

pendragon



EDITORIAL

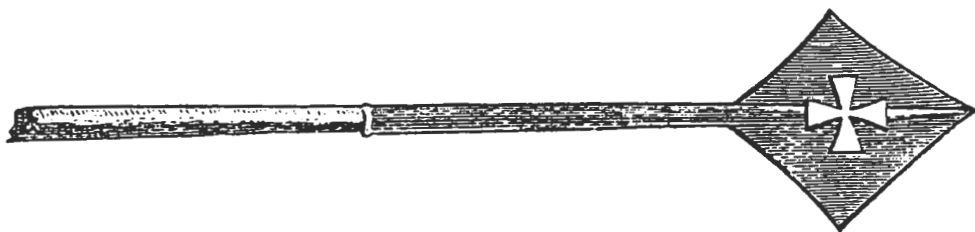
Pendragon
Vol. XXVI No. 4
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No, *Pendragon* is not a dead parrot, more a phoenix! However, to settle any qualms you might have over just who is your new editor, a quick CV might just do the trick. Since joining the Society in 1967 I have not only contributed items (some of dubious quality!) to the journal but also edited for a ten-year stint, beginning appropriately with the theme of Dragons in 1977 and ending with the Grail in 1987. But enough of that! I should like to pay heartfelt tribute to my immediate predecessors, Charles and Fred, for keeping the standard flying with both high production values and dazzling panache.

They are hard acts to follow, and my debt to them will be all too evident. Welcome also to John and Linda Ford who take on the all too often thankless tasks of Secretary and Treasurer. Exciting events are promised! Details elsewhere. Fred remains as Chairman, a role without which *Pendragon* may well have disappeared. This issue's theme is **Relics of the Past** - crowns, crosses, spears, cups, writings - but not all these relics still survive! (No, the theme is not a reference to the editor.) As well as the main articles, we hope contributions will continue to flood in for all the regular features: letters for *PenDragon*, miscellaneous Arthuriana for *The Board*, historical snippets for *Old News*, as well as notes & queries, book reviews and *Book News*.

Don't feel lengthy submissions only are wanted - you could for example write a couple of hundred words about your favourite piece of Arthurian fiction or art. Remembering the *triskele* symbolises our threefold approach to Pendragonry (history and archaeology; legend-myth-folklore; literature and the arts) we also welcome, as always, appropriate illustrations, cartoons and poems. Next issue, for which we already have a number of items (including poems), will feature **avatars of Arthur**, looking at a number of predecessors, analogs or parallels of the figure of the hero. By the way, thank you for the numerous offers to proof-read; the turn-around precluded this for this issue, but I hope to call on you for the next time! Do remember, too, **The Eddie Tooke Prize**, yet to be awarded, of a year's free subscription for the winning submission displaying any combination of the following approaches to matters Arthurian: diversity, speculation, and puckishness.

Now read on!



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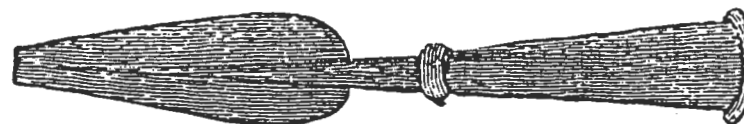
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Arthur and the careful historian

Helen Hollick

Is there anything left that the careful historian can say about "King Arthur"?

No figure on the borderline of history and mythology has wasted more of the historian's time. There are just enough casual references in later Welsh legend ... to suggest that a man with this late Roman name - Artorius - may have won repute at some ill-defined point of time ... But if we add anything to the bare statement that Arthur may have lived and fought the Saxons, we pass at once from history to romance (Myers 1987).

Much of the view of "Arthur" is created around myth. Later medieval story-telling has clouded any careful judgement of the existence of this debatable character from the past - but is it not as unprofessional to dismiss Arthur entirely - as Myers suggests - as it is to portray him as a chivalric knight in armour, seated at his round table and searching for the querulous sanctity of the Holy Grail? Is there *nothing* left to support the plausible existence of "Arthur" as a successful war-leader of some time during the late fifth, early sixth century?

The inclination of the historian today is towards selective knowledge - verging on a blinkered view of a chosen specialisation, with little broadening into knowledge that could dove-tail into other, diverse, interests.

One commonly cited dismissal of Arthur as a factual possibility is the outright disparagement of his connection with cavalry. The very basis of Arthurian legend is that of Arthur being a leader of *mounted* men, either fighting the Saxons, or the British, in Civil War. Objections have usually included that "Arthur" could not have led a cavalry because

the horses of the early medieval period were too small or too insubstantial, that stirrups or saddles were not in use, objections that automatically negated an effective use of cavalry, ergo, Arthur must belong purely to myth or legend., the later medieval period and the popular image of the mounted knight.

Is there any available evidence to prove this conclusion, regarding the use of cavalry, as incorrect?

Weight carrying ability - height of horses

By later periods, when cavalry relied upon full armour (the Knight), then the height of - horses became relevant - the mean-tempered, weight-bearing Destrier was developed. It is not necessarily the height of a horse that determines ability to carry weight, but the width of bone in the leg. Native ponies indigenous to Britain, 13.2 hands pony of Welsh breeding for instance, is perfectly capable of carrying a man of, say, 13 stone, 5' 9" in height, for long periods of time and distance. Similarly, the modern Arabian - one of the most enduring breeds for speed and stamina - is often no greater than 14.2 hand high.

Were such breeds in existence during the period of "Arthur"? For the British breeds, most definitely - areas of Britain were noted, even before the conquest of Rome, for the excellence of horse breeding. Prof Ewart, in his report on the animal remains from the Roman fort at Newstead, demonstrated that there were big-boned ponies of 11 - 12 hands, slender-limbed ponies of 12 - 13 hands, and horses of two types, one for cavalry, the other for transport, of 14 - 15 hands (Hodgson 1976). James Curle (1911) records that "the auxiliaries ... had 14 hands horses as fine in head and limbs as modern high-caste Arabians." The measurement of horse bits, bridles and harness confirm these heights.

Distance capability - feeding and logistics

Cavalry travelling alone, unburdened with infantry - "Arthur" has often been alluded to fighting "alone" - would move faster than mixed units. It would have been quite possible to average 30 to 40 miles per day without overtaxing animals, given good feeding and the occasional day's rest.

The *Elegy for Geraint*, an early Welsh poem that encompasses the battle at Llongborth (probably Portchester,

Hampshire) refers to well-bred horses, fed on corn:

*Under the thigh of Geraint, swift chargers
Long their legs, wheat their fodder*
(Morris 1973)

And in Aneirin's poem, *Yr Gododdin*, more references:

*... Swift, long-maned stallions ...
... Power of horses ...*

and

*To their horses he'd portioned out oats
that winter.*
(Conran 1986).

