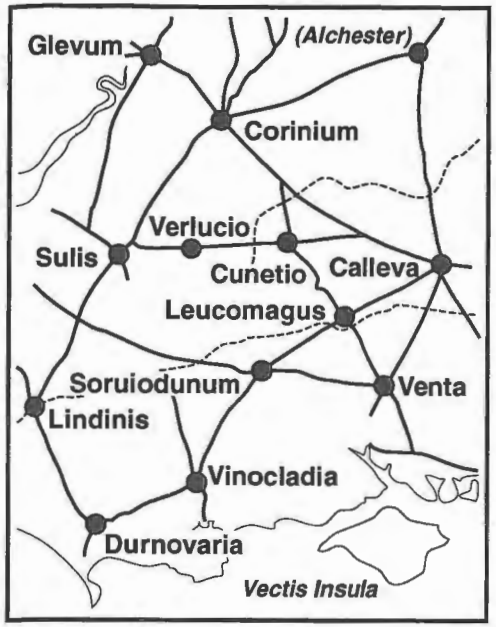
Though the study of early medieval chronicles is fraught with problems many events can be cross-referenced. A comparison between the **Anglo-Saxon Chronicle** (ASC) and the **Welsh Annals** (WA) show that certain events often correspond to within a couple of years or so. For example, working backwards: Bede's death - ASC 734 - WA 735, rain turned to blood - ASC 685 - WA 689, a comet recorded - ASC 678 - WA 676, Battle of Chester - ASC 607 - WA 613 and Pope Gregory's death - ASC 606 - WA 601. However, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle seems not to record either the first or second battles of Badon - or does it?

There were a number of battles mentioned within ten years either side of 665. In 658 there was a battle at Penselwood, 661 at a place called Posentesburh and in 675 one at Biedanheafod. Of these Penselwood was fought between the West Welsh and the Saxons of Wessex, Posentesburh looks like it was between Wulfhere of Mercia and Cenwalh of Wessex and Biedanheafod was between Wulfhere and Aescwine of Wessex. The Welsh Annals makes no reference to who was fighting at the 2nd Badon though some have suggested that the Morgan who died that year should be linked to it. There is no reason to believe this and it is easily possible that the chronicler was recording the 2nd Badon because it was on the site of the more famous,earlier battle of Badon.

There is another possible indication to pinpointing the 2nd Badon since the entry records the celebration of Easter by the Saxons. In 663 a synod was held at Whitby, in Northumberland, to discuss the differences between the Celtic Christians and the Roman Christians. Paramount was the date for celebrating Easter. Could this be what the **Welsh Annals** entry for 665 refers to? In 673 a synod was also held in Hertford and top of the agenda was the date of Easter. Is it possible that the **Welsh Annals** chronicler had got the two mixed up and the reference is to Hertford and not Whitby? If this is so then the battle at Biedanheafod could actually be the 2nd Badon.

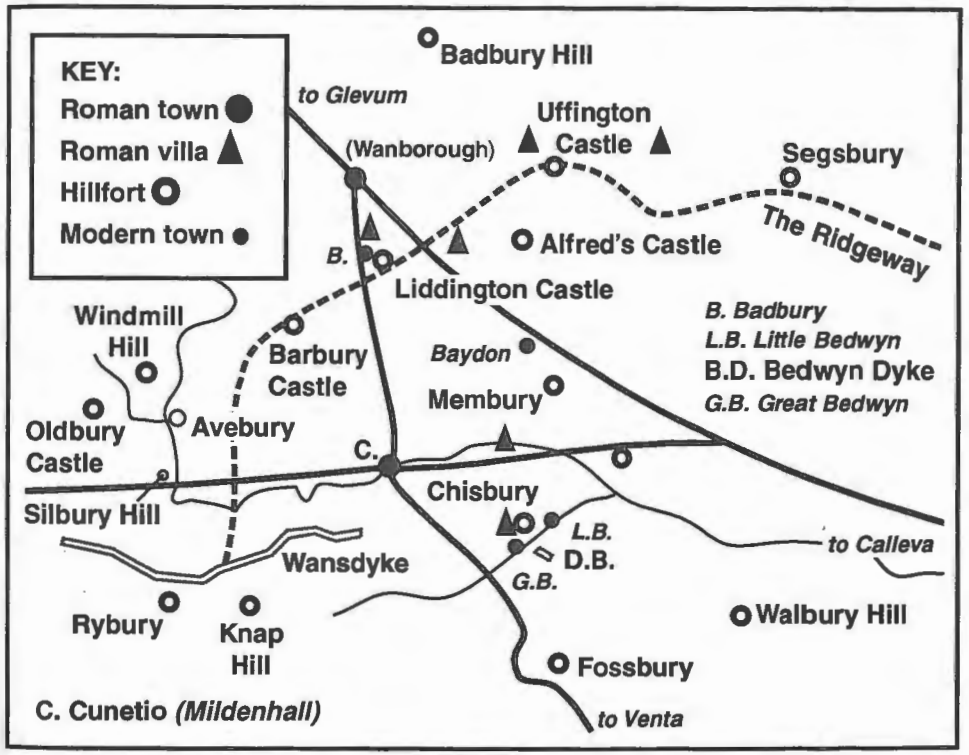
The name Biedanheafod is made up of two elements. Heafod represents a headland, summit, upper end, promontory or a source of a stream. Therefore the placename could be Biedan's head. It has been suggested that the battle of Biedanheafod took place near the villages of Little and Great Bedwyn. This is a fascinating area, of which more later. Since the battle was between Wulfhere of Mercia and Aescwine of Wessex there is every reason to locate a battle on or near a Roman road somewhere between Glevum (Gleawanceaster - Gloucester) and Venta (Uintancaestir - Winchester). The Mercians would have been coming from the Midlands by either the Roman road through Glevum or Corinium (Cirencester) while the army of Wessex would likely be moving from Venta through Leucomagus (East Anton) and Cunetio (Mildenhall). On or near these Roman roads are a number of defensive systems and a good few hillforts. The major defensive system is Wansdyke and hillforts include Fossbury, Walbury Hill, Chisbury, Membury, Barbury Castle, Liddington Castle, Uffington Castle and Badbury Hill. There are some other hillforts locally and such historic sites as Avebury, Silbury Hill and Windmill Hill. As can be seen from the map a number of the hillforts are on The Ridgeway which runs diagonally across this area.

There are in this location some interesting placenames including Badbury, near Liddington Castle, Baydon and Bedwyn. Near Baydon is Membury hillfort and between Little and Great Bedwyn is Chisbury. The latter is of some interest since it seems to derive its name from Cissa,



son of Aelle, which may be important. Logically this area is perfect for locating Badon. It is also the area of a number of battles from Beranburgh -556, Woden's Beg - 592 (and again in 715) and Elladun in 582, not to mention later battles, such as Roundway Hill in 1643, during in the Civil War. The military connections are also considerable, including colleges, training areas, aerodromes and top secret sites.

Another point which may have relevance to the location of Badon is a 13th Century gloss to Gildas' De Excidio Britanniae which says that the siege of Badon Hill was ". . . near the mouth of the Severn'. What is interesting is that there is in the area being discussed a Savernake Forest, called Safernoc in 934, which Eilert Ekwall has suggested is from the same Celtic origin as Severn. Therefore it is possible Safernoc is an older name for the River Bedwind which runs from the River Kennet near Little and Great Bedwyn. For sake of argument let us say that Biedanheafod can



be located in this area and that it is probably the second Badon. Therefore it is likely that the first Badon was also located at the same spot or somewhere nearby.