Caesar's commentaries frequently refer to the corn supply and rations for both man and beast, as do Vegetius, Polybius and the *Codex Theodosianus*. Oats, barley, beans and hay are essential for feeding horses in work (grass alone will not keep a horse fit and well muscled), cereals known to be grown abundantly in Britain. Seaweed, too, can be added as a supplementary food. The logistics of supply of horses and adequate feeding was an integral part of the Roman cavalry in Britain throughout the occupation. Given that the collapse of the Roman structure after the official withdrawal did not cease overnight, there seems no reason to assume that the feeding of horses could not be sufficiently maintained.

Stirrups, saddles and harness

Until recently, there was no archaeological evidence for Roman saddlery, enough leather being rare, and the few finds being difficult to interpret. From relief carvings on triumphal arches and tombstones it was wrongly assumed that a simple pad or blanket was used, with the rider perching precariously on top. Such would have been useless for fast travelling or manoeuvring and for fighting from horseback.

Later evidence, in particular research and experiments undertaken by Peter Connelly (1988), has shown that a saddle was indeed used, one made of a strong wooden construction, padded, and covered with leather. Stirrups were not necessary, and would only have added to an ease for mounting. The rider was held firmly in place by four "horns" set to each "corner" - these

would have been much as the modern leaping head on a lady's side-saddle, to keep her seat secure (more secure, in fact, than riding astride). For parade purposes or special occasions the saddle would have been covered, and obscured, by a fringed or zigzag edged cloth - hence the misleading relief carvings.

It is interesting that many example of the Celtic horse bits are identical with the modern snaffle, apart from the metal, which would now be stainless steel, not iron. Bridle buckles, too, are similar to those found on modern "show" harness.

Training of horse and rider

Much Roman equine expertise was inherited from the Greeks, notably Xenophon's book *On Horsemanship*, although from Arrian's *Tactica* it seems that the Romans adapted a slightly different approach. The methods of breaking and training horses were remarkably similar during the early centuries AD to those used today, which points to some degree of continuity. Varro and Virgil (*Georgics III* 191) agree that horses ought not to be broken until the age of three, as is usual today, and that training ought to be a mixture of patience and common sense.

Vegetius states that a *decurio* of a *turma* should set example to his subordinates by being a better rider and more adept with his weapons.

Evidence that an *effective* cavalry remained in use - even if only in localised areas - after the going of Rome is conclusive from the early poems mentioned above.

There is further contemporary evidence of the successful use of military cavalry from fifth century Gaul, from the letters and poems of Sidonius Apollinaris. In 471 his brother-in-law, Ecdicius, successfully routed a large Gothic force (possibly several thousand) with only eighteen mounted men. A stunning feat, but quite possible given disciplined.

Plausibility

While the evidence of an existence of a cavalry force does not prove the existence of a leader who may have been named "Arthur", the provision, at the very least, of the plausibility *behind* the myth does lend some amount of added credence to those

"casual references in later Welsh legend" (Myers 1987).

In this area then, surely, yes! the careful historian can, perhaps, say more about "Arthur".

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The Lance of Longinus

Ian Forrester Roberts



It was perhaps inevitable that the
famous spear of Longinus would find its way

into the Grail legends. Traditionally this spear
had been the object of incredible reverence
and veneration, a veneration so intense that it
would be almost inconceivable to us today. It
was believed implicitly then that when the
Roman soldier Longinus was moved by pity
to pierce the suffering Christ with his spear, it
became the instrument by which Christ's
blood had been made to flow for the
redemption of the world. The sacred blood
had been made to flow for the redemption of
the world. The sacred blood was later caught
in the Grail cup, so that both lance and cup
are similarly imbued with mystical power.

One of several well documented
historical incidents associated with the spear
illustrates this. In 1098 the main body of the
Crusaders was trapped within the walls of
Antioch, having worn themselves out
capturing a city plagued by famine and
disease. Surrounded and outnumbered by an
ever increasing Saracen army, their situation
was quite hopeless. Then, as the result of a
cleric's dream, the sacred lance of Longinus
was discovered beneath the flagstones of St
Peter's church. There was such an immediate
uplifting of spirit that the heartened Crusaders
surged out of the gates to sweep the
besieging army from the field. Since then the
ancient lance has been coveted and highly
prized, for even today the corroded
spearhead is still believed to house a
tremendous latent power; power to achieve
ambition, albeit for good or ill, depending
upon the objectives of the possessor.

In the Grail stories the lance
represents the indiscriminate power of the
will, which, when properly directed, should be
aimed at the heart of Jesus, releasing his
blood to the earth, the symbol of
inexhaustible spiritual power.

But the lance of the will can equally
powerfully be wrongly directed towards
selfish or evil ends. It is a missile of passion,
capable of wounding as well as healing. The
Grail King had not controlled his conscious
will and the resulting misdirection of the lance
has caused his grievous wound. Thus the
power of the will can be turned to destructive
of creative use through the same weapon.
However, the Christ blood dripping sown the
length of the lance is a reminder that the
lance's target should be a spiritual one. It
symbolises our ever present human ability to
direct our will so that it releases the latent
power of God.

That extract from an article I wrote some seven or eight years ago is relevant here because it emphasises the psychological power that a relic can unleash, rather than any fancied energy encapsulated within the object itself. The distinction is vital.

Today, the spearhead from Longinus' broken lance lies in a glass case in the Hofburg Museum in Vienna, its flanges bound together by gold, silver and copper wire. Beside it stands the Imperial Cross, said to be designed out of a piece of the True Cross, way back in 1024, as a housing for the venerated spearhead. It is said, by those who behold it, that the spearhead emits a tangible and disturbing power, although, as with all such relics, it would be rather difficult to measure just how much of the sensation arises from the spearhead itself and how much from the overheated imagination of the beholder. Whatever one's opinion, it is an object of such curiosity and attraction that it has to be viewed as part of an ever moving crowd who are constantly exhorted to stand well clear and to refrain from taking photographs.

It was not always so.

After the German centurion Longinus stabbed it into the side of Jesus, we lose sight of the 'Spear of Destiny' for seven centuries until it re-emerges in 732 as an object of increased veneration, after Charles Martel wielded it successfully against the Moors. They had carried all before them, flooding northwards into France as far as Poitiers. And it was with its aid that Charlemagne continued the fight, driving the Arabs back into southern Spain. The story of the spear then moves to England where it passed into the hands of King Athelstan. He used it to devastating effect in smashing the armies of Norsemen at Brunanburh in 937. Following that, it was returned to Germany as part of his sister Edith's dowry, to Otto I, who proceeded to thrash the invading Hungarians with it, at Augsburg, in 955.

After these climactic events, the spear disappears from history once more, until its miraculous excavation from beneath the stone flags of Antioch Cathedral and the resulting extraordinary victory. This was all the result of the vision experienced by Peter Bartholomew, as previously described (although it has to be said that Bohemond, the hard-headed leader of the Crusade, remained distinctly unimpressed; "Let Count

Raymond and his foolish crowd assign victory to the lance if they must," he declared).