We know who fought at Biedanheafod but who were the opponents at the first Badon? Bede records that certain Saxon leaders were called Bretwaldas. These were, in reverse order: Egbert of Wessex, Oswy of Northumbria, Oswald of Northumbria, Edwin of Northumbria, Raedwald of East Anglia, Aethelbert of Kent, Ceawlin of Wessex and Aelle of Sussex. Aelle is mentioned in the ASC as arriving in 477 together with his sons Cymen, Wlencing and Cissa. They fought a series of battles with the British in 477, 485 and 491, after which Aelle and clan disappear completely! However, Aelle was remembered as a great leader - a Bretwalda. It is possible that Aelle led an army of Saxons against the British after 491, was defeated and that defeat or series of defeats had not been recorded in the Chronicle. If this is so then it is possible that the Saxons would have been heading for an area of Britain that was still British, which could have been around Circencester. To get to this part of Britain they would have probably moved along the coast from Noviomagus (Cisseceaster - Chicester) and then up through Venta or from Noviomagus up to Calleva (Silcestre - Silchester). Both roads would eventually pass through the area suggested as the site of Badon.

What is worth remembering is that near Little and Great Bedwyn is Chisbury which may have its origins in the name Cissa. The last we hear of Aelle is that he has successfully besieged Anderida (Andredescester - Pevensey) together with his son Cissa. No mention is made of Cymen and Wlencing. If Aelle and Cissa were in charge of the Saxon army, is it possibly that they met the British forces near where the Roman road between Leucomagus and Cunetio crosses the River Bedwind (possibly Safernoc - Severn)? If so, since Gildas describes the battle as a siege, Aelle could have been forced into an old hillfort near the Bedwyns - Chisbury! If the Saxons were using the Calleva road then it passes near Membury and Liddington Castle, which has already been linked to Badon by other writers.

Gildas is quiet specific in his comments about this battle: ". . . the siege of Badon Hill, pretty well the last defeat of the villains, and certainly not the least." What is he saying? Gildas indicates that Badon was not the last or the least, which surely means that there were more battles against the Saxons in this particular war and that they may have been greater battles than Badon. Gildas links Badon with his birth and therefore may be using this battle only because of his connection with that particular year. Also Gildas makes no mention of who led the British to victory at the siege of Badon Hill. The only British leader Gildas records is Ambrosius Aurelianus, who is likely to have lived at least a generation before this campaign.

Gildas relates that he was writing in his 44th year and that he was born the same year as Badon. Amongst the characters mentioned in Gildas' criticisms was Maglocunus - Maelgwn of Gwynedd. His death is recorded in the Welsh Annals as 547 and so if this date is correct Gildas would have to be writing before this time. Therefore the battle of Badon could not be after, at the latest, 503. An interesting piece in The History of the Britons gives a series of chronological hints and the last one is "From the year when the English came to Britain and were welcomed by Vortigern to Decius and Valerian is 69 years." This has been calculated as 497 and I would like to suggest that the author of this collection was indicating the campaign against the Saxons during which the battle of Badon took place in this year. Is it possible that 1997 is the 1,600th anniversary of the battle of Badon, and the birth of Gildas?

Hundreds of years later Badon became elevated to the greatest defeat of the Saxons during which Arthur the soldier led the British and alone killed 960 of the enemy. Professor Thomas Jones, amongst others, has shown that there are problems with this connection between Badon and Arthur. He suggests that the famous entry should be "The Battle of Badon and the British were the victors." Was the Arthurian part an addition? Badon had been elevated to something it may never have been - the final battle between the Christian Britons and the pagan Saxon. Arthur may have been known as a great warrior who fought a series of battle against a particular enemy that the Britons of the 8th or 9th Century considered to be Saxons. It has also been suggested that the 12 battles listed in The History of the Britons, credited to Nennius, was based on a battle listing poem. These battles found in Chapter 56 number 12, but only seven placenames are recorded since four battles were fought at the same place. This smacks of something unusual! Why not list 12 different names unless this is a genuine list and four battles were fought on the *"Dubglas, et est*

in regione Linnuis" or four lines or stanzas of the poem were devoted to one battle? Other writers have pointed out that not all versions of this list include Badon. Is it possible that Badon was adopted from Gildas and credited to Arthur though it can not be connected with him? It is likely that at least two other battles were brought into this list from different periods - Chester and Bregion. The poet knew Arthur fought a series of battles but wasn't quite sure where they took place.

What is interesting is that the Welsh bards, though they often mentioned Arthur and Badon, never linked the two together. However, they did often have Arthur and Camlann, another battle in the Welsh Annals connected with the hero. This suggests to me that the Welsh bards knew more about the history of Arthur than has been passed down to us. The only story that has Arthur fighting at Badon is The Dream of Rhonabwy, which I believe is a lampoon on the King Arthur of post- History of the Kings of Britain by Geoffrey of Monmouth. This later Arthur is probably a composite of a number of people including Magnus Maximus, Ambrosius Aurelianus and Arthur son of Pedr of Dyfed. From possible genuine historical warrior Arthur grew into the conquering hero and to him gravitated much, including the battle of Badon.

Badon, according to Gildas, played a part in the defence of Britain against the Saxons of Southern Britain, laid the way for their defeat and gave the British of this area relative peace for some 50 years. During this time, however, Saxon fought Saxon and Briton fought Briton. Arthur may have lived during this period and fought a battle the Camlann. Removing Badon from the battles of Arthur opens up the location and dating of Arthur. A number of the battles listed in The History of the Britons and mentioned in old poetry indicates they were fought in the north. It is possible that the propaganda of the 9th Century pointed the finger at the Saxons has being solely Arthur's enemies when there may have been more than one - including the Irish and the Picts as well as other Britons. According to the Welsh Annals Arthur and Medraut fell at the strife of Camlann. Where Camlann can be located is another story!

Birth - Life - Death

A look at some of the traditional Arthurian sites

by John Ford

BIRTH - TINTAGEL

Tintagel Castle lies on a small headland on the north Cornish coast. Sometimes it is called an island and though this is not strictly true, the way the cliffs on this part of the coast is crumbling away it will not be too long before this will happen. In 1135 Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote 'History of the Kings of Britain' and named Tintagel Castle as the birthplace of Arthur

The first point that comes out of this statement is that an ardent Welshman has named Arthur's birthplace outside Wales and the Welsh seem to accept this without a murmur! We have a Celtic race who fiercely claim Arthur as their own yet seem to accept the statement that he was born in Cornwall and buried in Somerset, as we will see later. Over the last century the doubters have again been at work and people now state that there was no castle in Arthurian times just a small monastery built on the island, and the only reason Geoffrey named Tintagel as Arthur's birthplace was to appease his lord, who was Reginald, Earl of Cornwall, the illegitimate son of Henry the First.

As to the monastery theories, this came from excavations carried out by C.A. Raleigh Radford in the mid 1930s. The excavations were never brought to a satisfactory conclusion due to the Second World War and certain circles never fully accepted his theories that the island was a monastic centre in the 6th century. Part of the disbelief was caused by the finding of 6th century imported pottery which was nicknamed 'Tintagel' pottery and has been since found at various other Dark Age sites including Cadbury. These pottery finds are significant as most were imported Mediterranean amphora containing luxury items such as olive oil or wine, certainly not the everyday diet of a monastic colony. Thankfully excavations within the last five years show that Tintagel was as far removed from a monastery as you could get. Little is left of any of the buildings from either the Dark

Age or the Medieval period, but the facts have emerged from them in the last five years due to some extensive archaeological work. These make very interesting reading for anybody interested in the Arthurian legends surrounding Tintagel.

Firstly let go back to Geoffrey and the widely documented theory that he named Tintagel as Arthur's birthplace only to please his lord Reginald who had just built a castle there. But due to painstaking historical studies and confirmed by the dig, it seems that work to construct Reginald's castle did not begin until 1145, fully ten years after Geoffrey had written his 'History'. It also turns out that Reginald was not even created Earl of Cornwall until 1140. I find it strange that Geoffrey named Arthur's birthplace after his master's castle which would not be under construction for another ten years in a land that his master would not be given for another five years. Maybe Geoffrey was a clairvoyant, then again maybe I'm just a cynic! But let's get back to some basic facts that have come out in the last five years.