Poor Peter; after the heady triumph that followed his miraculous vision, he began having further visions thick and fast. He would have been better advised to have left well alone, or at least to have been more cautious with his predictions. All his visions seemed to favour his own countrymen, the Provencal faction, at the expense of the northern barons. Never, at any time, was there any love lost between the nobles of northern and southern France; they were, in effect, from totally different countries; of the same family, to be sure, but speaking different languages, and with the same intense hatreds peculiar to so many quarrelling families.

The Normans soon grew tired of Peter Bartholomew's one-sided prophecies and openly dismissed his visions. They goaded him to submit to trial by fire, and so convinced was he of his heavenly patronage that he accepted the challenge. Logs were piled up in a narrow passage between stone walls and fired. When they were burning well, the Normans demanded that he walk through the furnace to demonstrate his divine connections. Peter launched himself forward, in a mad dash through the flames, and did in actual fact make it to the other side. However, the Normans pushed him back in again and that was that.

Frederick Barbarossa also carried the spear on the Third Crusade. It did him little good either, for he drowned in Cilicia on the way there and the Crusade degenerated into a cock-up. However, it takes more than a minor hitch to down a good superstition and the veneration of the spear continued. It was borne in procession before Otto III on his way to his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor in Rome. It became a hallowed talisman of the Germanic peoples and was preserved at Nurnberg, always a great centre of Teutonic mysticism and mythology. Durer painted pictures of it when it was brought out for exhibition each Eastertide. Later it was removed to Vienna for fear that the unstoppable Napoleon would cast covetous eyes upon it, and there it would have stayed but for the advent of Nazism.

Before Adolf Hitler rose to real power he dabbled extensively in mysticism, and for many years he had been fascinated by the spear. On of his first acts following the

annexation of Austria was to seize the trophy and return it to Nurnberg. It's a long time since I read Trevor Ravenscroft's *The Spear of Destiny*, but as I recall he relates how General Patton, himself an ardent historian and power seeker, relentlessly tracked down the spear to its hiding place in a vault, deep beneath the foundations of Nurnberg Castle. His discovery is said to have been made at 14.10 on April 30th 1945, at the precise moment that Hitler committed suicide in Berlin. Thus the power of the spear is said to have passed from the Nazis to the Americans, enabling them to unleash the power of the atom as well as sundry other rocket fuelled and nuclear tipped spears of the Teutonic gods. Thus does superstition infiltrate reality and take over once again, in a Walt Disney scenario that flies in the face of common sense, as frequently happens when emotion is divorced from reason, even in this day and age.

The implication of this sinister coincidence is that this relic in particular, and of course all other relics in general, have somehow been imbued with a power that transcends natural laws, by God or the Devil, or some other supernatural agency. However, these natural laws, that we are apparently so bored with and willing to set aside so easily, are God's laws, only we happen to call them Physics. Everything physical must always conform to them and nothing physical can ever contravene them. And it is precisely because these laws are so utterly inviolable that images of the Virgin don't ever, will never, weep human tears, or carvings of the crucified Christ won't ever drip

human blood, any more than Hindu statuettes will ever make a practice of disgorging cow's milk into gullible believer's spoons.

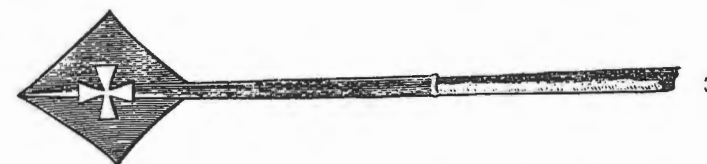
The power of the human mind, however, is a horse of a different colour, for the vast extent of its untapped abilities and potential still remains uncharted. The limitations of natural law will still apply of course, but their influence and application are far more extensive and subtle than those of the physical world and still so little understood. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that by concentrating the mind on powerful symbols we are able to work apparent miracles, snatch victory out of defeat and create order out of chaos. But, never lose sight of the fact that such astonishing acts are products of the mind, not of Disneyesque magic radiating from carved sticks or saintly bones. Tall tales of the miraculous powers inherent in spears, or stones, or shrouds, or rabbits' feet are pure blarney, but the human mind, properly focused, is a wondrous instrument, capable of the most staggering feats; such as taking a pile of stones and a few primitive tools, and conjuring up a magnificent cathedral out of them ... now there's something worth calling a miracle!

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2



3

Fig 1 The Hapsburg Holy Lance
Fig 2 The Holy Lance, St Peter's, Rome
Fig 3 The Holy Lance, Yerevan, Armenia

The Cross and the Crown

An introduction to the lost relics of Wales

Gwilym ap Iorwerth

As I can bear witness, they [the Welsh] pay greater respect than any other people to their churches, to men in orders, the relics of the saints, bishop's crooks, bells, holy books and the Cross itself, for which they show great reverence.

Gerald of Wales



Boss from St George's Chapel, Windsor

King Edward the First waged war on Gwynedd in 1282 after Dafydd ap Gruffudd had rebelled against English suppression. The leader of the Welsh was Llywelyn, Prince of Wales and Lord of Snowdonia, brother of the said Dafydd. Edward faced a determined foe who held him at bay and even defeated an army that had been sent to outflank them. Llywelyn felt Gwynedd was safe and leaving her in the hands of his brother he marched south. While near Builth Wells he was lured away from the main body of his army and murdered.

The psychological effect on the Welsh people was devastating! The head of Llywelyn had been severed from his body and sent to Edward at Aberconwy. It was later taken in procession through London to the Tower, where it was placed on a spike for all to see. Meanwhile, Dafydd was hotly pursued by the English but escaped capture until June 1283 when he was handed over to Edward by Welsh traitors. Dafydd was taken to Shrewsbury where he was drawn, hung and quartered. While the parts of his body were sent to Bristol, Northampton, York and Winchester, his head joined that of his brother at the Tower of London.

At Aberconwy during the month of June 1283, a group of Welsh court officials presented to Edward the regalia of the House of Gwynedd. These, we are told, consisted of the high seal of Llywelyn (his personal seal had been taken from his body), the seal of his wife Eleanor de Montfort, the seal of Dafydd, a cross known as the Croes Naidd and the Crown of Arthur. In Gwynedd, it would seem, there were two important relics: a religious one, a piece of the True Cross kept in a Celtic cross-shaped reliquary known as the Cross of Refuge or Protection, and a political one, the Crown of Arthur. Both were of considerable importance to Edward as possession of them symbolised the conquest of Gwynedd, the most powerful state in Wales.

Edward Longshanks was not only a knight's knight but also a shrewd propagandist. He knew that it would take more than the death of Llywelyn and Dafydd to subdue North Wales. Having captured Dafydd and his family, Edward made sure there would be no successors. Llywelyn's wife had died in childbirth leaving a baby girl Gwenllïan and she, together with Dafydd's daughter Gwladys, was put in a nunnery at

Sempringham and died there. Dafydd's sons lived out their lives in various prisons. Aberffraw, ancient capital of Gwynedd, was completely destroyed and Aber, Llywelyn's favourite palace, became the property of the Crown. Edward built a series of strong castles from Flint to Caernarfon. But these physical constraints were added to by a psychological conquest with the possession of the sacred relics. Edward saw the importance of this and made use of the same system in Scotland when obtaining the Holy Rood and the Stone of Scone.