The position of the castle is a strange one. None of the three ancient routes in Cornwall run anywhere near Tintagel and as a military stronghold this would be the last place you would place a castle, an army could march straight past on the headland and the castle occupants could do nothing about it. Yet a large stronghold did exist in Arthur's time. Recent digs show from the period AD 475-550 Tintagel served as a stronghold to Post-Roman kings in the form of a seasonal home. Possibly its use was for dynastic happenings (births?). Various buildings were discovered on the island and on the mainland a large defensive ditch was found in the lower ward dating to AD 450-500 and on the lower point of the island a landing point (harbour) was discovered dating back to the same time. The amount of imported pottery found at Tintagel was astounding. It was not only dramatically greater than that from other single sites dated around that time in either Britain or Ireland but also larger than the combined total of ALL such pottery from ALL known sites; and given that only 5% of the island's accessible surface has been excavated these figures show this was a very important site in its time.

Also recent excavations on the churchyard opposite the island shows that Christian burials began at least as early as the 6th century and the churchyard and the island were intimately linked. Pottery found in the churchyard dates to the 5th-6th century, and the earthworks, which date to a much earlier period than the 12th century church have only one entrance which faces north (away from the village and directly opposite the island). The church itself is built at least half a mile from the village and is dated to AD 1120 a full 25 years before Reginald's castle was built. The village itself only dates back to the 13th century.

The medieval castle which now stands on Tintagel island is not in fact the castle that Reginald built. Contrary to tradition Reginald did not built the magnficant castle that Geoffrey was supposed to have seen and named as Arthur"s birthplace. Reginald did not build much of a castle at all. It has now been proven that most of the castle was built by Richard Earl of Cornwall, and son of King John, in AD 1230. Richard had the castle built similar to the Dark Age castle and was almost certainly influenced by the Arthurian buildings already on the island. Did Richard know something we don't?

One last fact. It seems that the Dark Age occupation on the island ended abruptly around the middle of the 6th century. I wonder why? Now what date was Camlan?

LIFE - CADBURY

Cadbury Castle lies on the Somerset/Dorset border and is an impressive Iron Age type hillfort. It is 500 feet above sea level with breathtaking views across the Summer Land to Glastonbury.

The first recorded written evidence was by Layland in 1542 but the site has always had Arthurian legends associated with it. The local people have always called the site Camelot, and they still claim to hear Arthur and his men ride down from the castle on Midsummer Eve. The hillfort is a total of 18 acres surrounded by 4 defensive perimeters which consist of impressive banks and ditches slopping at 35 degrees.

In the mid 60s a major archaeological dig was carried out at Cadbury and the results proved that something very special happened at Cadbury in the 'Dark Ages'. Refortification of hillforts on a large scale was unknown after the Iron Age yet it was found that the whole of the 18 acres of Cadbury had been fortified sometime between 400-600 AD. Smack in the middle of those dates was Arthur!

The whole of the perimeter had been fortified with 20 foot thick banks topped with wooden fences. bearing in mind the complete circuit of the perimeter is 1,200 yards, you do not need a big

stretch of the imagination to work out how much work was involved to complete this task. Yet it was achieved not once but four times around the perimeter. A major gateway was built on the south side of the hill with roads laid leading up to it, and on the summit itself various 'Dark Age' buildings were found including post holes over one foot thick which would have supported a very substantial building. The manpower needed to build this scale would have been vast and only a person of very high standing could have achieved this. In 500 AD the Saxons were nowhere within miles of this area so it could not have been a fortress built to resist the Saxons. So it must have been the home of a mighty warrior of that time. Possibly the home of a king?

Significantly, there had not been a hillfort found in the whole of Britain that had been fortified anywhere near this extent or size and even more significant nowhere has been found since.

To sum it up, legend has always said Arthur was there but until they find a 'Dark Age' stone with the Latin inscription "Arthur of the Britons lived here" there will always be doubter, so I will close on this subject with a quote from the book 'The Quest for Arthur's Britain':

"The lord of Cadbury was a person as much like Arthur as makes no matter: A person living on a site traditionally picked out as his home, in the traditional period, with the resources on traditional scale, playing at least part of the traditional role; a person big enough for the legends to have gathered round him, nowhere else but Cadbury does Britain supply any archaeological trace of such a person."

DEATH - GLASTONBURY

Glastonbury is a small market town nestled in the heart of Somerset famous for many legends and believed to be the earliest sites of Christianity in Britain. It has been stated that there could have been a Christian settlement in Glastonbury in 162 AD and some legends state that it goes back further than that. St. Joseph of Arimathea is said to have started a Christian settlement when visiting this country around 10 AD. There is even a legend that Jesus came to this country with Joseph at some point . Blake referred to this in his famous song 'Jerusalem'

"And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountain green."

In 1191 the monks of Glastonbury announced they has discovered the grave of Arthur in the grounds of the abbey and this seems to have been accepted right up to the 20th century when the skeptics began to voice their doubts. The main claim of the doubter seems to be that the whole of the story of the find was a sham to raise money for the abbey which had been destroyed by fire some years before. My own opinion is, why should the monks fake the claim? There is no evidence to raise money in any way! And what is even more surprising is that nobody at the time disputed the claim. Why did everybody accept it as fact? It seems very strange that if it was a fake, why did the Celtic Welsh who claimed Arthur as their own, say nothing about it? Why didn't the other Celtic regions who claimed Arthur as their own not challenge the discovery?

There was a lot of rivalry between abbeys at that time and they used any excuse to discredit each other at every opportunity, yet no other church body disputed the find. In 1066 the hated Saxons lost control of the country and by 1191 the Normans had tightened their grip on the country. The counter offensive by the Saxons had not happened and the secret resting place of Arthur could be revealed without reprisal. I believe the resting place of Arthur was known to the Celts and by the 12th century the rumour was widespread and it was no surprise to anybody that Arthur was discovered at Glastonbury.

Now let's look at the facts that have been recorded about the discovery. It was claimed that the grave was discovered between two pillars and approximately seven feet down they found the famous leaded cross. Another nine feet down they found a hollow trunk which contained the body of Arthur. If it was a fake why did they not jazz the grave description up? The description was not awe inspiring magnificance you would expect from the discovery of the great King Arthur's grave, in fact it was quite bland. Bland but accurate?

There are two points I would like to make on the brief description given on the discovery. If the monks faked the burial how were they so correct in the description of a Pre-Saxon grave? And the point about digging seven feet and then a further nine feet is very interesting. In the 10th century when Dunstan was abbot it was decided that there was no more room in the abbey graveyard and a decision was made. They built abbey walls around the graveyard up and laid a new layer of soil on the top of the old graveyard. This would explain why the monks in the 12th century dug so

deep. In 1962 Raleigh Radford found where the grave was supposed to be. He found the postholes described by the monks and directly between the postholes he found soil disturbances which showed where the monks had dug. He found the soil disturbances consistent with the depth the monks described and found traces of a burial at some point in time. But the most interesting find he made was some chips of Doulting stone mixed in with the backfill. At the time of the monks discovery of the grave the abbey was building the Lady Chapel. The chapel was made of Doulting stone and the chips found in the grave were waste chips from the building work. Next to the cross. The monks state that they found the cross at seven feet in depth. This would tie in with the graveyard being raised an extra level 200 years before by Dunstan.

As to the cross itself, there are a lot of claims that it is a fraud. The main claim is that it is not consistent with 6th century writing, but what is not commonly mentioned is that the writing on the cross is not consistent with 12th century either! If the cross was a bad fraud the writing would be consistent with 12th century and if it was a good it would be consistent with the sixth century, but it is neither. It is in fact consistent with the 10th century. Why forge a cross with 10th century writing? There would be no point, but say the cross was made in the 10th century? Remember Dunstan? If the monks knew of Arthur's last resting place but could not reveal it would it not be reasonable that when they raised the level of the grave they could at last lay a memorial on Arthur's grave knowing the soil was going on top and the secret would still be safe? One last point about the cross, but I feel a very important one. If the cross was a forgery, surely they would use the spelling of Arthur that was known, bearing in mind Geoffrey's book was all the rage. However, whoever the so-called forger was, he did not copy any known source of the spelling of the name Arthur. In fact the way Arthur had been spelt on the cross had never been used before. This is not the only word on the cross that went against the normal way of spelling things. If it was a forgery I find it very strange!