Longshanks placed considerable importance on chivalry and was a great enthusiast of the Arthurian legends. He even took books of Arthurian tales with him on crusade in 1270. But he is well remembered, after the first defeat of the Welsh in 1277, when together with his wife, Eleanor of Castille, he travelled to Glastonbury at Easter 1278, where they opened the fabled tomb of Arthur. Whether Edward believed that the bones therein were really those of Arthur and Guinevere we can never be sure. However, he was at times likened to Arthur and held a number of Round Tables during his reign.

In the Middle Ages relics were of great importance, bringing pilgrims from all over the known world. Whether it was the Holy Shroud, Holy Blood or pieces of the True Cross (and there were enough of the latter around to build a large wooden ship) medieval people deeply believed in the power of relics. Also there were relics of famous people and the interest in things Arthurian had grown considerably by the 13th century. First and foremost was the Tomb of Arthur at Glastonbury, then we hear of Richard I giving King Tancred of Sicily Arthur's sword *Caliburn* in 1190, a Round Table at Winchester, King Arthur's seal at Westminster Abbey, the image of the Virgin Mary brought to Wedale near Melrose in Scotland by Arthur, and a collection of relics connected with other Arthurian characters.

A document signed at Rhuddlan on 25th June 1283 stated that seven Welsh officials brought to Edward the 'jewels' of the House of Gwynedd at Aberconwy. These were Einion ap Ynor, Llywelyn, Dafydd, Meilir, Gronow, Dayhoc and Tegwared, and they were given special privileges for handing over the Croes Naidd. Whether the seals and the Crown of Arthur were passed

to Edward at the same time is not quite clear. However, it is recorded that the Friday after Easter 1285 Edward, together with his family, the Archbishop of Canterbury, fourteen bishops and all the magnates of the land walked in procession from the Tower of London to Westminster Abbey. It is said that John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury, carried the Cross and Edward's twelve year old son Alfonso, who was to die later that year, carried the Crown. We are also told that the Crown was presented to the Shrine of St Edward the Confessor at the Abbey but the Cross became Edward's personal relic.

Having subjugated the Welsh, Edward turned his attentions to Scotland and, apart from some time in Europe, he continued to campaign against the Scots, under William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, until his death in 1307. During these campaigns Edward carried with him the Cross of Refuge and it is recorded as part of his Wardrobe. In 1296 the Bishop of Glasgow swore fealty to Edward on the Cross and it is mentioned again in 1299, 1300 and 1307.

Following his death the Cross became a focus of pilgrimage first at the Chapel in the Tower of London and later at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. In fact it was Edward III who presented the Cross to St George's when he formed the Order of the Garter in 1348, after his unsuccessful attempt to recreate the Round Table. The Cross remained at Windsor until the Reformation and was last recorded in 1552. It is believed that after this date it was broken up and disappeared.

The seals that were given to Edward in 1283, which were of silver, were melted down and formed into a chalice and paten. Like the Cross these too disappeared, but due to robbery. During the process of transportation the two were stolen when the baggage train was attacked by robbers. The perpetrators hid their ill-gotten gains with the intention of returning to reclaim them later. This they never did and it was only in 1890 that two men discovered the objects near Dolgellau. The chalice and paten were classed as treasure trove and are now in the possession of the Crown. However, copies of these unique objects can be seen in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

The Crown of Arthur met an even more mysterious fate! After being presented

to the Shrine of Edward the Confessor, Westminster Abbey, the Crown disappeared from history. Some say that it never existed and it was a fable created by either Edward or later chroniclers as a symbol of Edward's dominance over the Welsh. However, it is possible that the House of Gwynedd did possess a crown or something which they connected with Arthur. By the 13th century the British believed that Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* was historical material and quoted from it whether it was needed to prove a point. Edward claimed sovereignty over Scotland to the Pope by using Geoffrey's work and Llywelyn wrote to the King of Scotland pointing to the links between Wales and Scotland from the same source.

In 1305 a strange trial took place! In October of that year on Richard de Pudicott was hanged for his part in a crime connected with the crypt of the Chapel of the Pyx at Westminster Abbey. Here the treasures of King Edward were kept. The Cross of Refuge had at the time returned with him from the North but a considerable amount of jewels, gold and silver had been kept at the Abbey until April 1303 when the cellar was broken into. Richard de Pudicott glorified in his crime which read like a modern thriller (in fact P C Doherty included the crime in one of his Hugh Corbett novels) and was probably just as much fiction. The crime was not discovered until June of 1303 when pieces of the treasure began to turn up in various parts of the City of London. Some of it, including foreign currency, was sold to merchants who were suspicious and informed the authorities. John Droxford, Keeper of the Wardrobe, returned to London and found out what had taken place. Immediately a manhunt began and numerous arrests took place. These included William, Deputy Keeper of the Palace at Westminster, and Richard de Pudicott, both of whom were found in possession of stolen items. Forty-eight monks and thirty-two other people were also arrested.

Most were freed by order of the King but Richard was made a scapegoat and was hanged in October 1305. (Pudicott, it is said, was later flayed and his skin nailed to the Abbey door.) The shock of the crime caused Edward to move his treasures to the Tower of London. Droxford, it would seem, made a complete record of the objects that were lost

and recovered. The list can be found in the Exchequer Account K R 332/8. Unfortunately, I have not been able to check this list. It would be interesting to see if any mention is made of the Crown of Arthur. Ditmas, in his article on Arthurian relics for the journal *Folklore*, points out that there is no record of the Crown and that its history seems to be shrouded in mystery.

Of the objects passed into the hands of Edward in 1283 the seals were genuine and the result of their transformation are still in existence. The Cross did not survive but ample descriptions exist and it is depicted to this day on two bosses and a sculpture at St George's Chapel, Windsor. It can be seen as a jewelled Celtic cross on a stand, being worshipped by King Edward IV and Bishop Richard Beauchamp and also carried by an angel. That it is shown as a Celtic cross may indicate that the Cross was quite old when it passed into Royal possession. The Crown of Arthur has never been described but since its fellow treasures can be proven to have existed then why not this jewel.

Earlier in 1997 the Queen allowed the Stone of Scone - the Coronation Stone - to be returned to Scotland after 700 years. Whether you believe it is the real Stone of Destiny or not, it had become a symbol of Scottish nationhood. To the Welsh of a decade or so earlier (1280s) the Cross and Crown were their symbols. These will never be returned!



Relics of the Grail

Tristan Gray Hulse



Fig 1. The Sancreed Grail

The recent number of *Pendragon* (XXVI/2 Spring 1997) featuring so much interesting material on the Holy Grail prompts a note on the subject of actual Grail relics. Pace Ian Forrester Roberts' claims as to the profound unease felt by the medieval Church with regard to the Grail (*ib*, 7-8) it remains a fact that that organisation tolerated the existence and promoted the veneration of numbers of pertinent artifacts.