CONCLUSIONS

I am sure a lot of our learned readers will point out the flaws in my beliefs but the one thing they will not do is shatter them. That is the beauty of Arthur, everybody has their own beliefs and ideas of who or what he is and where he rules. I have visited Arthurian sites all over Britain but to me these three feel right. Maybe its my active imagination but there is a presence, an aura about these places that I have not felt anywhere else. If you do not understand what I mean, stand on top of Cadbury castle early one autumn morning, with the mist laying on the lowlands all around you, and soak in the atmosphere, then try and say he was not there.

BOOK REVIEWS

Arturius - A Quest for Camelot
D.F. Carroll Privately published by the author at Southfield House, Goxhill, S. Humberside, 1996,

There have been a number of attempts to present a case for a Scottish Arthur, notably by J.S. Stuart Glennie in a long essay included in the EETS edition of **The English Merlin** (1099); followed by Nora K. Chadwick's fine 1953 essay **The Lost Literature of Scotland** and more recently by Williams Gilles **Arthur in Gaelic Tradition** (Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies, Vol. 3, 1982).

All of these might have proved useful references by the author of Arturius, but his use of sources - or rather lack of them - is generally so vague as to be confusing. Indeed his bibliography consists of just five books: Skene's **Chronicles of the Picts and Scots**, the **Four Ancient Books of Wales**, Giles **Six Old English Chronicles** and R.F. Treherne's **Glastonbury Legends**. If these are really the sole sources we may be forgiven for wondering how seriously to take the thesis offered here. The book is certainly written in a manner which lead one to suppose that Mr. Carroll is unfamiliar with book production or the proper use of sources. Despite which - and it has to be said that the lay out and construction of the book is repetitive and occasionally confusing - the thesis is of some interest.

Rejecting the more familiar contenders of Arthur's 'true' identity, Carroll plumps for a Northern figure - Artur son of Aiden Mac Gabran, who may have lived and died towards the end of the 6th century. This figure has been put forward before, but never with such vehemence and even ferocious conviction as Mr. Carroll - who believes unswervingly that this is the only historical Arthur (assuming Arthur to be historical, for which there is no real evidence) who fits all the facts. Indeed, he defies anyone to contradict him!

Having settled on this character, Carroll then proceeds to offer (fairly slender it must be said, and without any historical apparatus to support it) that this Arthur (Artur) died at the battle of Miathi (or Manau according to the Annals of Ulster) in 582, fighting against the son of the Pictish king Cennalet, whom he identifies with the Arthurian Lot of Lothian. The name of this son is given as Moldried or Meldred - in other words as the Mordred or Medraut of Arthurian tradition, though no real evidence is given for the identification of these two figures. The battle, according to Carroll, took place on the River Allan (or Cam-Allan) near the Ochill Hills in the area of the Firth of Forth. In the same area he identifies the Roman fortress of Ad Vallum with Camelot, a name apparently applied to it by local tradition - though not recorded before the 16th century. Following on from this Carroll points to the nearby settlement (in the 14th century) Invalone. Could this be Avalon? Given the close proximity of the sites known as Arthur's O'on and the famous Round Table of Stirling Castle, Carroll is persuaded that this area is the original site of the Arthurian story, and finds the coincidence of names and records conclusive proof of this.

Does he prove his case? Ultimately, I think not. There is a good deal of interesting material here, some of it worth of further investigation. But there needs to be a far greater degree of scholarship to substantiate such a markedly unusual theory. Carroll seems to know nothing of the **Senchus Fer nAlban** or the **Acallam na Senorach**, either of which early Gaelic text might have added to his thesis. Nor does he really address the important question of how a comparatively minor figure such as Artur became such an immensely important figure to the British people. His suggestion that Aidan, and possibly Artur after him, assumed the titles of *Dux Bellorum* or *Dux Brittanorum* seems unlikely in context of the larger picture.

Ultimately this is an interesting, if not exactly unique, theory, which may well repay further investigation. But until a more scholarly approach is taken, the reader must make up his or her own mind as to its veracity.

John Matthews

The Young Merlin Trilogy (1: Passenger, 2: Hobby & 3: Merlin)
Jane Yolen Harcourt Brace & Co. Florida, 1996-97 (pp76, 90 & 91) h/b $15.00 each

Jane Yolen's forays into Arthurian fiction are becoming more frequent and more impressive. Her notable earlier work **Merlin's Booke** (1986) made her interest in the great mage clear. In this new trilogy, intended for any age between 8 and 800, she returns to the story of Merlin's lost years, and in these three brief, brilliant, electrifying works tells us more about the making of a magician than anyone since Ursula le Guin in her Earthsea quartet.

The setting is a kind of medieval England that has strong echoes of the Dark Ages. Book one described an eight year old child abandoned in the woods, finding his way through the mysterious world, learning to hunt, eat and sleep without terror. Then he is founded by a falconer who tames him like a hawk and teaches him the ways of man, helping him find his name Merlin, the hawk, a passager bird, caught and tamed while young. The second volume takes us deeper into the story. The falconer and his family are killed and Merlin, called Hobby now, a hawk trained and flown to kill small birds, travels the world, meeting the trickster and cunning man Ambrosius and his partner Vivienne, learning to trust and not to trust, meeting Vortigern and prophesying his death. And he learns to dream, and that his dreams are truth but 'on the slant', perceived only by those who know. Finally, in book three he becomes a caged 'Dreamer' for the Wildwooders, the marvellous wild folk who were believed to dwell in the forests of Medieval Europe. There, in a moment of wonderful unexpectedness, he will meet one who will become the greatest king of all, and Merlin's pupil, or even son in the great family of wonder-figures from myth and legend.

Such is the outline of these three brief books. But there is much more here. Wise words, poetry, power and magic of the kind met with all too rarely. Jane Yolen is a practised spinner of tales and here she draws from many layers of the Arthurian world, from the older to the new - there are echoes from as far apart as the medieval **Vita Merlini** to the relatively new Once and Future King (how much modern retelling is still owed to T.H. White, even though few acknowledge it). The use of sources like the impressionistic brush-strokes is wonderful. Where else can one read an explanation of Merlin's mysterious 'moulting cage' and a few pages later find him associated with the Green Man and Robin Hood? How one longs for more at the end. Surely, this is the beginning of a great cycle of stories, too big to be contained in these all-too short books?

But what makes this trilogy so good is the depths of feeling which lies behind every word. Not since Alan Garner's **Stone Book Quartet**, have I read anything so powerful and evocative. At present these are only available in the US or through import shops, but they are more worth seeking out for the tremendous vitality they posses, and for the new-old image of Merlin that will stay in your mind long after you lay them down. Do anything to get these books if you can.

John Matthews

Dictionary of Norse Myth & Legend
Andy Orchard Cassell Reference, 1997, ISBN 0-304-345202, hbk, 224pp, illustrated, £20

Dr. Orchard is Director of Studies in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and this volume is intended to be a comprehensive survey of Norse myths and the society which created them. The author reminds us that the legends are found in a bewildering array of sources from different periods and places and reflect hugely varied views. Various authors and editors have attempted to synthesize and integrate the material over a long period of time.

There are over seven hundred outline accounts of all the principal sagas and legends, the cosmology of the Norse world and related topics such as amulets, runes and rites, etc. The text includes over three hundred quotations from early Norse literature and a fascinating appendix offers insights into the meaningful names given to the Norse gods, dwarfs, giants, troll-wives and Valkyries.

Each entry in the main text includes further references to the extensive bibliography of 628 works, which is described as "far from exhaustive". It includes: reference tools and general surveys of the field; editions of primary texts; translations of the texts and secondary works, including essays.

There is as much scholarship here, as one would expect from a Cambridge academic in this field of study, but Dr. Orchard admits he has tried to tread the narrow path between the demands

of modern scholarship and the pleasures of medieval story-telling:

> Each man should be only middling wise,
> never over-clever:
> a wise man's heart is seldom glad,
> if he is truly wise.
> (Eddic poem: Havamal)

No doubt a paperback edition of the book will appear shortly to make this useful reference work affordable by the general reader.

Fred Stedman-Jones

The Salmon of Knowledge: Reflections on Celtic Myth and Folklore
Brendan McMahon Dalriada Celtic Heritage Trust, 1997, ISBN 0-9520971-3-3, pbk, 42 pp, £3.50 UK, £3.75 EU, £4.50 overseas

Brendan McMahon's writing will be known to Pendragon readers, he is a psychotherapist and lecturer with a special interest in myth and folklore.

This booklet is described as "an explanation of traditional narratives from the Celtic lands" which "examines the way in which these narratives reflect human experience in many dimensions simultaneously." It is organised into seven chapters with such thematic titles as Hazels of Wisdom, The Cornish Giant Myth, Dreams and Dragons and The Voyage of Bran. In each of these chapters the author has more to tell us than many other books ten times the size of this one; the writing is a triumph of condensation and leaves one hungry for more. There is a bibliography of twenty six sources which open up the whole field for anyone wishing to pursue this material further. There is no New-Age, pseudo-Celticism here but an informed and expert insight into the psychological function and meaning of the Celtic narratives.

To quote the author's introduction: (these traditional narratives) "invite us to explore the significance of our lives and deaths, and of the natural and spiritual forces which may shape them. And that, I hope, is sufficient justification for what follows." In my opinion it is. Highly recommended.

Fred Stedman-Jones

Secret Camelot - The Lost Legends of King Arthur
John Matthews and illustrated by Gary Andrews Blandford, 1997, ISBN 0 7137 26466, hardback £18.99

Consisting of 176 pages, two and half pages of introduction and 12 stories, each with an explanatory prologue, here is another gem by John Matthews. **Secret Camelot** continues to collect lesser known Arthurian tales following on from John's **The Unknown Arthur: Forgotten Tales of the Round Table**.

Read and enjoy a collection of hard to find tales, featuring Caradoc, Gawain, Perceval, Lancelot, Galahad and less well known characters such as Tyolet and Jauffre. These retold ripping yarns are from all parts of Europe - Cumbria to Switzerland - and span a period from the end of the twelfth century to the second half of the fifteenth.

John suggests that these stories are "old Celtic tales of Arthur and his heroes given fashionable court dress" but I would go further and say that some have developed from much older Celtic mythology. Adventures such as **Gawain and the Green Knight**, which bears a considerable resemblance to **The Story of Caradoc**, reminds one of Cuchulain. Here are tales, passed down by storytellers from the Celtic world, which have travelled to the Continent, where they have become woven into the growing popularity of Arthurian romance.

Whatever the origins of these tales, here we have a chance to immerse ourselves into a sea of medieval adventures. Marvel at the heroes, villains, damsels, monsters, sorcery and travel throughout Christendom and beyond. I will not give away any of the plots - just enjoy! The text I cannot fault, but I do feel that a good story hardly needs illustrations and the artwork by Gary Andrews, which belongs more to fantasy comics, adds little to this book. *One other small point is the reference John makes to Caradoc being connected with Glamorgan or Gwent - he is often*

linked with Gwynedd also and in later writings with Hereford and Radnor.

So turn off the telly, sit down with a box of chocolates, cup of tea / coffee or something stronger and enter the world of medieval heroes.

Charles W. Evans-Günther

Celtic Druids, Celtic Bards
R.J. Stewart and Robin Williamson, illustrations by Chris Down (colour) and Sarah Lever (black and white), Blandford, 1996, ISBN 0 7137 2563 X, hardback £18.99

This interesting but flawed publication consists of 159 pages, 16 colour illustrations, 28 black and white pictures, a two page bibliography, five page index and appendices of 19 pages. It is the combined efforts of Bob Stewart and ex-member of the "Incredible String Band" Robin Williamson. The title says a lot about the subject of the book but a lot of it is retelling tales from Ireland and Wales. I found the section on the druids below standard and though the bardic section is better it is also rather superficial. The study of bardic history deserves better coverage than this book.

Celtic Druids, Celtic Bards is marred mainly by some of its sources, particularly those of Edward Davies and Iolo Morgannwg. And when it comes to Iolo Morgannwg we enter a different world. Mr. Williamson adapts some of Iolo's Triads as if they were part of a Welsh or Celtic tradition but are in fact the creation of their author. Dr. Rachel Bromwich has shown that of the Third Series collection of Triads, numbering 126, 42 are the inventions of Iolo and the rest have been doctored by dear old Ned. *Gwyddon Ganhebon* and *Nwydd Naf Neifion* are from Iolo's own imagination while *Dyfnwal Moelmud, Hu Gadarn* and *Tydain Tad Awen* are based loosely on possible real people or characters from literature. Another character mentioned is *St. Cattwg* whom Iolo elevated into something beyond the original holy man. Talk of *Einiged the Giant*, inventor of writing, *Menw the Aged* as creator of the first three letters and Awen being symbolised by the letters OIU is pure invention on Iolo's part as is his Coelbren alphabet. The three rays of lights date no further back than Iolo and have no connection with real druidism or bardism.

Like the curate's egg this publication has its good bits and its bad bits. The stories retold are in general very good and the appendix on story telling well worth reading. Sadly what seems uncritical use of sources brings this book down. Also I found the colour illustrations, in the main, wooden and added little to this publication. The black and white illustrations on the whole are good and the Celtic designs excellent. The stories retold, alone, make this book passable. Maybe it should be republished without the pieces on druids and bards. If it was I would certainly buy it but as it is I do not rate it highly. Borrow this edition from a library - that's what I did.

One last thing - the study of druidism has been covered many times and far more carefully that **Celtic Druids, Celtic Bards**. What we really know about them is limited. It is more than likely that the Celts knew no more about Stonehenge than we do and probably avoided it. What is interesting is that Stonehenge was never mentioned by the Romans and the first real reference to it is Geoffrey of Monmouth's **History of the Kings of Britain**. However, there is the mention of a strange temple of the sun in the land of the Hyperboreans, which may or may not have been Britain! There is no evidence that druids had any connection with henges or standing stones since all Greek and Roman sources talk only of worship in woods or secluded places. If the reader wishes to look into druidism or bardism there are better publications than this worth reading.

Charles W. Evans-Günther

The Arthurian Companion
by Phyllis Ann Karr A Chaosium Book, USA, 1997, ISBN 1-56882-096-8, pp 570, paperback, $14.95 (CDN $20.95)

We have Chaosium to thank for reprinted and expanding this excellent encyclopedia of the Arthurian legend. It covers this genre at its height - using mainly the Vulgate versions and Thomas Malory's **Le Morte d'Arthur**. Though not as pictorial as its previous incarnation - **The King Arthur Companion**, published in 1983, this tome is, in my opinion, incredibly useful and entertaining.

The first thing of note about this book is its fantastic cover with striking painting, by Ed Org, depicting a 15th century King Arthur in front of an army with billowing flags. Though not illustrated, apart from illuminated lettering, four charts, heraldry and a map, this publication is full of interesting material. It consists of an eleven page introduction to the book, the companion itself and appendices. The latter looks at various aspects related to the legend including a chronology (worth discussing in some future issue of Pendragon), classes and roles, aspects of the court (such as knighthood, questing and tournaments), magical arts, names and a look at Chrétien de Troyes.

The bulk of **The Arthurian Companion** is an A to Z of people, places and things - from Abblasoure to Zelegbres. Even someone like myself, who is almost obsessed with the historical aspects of Arthur, will find this a brilliant publication. I do not pretend to be an expert on the later developments of the Arthurian legends and I certainly must admit I found this book an education. Some entries are most intriguing, particularly the ones related to the Holy Grail. The geography of the Arthurian legends are also of some interest (especially since this edition of Pendragon is about Arthurian topography) and the names of areas of various parts of Britain are quite fascinating. Another interesting aspect of this book is that it includes the shields of many of the knights and other characters in the legends. Some of these I knew from articles by Helmut Nickel but there are many here that I have never come across.