The cup in Jerusalem

The Christian sites of Palestine attracted European pilgrims from an early period, and over the centuries numbers of them left written accounts of their travels. The earliest surviving report is that of an anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux who described his AD 333 visit; later in the same century the Spanish nun Egeria compiled a fascinating detailed account of her own pilgrimage (for the texts of both of which, see Wilkinson 1971). From a comparatively early period the cup of the Last Supper was being shown to pilgrims in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the pilgrims' records make it clear that it was not always the same vessel!

In or around the year 570, an anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza wrote an account of his pilgrimage. Between the shrine of the Holy Sepulchre and the Constantinian basilica which marked the site of the discovery of the True Cross, he saw "a small room where they keep the Wood of the Cross".

In that place are also the sponge and reed mentioned in the Gospel (from this sponge we drank water) and also the onyx cup which he blessed at the Supper, and many other marvellous things beside (Wilkinson 1977, 83).

The next mention of the relic appears to be that of the French bishop Arculf, who, c 685, dictated an account of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land to Adamnan, the abbot of Iona; but it was quite evidently *not* the relic seen by the Piacenza pilgrim. In a chapel between the church of the Sepulchre and the Constantinian basilica Arculf was shown *the Cup of the Lord, which He blessed and gave with His own hand to the Apostles in the supper on the day before he suffered ... the cup is of silver, holding the measure of a French quart [apparently, a sixth part of a gallon], and has two little handles placed on it, one on each side. In this cup also is the sponge which those who were crucifying the Lord filled with vinegar and, putting it on hyssop, offered to His mouth. From the same cup, as is said, the Lord drank after His Resurrection, as He sat at meat with the Apostles. The sainted Arculf saw it and touched it with his own hand, and kissed it through the opening of the perforated cover of the case within which it is concealed: indeed, the whole people of the city resort greatly to this cup with immense veneration* (MacPherson 1889, 11-12; cf also Wilkinson 1977, 97).

Nearby Arculf saw "that spear of the soldier with which he smote the side of the Lord as He hung on the Cross", which, too, "the whole city of Jerusalem resorts to, kisses, and venerates".

This intimate connection between Holy Cup and Holy Spear continued to be noted for centuries; cf Epiphanius, quoted below. For what it is worth, Baring-Gould, in his essay "The Sangreal", quotes from Malory the appearance of the Grail in the castle of King Pelles, when "the fourth [angel] set the holy speare even upright upon the vessel"; and suggests that this is "represented on an

ancient churchyard crucifix, in rude sculpture, at Sancreed, in Cornwall": Baring-Gould 1906, 613-4. Fig 1.

Adamnan's *De locis sanctis* was an immediate popular success. Bede produced an epitome of the book, which mentions the cup (MacPherson 1889, 69-70); and, further, drew the material for three chapters of his *Historia* (V, 15-17) from it. Arculf prepared plans for Adamnan, drawn on wax tablets, of four of the principal sites which he visited, one of which depicted the area around the Sepulchre and the basilica of Constantine. Those manuscripts deriving ultimately from Adamnan's original text, rather than from Bede, show the "chapel of the Lord's cup" between the two churches, labelled *exedra cum calice Domini*; the ninth-century MS Vindobonensis 458 even includes a schematic chalice within the plan of the chapel (Wilkinson 1977, 196 and plate 5: in other mss of the same series a circle is shown within the *exedra*, leading one to presume that, in some sort, the chalice was shown by Arculf himself on his tablet). Fig 2.

More confusing is a pilgrims' text composed between 750 and 800, attributed to a monk called Epiphanius. He saw a crypt, which he represented as "the guardroom where Christ was imprisoned". Above this was

the sanctuary in which is kept the cup from which Christ drank the vinegar and gall. It is like a chalice of emerald plainly set [Wilkinson here notes that the translation is "doubtful"]. And in the same place is kept the basin in which Christ washed the feet of his disciples. It is made of marble. There are kept the Lance and the Sponge and the Reed (Wilkinson 1977, 117).

However, before this the English-born St Willibald had spent some considerable time in the Holy Land, between 724 and 730, and his *Life*, written by the nun Hugeberc c 780, largely at the dictation of Willibald himself, makes no mention of his having seen the cup. And after his time there seem to be no further references to the chalice in Jerusalem. Instead, in the high middle ages, vessels claiming to be the cup of the Last Supper began to appear in Europe.

The cup in medieval Europe

The treasury of Genoa cathedral still preserves a shallow green vessel known as

the *Sacro Catino* (Holy Cup), which has been in Italy since at least the twelfth century, when William of Tyre wrote that crusaders from Genoa had obtained it after the fall of Caesarea. Translucent, and of a particularly intense green colour, it was once thought to have been carved from a single emerald, but in fact it is a superb piece of Roman glass, and measures 16 inches across. Stolen by Napoleon, it was broken in Paris before its return to San Lorenzo in 1816, and one piece is still missing. The vessel is heptagonal (not hexagonal, as reported by the Beggs - Begg 1995, 140-1 - though one side is narrower than the other six), and was at one time believed to have been used in some way at the Last Supper.

Just as impressive and beautiful is a chalice preserved in the cathedral of Valencia, in Spain. It is made of two pieces of dark red agate, carved to form a bowl and a base, joined by a two-handled stem and mount of gold, studded with pearls and gems; the whole measuring just 17 centimetres tall. The metalwork dates to the ninth century, when chalices of just this form were in use. Fig 3. Its legend tells that the little stone cup was used by Jesus at the Last Supper, and afterwards was used as the papal chalice in Rome until the persecution in 258 forced Sixtus II to send it for safety to Spain. It was entrusted to his deacon St Lawrence (who, however, was martyred in Rome, traditionally, roasted on a gridiron) who took it to his birthplace, at Huesca.

From here the *Santo Caliz* found its way to the monastery of San Juan de la Pena, where it first enters history in the thirteenth century. It reached Valencia in 1424, and is now enshrined above the altar in its own chapel (Cruz 1984, 30, illus page 138). That this is a Mozarabic chalice rather than the Grail is suggested by a short inscription in Arabic on the base (Begg 1995, 125; that an Arabic text does not automatically imply an Islamic origin is indicated by the Kufic inscription on the Arca Santa reliquary in Oviedo, in Spain, which records its manufacture in 1075 - cf eg Bamm 1961, 270, illus); but of all the possible claimants this is the one which looks most like the sacred cup of medieval legend.

There were undoubtedly other claimants at one time. Thus, for example, in the sixteenth century Sir Richard Tonkyngton claimed that in Lyons



Fig 3. El Santo Caliz of Valencia

There ys a Cuppe of an Emerawde stone, wherof Ower Savyor Crist drank at hys Mawndy

- unless, of course, Sir Richard was confusing it with the Genoese relic.