This is, without doubt, a most excellent publication and I would highly recommend it to you. At present, as far as I am aware, it seems to be only available in the United States and Canada but let us hope it finds its way to our shores in the near future. Watch out for it!

Charles Evans-Günther

Percival and the Presence of God
Jim Hunter Pendragon Fiction, A Chaosium Book, USA, 1997, ISBN 1-56882-097-6, pp192, trade paperback $10.95

This is a reprinting of the book of the same name and author, published in 1978 by Faber and Faber. I was sent pre-publication copy by Chaosium Inc.

One of the problems of reviewing novels is that your opinion is going to be just that - your opinion. There are no facts to play with or anything like that, so, as with all pieces of fiction, one person's rose is another person's thorn!

This may well be considered a masterpiece by some but I found it boring to be honest. val doesn't seem to me to have the magic of the medieval versions and neither does the He goes on and on about his mother to the point of repetition. The story is not bad but ms to be blatantly symbolic as if catering for a 'soap' audience. It is written in the first person in my opinion, lacks the feel that you are part of the story - I certainly can't identify with 'ercival. In the past I have found a number of Arthurian novels that I first of all could not get into and then later just did not enjoy them when I did. Others would think Mists of Avalon by Marion Zimmer Bradley a classic but I did not like it all. This also goes for Percival and the Presence of God.

Charles W. Evans-Günther

Editor: Just as we are going to press a copy of Helen Hollick's third part of her trilogy arrived. It is hoped that ***Shadow of the King*** *will be reviewed for the next edition of the journal together with an interview with Helen.*

THE SMALL PRESS

At the Edge No. 6 June 1997

This issue is a "Sex & Gender Special" with articles such as Beyond Indiana Jones v the Mother Goddess, Constructing Sex and Gender in Archaeology, Women on the Rampage, A Sacred Island : A feminist perspective on bronze age Crete, Weaving the World, Rumpelstiltskin, Spinning in Myths & Folktales and Pussycat, Pussycat, Where have you been?

There are also some interesting letters, book reviews and abstracts from various sources. This is a journal on the cutting edge of myth and folklore, excellently put together by Bob Trubshaw.

At the Edge No. 7 September 1997

Another excellent edition by Bob and team! This issue, without a theme, contains some fascinating articles, particularly Blood and Soil by Jeremy Harte, concerning the tribe in early English society. Other pieces include Leys as Ideology, A Dream World, A Lost Class of Central Places, Making Time, Rhiannon Rides on Uffington White Horse and Shinto torii arches and the trilithons of Stonehenge.

Also a good collection of letters, abstracts and reviews. At the Edge is always of good design and quality both in content and layout.

The Dragon Chronicles: The International Journal of Dragonlore Number 10, May 1997

The Dragon Chronicle is packed with dragon articles such as Medea: Greek Dragon Queen, Living Sky Serpents - Astronomical Phenomena, The dragon that lost its tale. . . , The Milk Maiden, The dragon rears its head. . . , More Cut-Price Dragon Hunting, And a dragon in Newcastle and The Saint and the Dragon. These together with poetry and reviews makes an interesting journal.

I found Steve Sneyd's article on Castle Hill, Almondbury, of particular interest, showing how folklore can change and develop and sometimes hide something possibly very interesting!

The Cauldron: Journal of the Old Religion Beltaine/Midsummer 1997 No. 84

Robin Hood, By the Dark Light of Lilith's Lantern, The Spear of Odin, Gerald Gardner: The Man, the Myth and the Magick, and Y Tylwyth Teg make up a collection of articles in this interesting journal. To these you can add snippets of news and book reviews.

I must say I enjoyed the articles on Robin Hood (I must admit I am interested in this character as well as Arthur) and Y Tylwyth Teg. For those who may not have heard of the latter - the Tylwyth Teg - literally Fair Tribe - are the fairies of Welsh tradition. Editor Mike Howard as also produced an A-Z of Traditional Herbal Remedies, a 240 page, illustrated book at £1.99 - yes, one pound ninety nine pence!

Ancient No 56 Vol. 5 April 1997

Though strictly not Arthurian, Ancient contains a number of interesting articles including Measuring the Roman Landscape, the Ermine Street Guard (with information on their '97 programme) and in Hecatean Chronicles (a new roundup section) pieces on the Mildhenhall treasure and the dramatisation of Redwald's Dynasty

Meyn Mamvro No . 33 Spring/Summer 1997

The journal of stones and sacred sites in Cornwall has amongst its articles - Cornish holy wells (including some near Camelford and Tintagel), Epona's Children and on The St. Levan's Lion for those fascinated by zodiacs on the landscape.

de Ville's Advocate No. 3 Spring/Summer '97

The journal of the unusual with articles on the Black Beast of Gloucester, the Footprints of the Gods and Addressing Regression also includes a three page piece on the Holy Grail entitled Cups and Saucers. This compares the legend of the Grail with human abduction by aliens. The article is very well written and makes some quite fascinating points. That ancient myths should be still alive in today's myths is not impossible and since human abduction is far from being a modern phenomenon - taken by the gods or fairies - then Cups and Saucers is not at all silly!

de Ville's Advocate can be obtained from Mike White of 62, Goodmoor Crescent, Churchdown, Glos., GL3 2DL for "a couple of stamps, an SAE, trade (especially trade), beer, 50p if imagination deserts you or a simple begging letter if all else fails."

ABSENT FRIEND

Thank you for the latest issue of Pendragon, as ever a most interesting and thought provoking read. I enjoyed the articles by both Alby Stone and Fred, and look forward to possibly reading more by Fred on the Welsh Grail legend.

I was also interested to read the brief article on the possible Arthurian links with Wychbury Hill. Wychbury is only a few miles from my house, and I can see the tree-covered Iron Age fort from the back garden. A truly magical place! In recent years I have also had the pleasure of knowing Granville Calder, who has done a lot of work on the archaeological and folkloric aspects of the hill. With this in mind it is my sad news to announce that Granville died of a heart attack on 3rd May 1997. He was 73. He was something of a lone voice in the wilderness as far as the Arthurian links with Wychbury were concerned. But he had done a lot of work on the site. Thankfully some of that material is either in local libraries or local researchers, such as myself, have small parts of it. Sadly I fear Granville has taken the largest part with him to the Summer Isle. Granville had all the hallmarks of someone dedicated to his research. I will always remember once, despite his age, how he was as excited as a schoolboy in a toy shop when he had come across some new material connecting with Brythonic research or the discovery of Roman artifacts on the hill. It goes without saying that he will be missed.

David Taylor,

STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

In response to Gwilym ap Iowerth in Pendragon (Spring: 1997) and Arthur in the Stars. He notes that arth = bear and suggests some kind of connection with the constellations of the Great and Little Bears. I too read the Astronomy Now of February 1996 in which Richard Roberts wrote an article about the Arthur Stone (and related stones on the Gower peninsula). He claimed it was aligned astronomically to the Pole Star(s) 3000 years ago - the circling constellations of the Great Bear (at that time). John Rhys in **Studies in the Arthurian Legend** (Oxford: 1890) suggested that Maelgwyn (a contemporary of Gildas in the early to mid 6th century AD) was the nephew of Arthur. In other words Phillips and Keatman were not the first to explore this avenue. However, Rhys was far more interesting as he suggested the historical Arthur (if there ever was such) was named after a deity . . . and in that context possibly a feature in the prehistoric sky.

This deity was a culture hero figure . . . on a par with Conchobar (associated with the ritual eating of boars - nearly bears) [1], or Woden, etc. He made a connection between Arthur and Airem (of the Irish), known as Eochaid (horse) Airem, an avatar of the Daghda. Airem also seems to mean the ploughman and in some way he was associated with the furrow in the sky (var. the *lorg* of the Daghda). In another part of the world this became the magic stick of the Hindu monkey god Hanuman which had the ability to grow rapidly and amaze his enemies. Airem was also associated with one who yokes a team of oxen (and the star Arcturus can be found in the bovine constellation of Bootes) . . . i.e. to harness or bind (with reins, etc.). Herein lies a Biblical parallel as in the Book of Job reference is made to several constellations which include Ursa Major, Orion and Taurus (the bull) and the ability to bind or fetter the stars.

Latin *ario* in Irish yields *airim* (nearly Airem) = to plough, and in Anglo-Saxon = *erian*, in Gothic = *arjan*, etc. Welsh *aradr* = a plough, and simply *ar* = plough, hence Ar-thur could perhaps mean in one sense plough + bull (taurus) [?] (but this is stretching it). According to Rhys, Arthur was a ploughman, (or a deity that appeared to plough a furrow in the sky). We should note that the Plough is an alternative name for the constellation of the Great Bear.

Rhys pictured this as an Indo-European language phenomenon and of very ancient pedigree - at least as late as the third millennium when the Indo-Europeans were dispersed by unknown factors, possibly climatic. In Lithuanian *artojis* = a ploughman, and in Old Prussian = *artoys,* in Old Norse *ards* = a plough. The Gaulish goddess *Artio* he suggests is a variant of the English language word earth - and that is very interesting as a plough breaks the earth, or draws a furrow (like arth-ur). [2]

However, all is not simple. The Irish word *ara* = a charioteer (someone who harnesses horses and guides them) [in preference to oxen]. The stem ar also appears in Arawn = a name of the King of the Otherworld. It also appears in *arawd* = speech, as in eloquence, and *araith* = to speak, orate, etc. The root *ar* (var. *or*) could be said to bind or harness words, string them together (as in a bard), or one who gives orders and directs the movements of others (as in to yoke oxen or harness horses, to bring friends together, to unite men and women in matrimony or legal union, to put words together in sentences, and verse, to manage, guide or direct) - as in Arthur.

We might also note the root *ar* has a further dimension, as it recurs in Urien (the strong bull, the hero) and Orion the great hunter, or giant (and also a constellation), and we could continue in the same vein . . . on and on.

1. The remnant of the ancient feast of Conchobar survived until recently, see O'Sullivan (Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies) in **Celtic Studies: Essays in memory of Angus Matheson**, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1968, p.118, Verses on Honorific portions.

2. Which idea combines earth (goddess) and sky (god).

Phillip Clapham

(Editor's comment: An excellent letter with a lot of research and brings up a lot of questions. One small point concerns Maelgwyn (sic). Maglocunus - Maelgwn - can be shown to have killed his uncle but the Latin is specific - it is a maternal uncle and not a paternal uncle whom Owain Danwyn was. This letter gives a lot of food for thought and should not be ignored - I too think there is something Gaelic about the name Arthur! Airem is also found in placenames in parts of Scotland!)

KING OHTER: THE SCANDINAVIAN CONNECTION

In a letter from Steve Sneyd concerning sword in stones is the following:

There is a passing mention, in the chapter on Tintagel in L.S. & C. De Camp's **Citadels of Mystery**, that "the Norse hero Sigurd obtained his Sword Gram by pulling it out of the oak Brahstock, a feat no other man could do", but that could itself be a late accretion to the Volsung Saga?

Mentioning Scandinavian 'connections', you may have seen the 1995 Llanerch Press **Aldfrith's Beowulf**, translated by Paula Grant. Her introduction, attempting to place the poem's setting in NE England, is full of very, to me, simplistic data leaps – anyway, the reason for mentioning is that she claims Arthur was in 'fact' Ohter (A-S), 'Ottar' or 'Otr' (Norse), son of Ongentheow, the Swedish king mentioned frequently in **Beowulf** – she has the latter marrying, of at least having the son by, a Pictish or British princess, Bryd, and that Ongentheow would have been Angantyr in Norse, and Uther in the British tongue. (She explains the situation by having Ongentheow in exile in Britain.) Yet another candidate for the ever-growing list of possibilities.

Steve Sneyd

Steve also send a copy of a leaflet about a set of Arthurian coins issued by the Isle of Man. There are five One Crown coins featuring Camelot Castle, King Arthur, Sir Lancelot, Queen Guinevere and Merlin. "Own the first King Arthut collection ever issued . . . a legend in its own right" goes the heading. Art like fiction is a matter of one's personal taste so I will not comment on the images depicted. For further information phone 01923 475 575 (I did but couldn't get an answer) or write to Westminster, Freepost, P.O. Box 100, Watford, WD2 5WD.

CORNWELL INTERVIEW

Here follows two similar letters commenting on the interview by John Matthews of Bernard Cornwell:

As author of my own Arthurian trilogy - **The Kingmaking, Pendragon's Banner and Shadow of the King**, (Heineman/Mandarin) I read the interview in the Spring '97 Pendragon, with Bernard Cornwell with great interest.

It is probably not professional to comment on Mr. Cornwell's books - but I must reply to two of his views. He says any story about Arthur that does not have Merlin does not work. My trilogy is very much a "what might have really happened" story. There is no Merlin - nor Lancelot - in my books. They are both characters of the 11th/12th Century stories and therefore have no place in a novel that is attempting to create the imagined reality of the 5th/6th Century.

I know I am biased, but without Merlin my books do work. They work very well. I have had many letters of congratulations about my novels, all of them saying, "at last, Arthur stripped of the Norman setting. Arthur as he might have been."

I can only suggest that those interested in Arthur read the two trilogies and decide for themselves. Can he become real without the magic of Merlin? It might be interesting to hear a few unbiased views?

My problem, however, is that Mr. Cornwell's Arthurian books have done better than mine because he is a known, established, author and I am new at this game. Still, I suppose three books into his Sharpe series, he had the same disadvantage!

Mr. Cornwell's views on the use of Gwenhwyfar or Guinevere is interesting. I used Gwenhwyfar simply because it is the Welsh spelling of her name. Some of the names I have used may, perhaps, be open to question, but I have at least tried to be consistent with what fits in with the time scale.

I remember one of the most often quoted comments about Marion Bradley's novel the Mists of Avalon, one of her characters was Kevin. Most odd, Welsh does not have a k . . . .

I also think that Mr. Cornwell's reference to Walthamstow was rather unfortunate! I hope it was unintentional? It wasn't me who sent the indignant letter about the Winter King, but, it just happens, I do live in Walthamstow . . . .

Helen Hollick

Loved **Sharpe**, hated **Winter King**! I thought the interview with Bernard Cornwell rather interesting! He seems to chicken out of producing a real attempt at recreating a Dark Age Arthur - something not done well since Rosemary Sutcliff's **Sword at Sunset**.

Cornwell says he could not do without Merlin but this character only joined Arthuriana with Geoffrey of Monmouth and he had to change the name so it was no longer a French insult! All the Welsh tales, even those post-Geoffrey, were composed without Merlin even though they are tales of magic rather than historic chronicles. Chrétien de Troyes completely ignored Merlin and it would be hard to say his Arthurian tales didn't work. Of course it is Chrétien who introduced Camelot and Lancelot which Mr. Cornwell also uses.

So few writers have really attempted to explore a pre-Geoffrey Arthur. There is always the problems with Guinevere and Mordred. What may it have been really like? I believe that a good story can be accurate as well adventurous. Take for instance the works of Ellis Peters - Edith Pargeter. The **Cadfael** series contain real history as well as a good medieval detective story. Her **Brothers of Gwynedd** quartet is both a cracking story and historically accurate! Why it is necessary to use the later tales as a basis to build on? Why not explore the possible reality. More and more facts are coming to light through archaeology and investigation into the ancient texts are being taken seriously. Was there an Arthur? If there was then surely a novel can explore Arthur as much as a straight piece of historical writing.

One recent series of books does attempt to look at a Dark Age Arthur and that is the work of Helen Hollick. She has her own ideas about why and where Arthur should be placed and though you may not agree with her view (and I don't believe it is possible for anyone to agree on Arthur, anyway) you must admit for a dinner lady she has produced two very readable books. And the language is somwhat more possible than Cornwell's!