Modern grails

Nor have Grails failed to materialise in the modern period. Fred Stedman-Jones has eloquently outlined the history and legend of the *Phial Sanctaidd* of Nanteos (*Pendragon XXVI/2*, 14-19), but it is to be noted that none of the references predate the nineteenth century.

With regard to the Glastonbury variant of the Nanteos legend, it seems to be well-established that, insofar as the abbey ever made any serious claim to possessing a/the "grail", it said that Joseph brought two phials or cruets containing the blood and sweat of Jesus, rather than the cup of the Last Supper. The only medieval depiction of St Joseph known to me is on the painted screen in Plymtree church, in Devon, where - unlike the Victorian example illustrated in *Pendragon XXVI/2* - he is clearly shown holding two golden cruets, one in either hand. There were numerous relics of the Holy Blood around in the middle ages, many - such as Fecamp, or Niedermunster - with much more extravagant legends [a surprising number still survive: cf Begg 1995, *passim*], and one more would have raised few eyebrows; that Glastonbury never exhibited such a relic indicates that its "grail" was never anything but legendary.

In our own century, no less than three vessels have found people willing to defend their status as the Holy Grail. In 1910 an early set of eucharistic vessels were found in a well in Syria. Now known as the Antioch Chalice, and in the keeping of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, *the vessel is in two parts, the inner cup being composed of plain silver of great age, which has a capacity of two and a half quarts. The outer chalice is of intricately carved silver ... resplendent with ... two figures of Christ ... [and] ... with additional figures gathered in two groups of five each (Cruz 1984, 28-9).*

Responsible academics have suggested in all seriousness that the simple inner cup was the chalice of the Last Supper, and that the ornate outer cup was made as a reliquary for it; other scholars - equally responsible - have more plausibly designated the vessels as Byzantine, of the late-fourth or early-fifth century (Bamm 1961, 39, illus).

Glastonbury's late-medieval claims to the Grail received an unexpected boost from Major Wellesley Tudor Pole, the founder of the Chalice Well Trust, who in 1906 had a vision

of a chalice concealed near Saint Bride's Well in Glastonbury which resembled the chalice used on Maundy Thursday ... which they found on the site.

The shallow sapphire-blue glass dish, decorated with eight-petalled flowers, is still

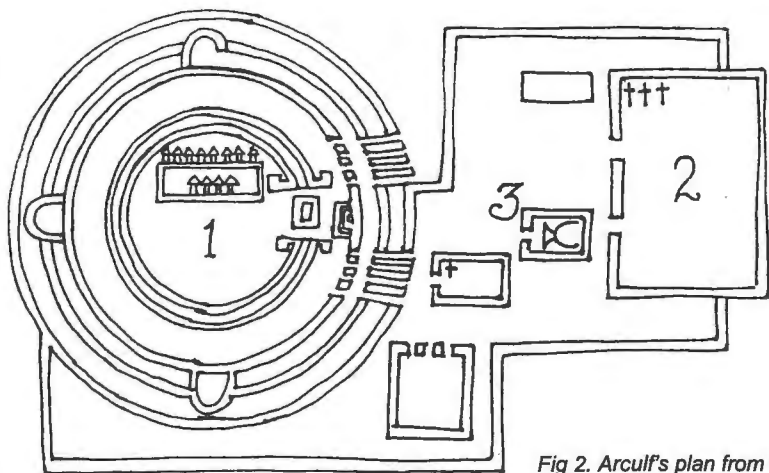


Fig 2. Arculf's plan from MS Vindobonensis 458 showing [1] the Anastasis, with the Sepulchre at its centre, [2] the Constantinian Martyrium, and [3] the exedra cum calice Domini

preserved; but as the Beggs pertinently inquire, Does it add to or detract from the mystery of the cup and its story that it was, it seems, originally discovered by a Dr Goodchild in Italy some twenty years earlier? (Begg 1995, 78)

Most recently of all we have the discovery of Graham Phillips: the "six centimetre onyx receptacle - more of a Holy Egg Cup than the Holy Grail" as Charles Evans-Gunther aptly noted (*Pendragon* XXVI/2, 38). And heaven alone knows what might yet await revelation when Blackett and Wilson publish their *The Holy Kingdom!*

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To be concluded

PenDragon Notes & Queries

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

◆ From Dr A R Kraaijeveld, Sunningdale, Berks:

I am interested in the history of board games in general and chess-like games in particular. When chess reached the British Isles, several ancient Celtic games were virtually driven to extinction. Names of these games that I have come across are: Fidchell, Gwyddbwyll, Tawlish, Dun, Goedhboell. Brandub, Gwezboell, Buanfach etc. I have been trying to collect information regarding the rules of play of these old games. Sometimes it is suggested that they were in fact variants of the Viking Hnefatafi; alternatively, it is stated that they were very similar to the Roman game Ludus Latrunculorum.

Do you have any information on how the above (or other) Celtic board games were played? Alternatively, could you suggest some other source I could contact?

◆ Any answers? See also *The*

Board.

Arthur's Cross?

Chris Lovegrove

Cross purposes

On April Fool's Day, 1982, an extraordinary story broke nationally. Back in November 1981 Derek Mahoney, while searching through mud excavated from an Essex lake, found a small lead cross. At the British Museum, the Keeper of Medieval and Later Antiquities noted that the cross was within an eighth of an inch of the size of the cross alleged to have been found above King Arthur's grave at Glastonbury in 1191. But, following on from his family's dispute with solicitors over a house sale, Mahoney said he had buried the cross in a "completely waterproof" container "well down in the ground" because possession of the cross gave him "power and authority".

Where exactly had he got this cross? Dredging operations at the lake at Forty Hall at Enfield in Essex had revealed, he said, some old Elizabethan bricks in a wall, and later a knife - and the cross. These were all photographed. When the foreman involved in the pond-clearing apparently raised no objections, Derek Mahoney took the objects home. Enfield Council, after hearing of the cross from a report in *The Enfield Advertiser*, successfully prosecuted him for retaining an object discovered on their land. He was jailed for contempt of court.

After nine months, Mahoney was brought before a High Court judge to reconsider. He refused. With remission, his sentence would have ended in July 1983. But then, on March 21st 1983 (the spring equinox), he was released. The judge said there was "no point" in his serving any more of his sentence as he was prepared to stay in prison "until doomsday" rather than give up the cross. A curious legal decision!

Suspicious were aroused, however, when it emerged that Mahoney was once employed by Lesney Toys as a mouldmaker. Geoffrey Ashe considered the whole affair to be "a false alarm". And yet there were attenuating circumstances.

The catalyst precipitating the Mahoney family's campaign against solicitors concerned the auction of a house somewhere in Somerset in 1973. Now, the last claimed whereabouts of the Glastonbury cross was in the possession of a Mr Chancellor Hughes of Wells in the 18th century (Robinson 1926, 59). Had Mahoney somehow acquired the cross in Somerset in the 70s? Indeed, Ashe had already written that it "possibly is still lying unnoticed in some family lumber-room" (Ashe 1957, 222).