One final point concerning Cornwell, and in fact any Arthurian novel, it should be remembered that, historically, the people of this period were not Welsh and didn't speak Welsh. The "language of the angels" was still developing at this time! Cornwell insists on using the Norman-French names of characters and things (e.g. Lancelot), while other writers have gone for medieval Welsh. In the 6th Century the British people spoke a language somewhere between Pre-Roman Celtic and medieval Welsh with a smattering of Latin. Though it isn't possible to be sure how these Romano-Britons spoke it is possible to go back to the earliest known versions of names as used in the Dark Ages from round the 8th/9th Century. A few examples: Caradog = Caratauc, Einion = Enniaun, Merfyn = Mermin, Owain = Eugein, Tewdrig = Teudubric and Urien = Urbgen. Maybe this more ancient style of names should be used in some future novel.

Gwilym ap Iorwerth

CHRIS' COMMENTS

What follows is part of a letter reviewing the Spring edition:

The theme of grail combined with stars seemed to work very well. . .and one article flowed smoothly into another. I liked the caricature of Fred in the editorial, too! (Incidentally, one are the days when we could call it the Eddie-torial, or even Freditorial!. . . .)

I appreciated the Ian Forrester Roberts article, but it seemed to stop rather abruptly. The potency of the symbol of the grail certainly excited the medieval mind, and in this respect I would recommend to readers Miri Rubin's study, **Corpus Cristi: the eucharist in late medieval culture** (published by Cambridge UP, 1991, paperback edition about £15.99). Quite apart from the inherent interest, her book has sections on grail imagery, heresy, fantasy and parody all relevant to Ian's essay. Ian's article also related to Tristan Hulse Gray's article on the bleeding host a couple of issues ago.

Alby Stone's contribution was wide-ranging too, and awoke lots of echoes. Lovers of the Sarmatian connection (and of the Oscar-winning film **The English Patient** too!) will be struck by Herodutus' description of certain Scythian customs: "when they made a treaty [they] poured wine into a great clay bowl, drew blood from themselves and mingled it with the wine, dipped a sword, arrows, a battle-axe and a javelin into it, cursed future traitors, and finally drank together" (cited in E.D. Phillips **The Royal Hordes: nomad peoples of the steppes**, Thames & Hudson 1965). The Greek-influenced treasure from the Crimea, of the fourth century B.C., show both Gorgon and Scythian severed heads, and a burial from a third century A.D. Sarmatian prince in Hungary contained the beheaded bodies of his retinue.

I haven't read any of Bernard Cornwell's Arthurian novels (the Sutton Hoo Anglian helmet on the cover of one put me off straight away! What a terrible indictment of my critical faculties!) but I did enjoy John Matthews' interview with him. I'm afraid I shall however always remember it for its Pendragon first - the quote where Guinevere says "Slit his fucking throat!" I shall be interested in what fallout, if any, results from that!

Mary Caine's article is wide-ranging too, and eminently readable, but I am dubious about its central premise, the existence of the Glastonbury Zodiac. It may be that it is a good example of what may be called poetic truth, but it is dressed up as though it is factual truth, which is not quite the same thing. I wouldn't go as far as to say it is a matter of right-brain intuition versus left-brain perception, but there could be something of this in it, both equally valid but from different points of view. I would recommend Ronald Hutton's **The Pagan Religions of the ancient British Isles: their nature and legacy** (Blackwell 1991) as an antidote to certain assumptions about the continuity of pagan traditions in this country. Incidentally, I would be wary of describing the relationship of Druidism and Christianity as Old Law and New Law when this customarily refers to Judaism and Christianity.

Finally, Gwilym ap Iorwerth's contribution is a useful summary of the educated guesswork that has been going on - for centuries, evidently! - about the relationship between Arthur and the Great Bear. My personal suspicion is that Ailred, Geoffrey, Peter, Benedict, Gervase and Caesarius were all displaying their classical erudition when they "corrected" Arturus or Arthurus to Acturus, rather than that this spelling represents a genuine folk tradition.

Chris Lovegrove

(Ed. The article by Ian was changed twice by its author and from a conversation with him I got the impression that he had a lot more to say but didn't want to hog the journal.

The reaction to John Matthews' interview has no mention of Pendragon's "first". Mind you we are all grown-ups and quite used to such language, especially after nine o'clock!

Finally, I too would highly recommend Ronald Hutton's excellent publication!)

To end this section - we received a letter from the ***Rollright Stones Appeal****, who describe themselves as:* "a small, independent group of local people who love and cherish the Rollright Stones of Oxfordshire which have been put up for sale by the present land-owner." *Amongst their supporters are Ronald Hutton (mentioned above) and Discworld's Terry Pratchett.*

I can sympathise with this group as a good number of historical monuments have been destroyed in Flintshire.

If you would like to help, write to:

The Rollright Stones Appeal, PO Box 333, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX16 8XA.

QUO VADIS ?

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN: FRED STEDMAN-JONES

First, I must express my appreciation and gratitude to Charles for the excellent three journals he has given us during his Editorship, they are of the highest quality and it is a great loss to the Society that he has decided to accept a teaching post in Japan for at least the next year. I am sure that we have not heard the last from his pen, however, we are fortunate that the mail is remarkably prompt from the other side of our global village these days so there will be no excuse if Gwilym ap Iorwerth's name does not appear on our contents page in future editions. Thank you, Charles, we wish you every success.

Charles is leaving us with a partly prepared journal which will need to be completed and set-up for the printers as the December publication, Pendragon No.XXVI/4. This journal will need a new editor and support team to ensure that it arrives promptly on our doormats in good time for Yule.

I now formally invite members who would like to take up the reins and organise the magazine and the Society to write to me as soon as possible, so that we can consider how best to move forward. I intend to continue as Chairman and the executive head of the Society while we build a new team but I am not free to act as Editor or Secretary again, I am halfway through writing a book and have another waiting. Marilyn is also ready to hand over the duties of Treasurer and Membership Secretary. We have both been very heavily involved in the organisation of the Society for nine years now and recognise that it is time to inject some new blood with new ideas.

Members should write to me **immediately** expressing their interest and experience. It would be ideal if several friends with shared experience of writing, word-processing and some secretarial and accountancy skills would like to work closely together on what will certainly prove to be a time-consuming, challenging but very rewarding endeavour. Computer facilities and competence are essential in preparing copy for our printers and someone with artistic flair would obviously enrich the team. In the past our small editorial teams have lived near enough to be in close touch with each other but this might not be so essential with today's improved communication facilities such as fax, internet, etc.

I shall be very happy to reply to all offers and to answer your queries and I'm sure there will be many! This first stage will be followed by an invitation to the most enthusiastic and promising team to attend a meeting at which a full discussion can be held, followed by a 'teach-in' and handover. I realize that we are 'bending' our Constitution a bit in order to allow the Society to continue and it must be understood that officers appointed at this meeting will necessarily be on a year's 'probation', literally to prove themselves before we confirm the new regime at an Annual General Meeting in 1998.

I am personally excited at the thought of a new input of energy into the Society, especially if we can be sensitive to the best of what has been achieved in the past and, at the same time, also implement new ideas, activities and contacts. There is an amazing interest in Arthur and the Matter of Britain around the world and the sky is the limit for the future success of the Society. The Pendragon Society is now a proud thirty-eight years old and deserves the very best endeavours of a committed group of Arthurian enthusiasts to take it forward into the 21st Century.

If all this excites you as much as it does me then get on the phone now to your Arthurian friends then write to me at **Smithy House, Newton-by-Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 6SX.** If you have any queries to sort out first you can ring me on **01928 - 787550.**

THANK YOU

(The Exchange Magazines list will be restored to this page in the next issue)

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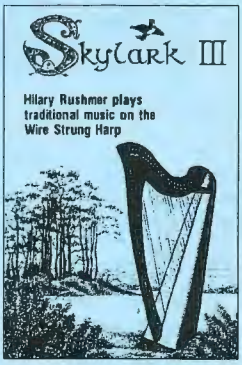

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