On the other hand, Forty Hall in Enfield was in the hands of a Richard Gough in the early 19th century. It was this Gough who in 1789 brought out a three-volume English translation of William Camden's *Britannia*. And it was Camden who, in his own 1607 Latin edition of *Britannia*, presented the first known illustration of the cross, from life as it were. Was Mahoney's cross a copy made in Gough's lifetime, as the British Museum suggested at the time? Or was Gough's illustrated version an accurate facsimile of the cross which, in later years, found its way into Forty Hall's lake? We may never know. Unless Derek Mahoney (in his mid-sixties, if he is still alive now) relents.

Is the Glastonbury cross a relic that no longer remains to us? Or can we, with judicious detective work, reconstruct the truth of the matter?

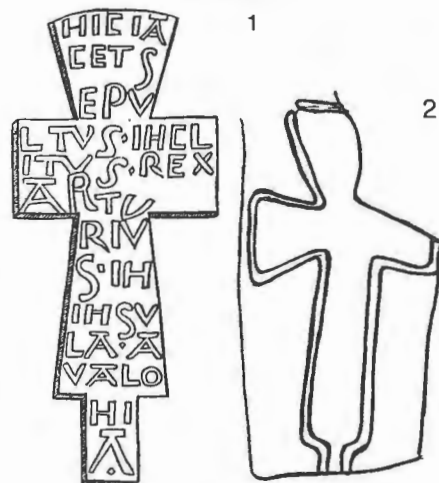
Cross dating

The first edition of Camden's *Britannia* (1590) gave only the inscription on the cross, as already known from 12th and 13th century accounts, arranged in five lines:

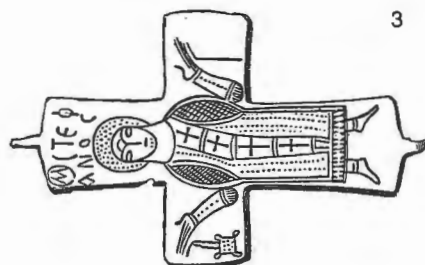
HIC IACET SEP
VLTVS INCLITVS
REX ARTVRIVS IN
INSVLA AVALO
NIA

Here lies buried the famous king, Arthur, in the Avalonian isle.

The 1607 and subsequent editions gave depictions of the object itself, possibly as a result of a change of format (Alcock 1973, 75ff). The cross is shown as about six inches high (15cms) although John Leland in the 16th century thought it was about a foot long. By now the arrangement of the wording had changed (fig 1).



The shape of the cross is curious, too. If it were from the Dark Ages, then we might have expected an equal-armed Greek cross related to the *chi-rho* monogram. However, the Latin form we have parallels incised crosses from Anglesey. These have splayed arms and heads with so-called spiked feet, and, by analogy with Gaulish Merovingian and Carolingian prototypes, could be from anywhere within a 7th to 11th century range (fig 2). The *fitted* foot of the Glastonbury cross (from French *fiche*, a spike) is probably modelled on a portable wooden or metal cross intended to be placed in a base or in the ground.



Alternatively, pectoral crosses, popular in the Byzantine period, may have provided prototypes. Or the spiked foot may have been based on part of the hinge present on reliquary crosses, which opened up to reveal a holy relic. These were generally three to four inches (8 - 10 cms) in height (fig 3).

So, if the form of the cross casts doubt on an Arthurian date, what of the form of the lettering of the words?

The Cs are square, the Ns have cross-bars like that of the H of HIC. The T and the V are conjoined in two out of three cases. The Ss are elongated and the As all have a distinctive serif.

Now, all the letter forms can be paralleled on Welsh memorials of the 5th to 7th centuries. After this period, from the 8th century up till the Conquest, Welsh stone inscriptions use lettering based on manuscript forms with a mixture of capitals and half-uncials (Nash-Williams 1950). Most of the letter forms of the cross can also be seen on Anglo-Saxon pennies from at least the 8th century onwards, especially the Ns with nearly horizontal bars, the Rs with open bows, and the As (Dolley 1970). For example, silver pennies of Offa of Mercia bear the inscription OFFA REX, with open-bowed R and a seriffed A (sometimes without a bar), comparable with capitals on contemporary manuscripts, and silver pennies of Coenwulf of Mercia, COEHVVLF REX, dating to about 800, have the square Cs and Ns with horizontal bars (fig 4).



However, doubt has been cast on this pre-Conquest date for the cross. The Norman tympanum at Stoke-sub-Hamdon church in Somerset has a centaur, conical helmet on his head, shooting an arrow backwards. In case we are in doubt over his identity, he is labelled SAGITAR (fig 5).

A similar zodiacal figure appears on the font of Hook Norton church, Oxfordshire, also dated Early Norman, and also clearly labelled SAGITTARIVS (fig 6).



But it is the Stoke lettering which displays such similar letter forms to the Glastonbury cross that suspicious minds have been alerted. Here again we meet the distinctive A, sloped S and sans serif letter I. On the other hand the G does not echo the square C of the cross, the S is not elongated as the Glastonbury Ss certainly are, and the R does not have its characteristic open bow of the Glastonbury REX. Perhaps all that can be said is that the tradition of monumental lettering can be very

conservative, and that the Stoke mason had not yet been influenced by the trend towards the uncial forms later known as Lombardic or Gothic majuscule.

Conclusions?

So, we have a lead cross (which may have been, as Leland asserted, made from local lead - the Mendips are not very far away). Its form reflects Continental crosses from the seventh to the eleventh century, but not earlier Greek crosses or the expected Celtic wheel-headed crosses. A number of incised crosses of similar shape come from Anglesey (many from one site in particular, Llangaffo) but we cannot be sure of their precise date, or their relationship with Glastonbury. As for the letter forms, they are of a very conservative type which persisted from around the sixth century on inscribed Celtic memorial stones, through later Anglo-Saxon coins. When we come to the Stoke-sub-Hamdon tympanum (of perhaps early 12th century date) it could be argued that the letter forms represent a Norman re-introduction of capitals of new-classical origin (which is why the Norman style is also called Romanesque), but apart from the seriffed A, there are too few convincing overlaps with the Glastonbury cross.

We are now back to our 7th to 11th century date. Certainly this is too late for an Arthurian relic, as we have seen. But it is also too early for a late 12th century date, and a little too vague if it is really a 12th century fake. Further clues may be forthcoming when we consider the implications of the actual wording and examine the accounts of the 12th century excavation, but for now, with little likelihood of retrieving the object, we may have gone as far as we can. As for Derek Mahoney, he ain't telling.

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To be continued. Parts of this article have previously appeared in *Pendragon* and in the *RILKO Newsletter*

Another look at Gildas

Chris Gidlow

Gildas' *De excidio Britanniae* is the only surviving book certainly written by a native Briton of the "Arthurian" period. As such, the witness it bears to the political and social conditions of the time is invaluable. However, the many layers of legendary and historical material written since, from the Dark Ages onward, as well as the preconceptions of modern historians, have obscured what Gildas actually wrote.

Gildas believed that the destruction of Britain was taking place in his time. He wrote his book to explain who and why this had come about. He assumed a certain amount of prior knowledge on the part of his readers which we unfortunately do not possess. In the earlier part of the work, up to the arrival of the Saxons, his facts are distorted for didactic effect. Those which are only incidental to his message are ignored.

As the narrative approaches Gildas' time our confidence in it increases. The climax of the work is a denunciation of his contemporary rulers and priests, some of whom are named and addressed directly. The events of the Saxon revolt and its attendant calamities were only a few generations in the past. As Gildas intended to convince his readers to turn from their wicked ways by his interpretation of recent history, every error they could pick up would obviously weaken his argument. Bearing this in mind let us look at what Gildas did have to say about his time and the events immediately preceding it.

The Saxon revolt

The Saxons had been invited to Britain by the proud tyrant to fight the Picts, a great plague having sapped Britain of its native man-power. (The Tyrant is named as Vortigern in the Auxerre family of manuscripts from which the earliest quotations, though not the earliest complete text, of Gildas are drawn.) They fell out with their employer over supplies and broke into revolt, described as a fire *heaped and nurtured by the Easterners*, leaving it possible that other elements joined in. Gildas never actually stated that these were the first German troops to settle in Britain and we know from archaeology that some had been settled here from Roman times.

The fire burned from sea to sea, devastating cities and fields and almost the whole surface of the Island to the shores of the Western sea. All the *coloniae* - York, Lincoln, Colchester, Gloucester and possibly Caerleon, Chester and London - were laid low by battering-rams and their inhabitants slaughtered. For those who argue, quite correctly, that Western Britain was either only conquered by the Saxons in much later times or not at all, it should be pointed out that these lands are neither said to be conquered nor settled, but simply invaded and devastated. In fact Gildas goes on to say that the *cruel plunderers subsequently returned home, that is to their settlements in the Eastern part of the Island*.

Ambrosius Aurelianus

Those Britons who survived the general massacre and did not flee abroad or surrender themselves to slavery held out in high fortified hills, dense forests and sea cliffs. God gave them strength and people fled to them from all directions. Their leader was Ambrosius Aurelianus, whose parents had been killed in the revolt. Gildas' description of him as *vir modestus*, an ordinary man, who *solus forte Romanæ gentis* had survived the disaster, is usually translated as *perhaps alone of the Roman race*. It could be rendered more plausibly as *perhaps the only man from a Roman family or clan*. Surely, says Gildas, *his parents had worn the purple*. This phrase should probably be interpreted as simply praise - although he was a man of ordinary status he fought as though he had imperial blood in him. However, later writers have tended to

interpret this literally, as meaning that his parents had been Imperial.

It should be noted that Gildas describes Ambrosius as *dux* or leader, although there are some men in Britain whom he has already called kings. It is possible to infer a continental origin for Ambrosius or his family, since elsewhere in the book *Roman* is only used for the European Romans, as opposed to the citizens of Britain. His grand-children, contemporaries of Gildas, have greatly degenerated from their ancestors' good example.

The *citizens*, as Ambrosius' followers are called (although they have abandoned their cities) sallied forth from their refuges and challenged the Saxons to battle. The war raged with victory going now to the Britons, now to the Saxons so that ... *the Lord could make trial of his latter-day Israel. This lasted right up to the siege of Mons Badonicus, almost the most recent and certainly not the smallest defeat of the villains*. Elsewhere he describes it as *the final victory of our country ... granted in our times by the will of God*. It is nowhere explicitly stated that Ambrosius was the victor at *Mons Badonicus*, although this is the obvious inference. It is, however, conceivable that the wars lasted for over a generation since Gildas, born in the year of the battle forty-four years before the writing of the book, is, as has been said, a contemporary of Ambrosius' grandchildren.

His contemporaries

Gildas now proceeds to his memorable denunciation of the temporal and spiritual rulers of his own time. *Britain has kings, but they are tyrants; judges, but they are unjust*, he begins. Judge is here being used as it is in the *Codex Justinianus*, to mean a ruler of a province or, as in Ammianus and the Bible, to denote a non-Roman ruler.

They often plunder and terrorise, but do so to the innocent; they defend and protect people, but only the guilty and thieving; they have many wives, but these are whores and adulteresses; they swear constantly, but their oaths are false; they make vows, but almost at once ~~all~~ lies; they wage wars, but only civil and unjust ones;

they chase thieves energetically all over the country, but love and even reward the thieves who sit with them at table ... they despise the harmless and humble, but exalt to the stars ... their military companions bloody, proud and murderous men, adulterers and enemies of God!

Already we can see through Gildas' words a pattern of heroic Celtic kingship, to be celebrated by other writers of the Dark Ages. Five kings are singled out for special condemnation, whom I shall return to later. Gildas then castigates the wicked priest, men who even degrade the harlots they lie with. They rejoice if they find even a single penny and are miserable if they lose one (an indication that some form of monetary economy was still in operation at the time in spite of the collapse of Roman rule and the destruction of the towns). Bishops, priests and monks are all mentioned. Most have bought their positions from the tyrants and even the best have not risked martyrdom by standing up to the wicked rulers.

While on the subject of religion it is worth noting that Gildas says absolutely nothing about a resurgence of paganism, Roman or Celtic, such as various ill-informed writers like to suggest. The time when Britons misguidedly worshipped mountains, hills, rivers and idols is far in the past. Indeed, the kings are specifically said not to be pagans:

Just because they do not offer sacrifices to heathen gods, there is no reason for them to be proud, they are still idolaters because by their actions they trample on the commands of Christ.

In addition there is no mention of heresy, Gnostic or otherwise, although Gildas left no stone unturned in searching out iniquity.

The tyrants

Five tyrants are singled out for special attention. The first is Constantine, *tyrant whelp of the filthy lioness of Damnonia* (Devon and Cornwall). In a similar way the Saxons are described as a pack of whelps issuing from the lair of the *barbarian lioness*, meaning their Germanic homeland. Earlier, Gildas mentions a treacherous lioness who rebels against Rome, and in that context it is not clear whether he is speaking figuratively of Britain or specifically of the leader of the Rebellion, Boudicca. Equally, in Constantine's

case it is not possible to state categorically that it is his kingdom and not some particularly notorious Cornish woman that is meant. There was, incidentally, another Damnonia, just south of the Clyde, the very area that the *Lives of Gildas* said was the writer's homeland. Certainly Gildas knew that in the very year in which he was writing (only a month of which had elapsed) Constantine had murdered two royal youths in a church while disguised as a holy abbot. Who the youths are is not revealed, although almost no man could handle weapons as bravely as them.

Next comes the denunciation of Aurelius Caninus, an unlocated tyrant. He is also described as a lion's whelp, which may be simply figurative or may indicate some family relationship to Constantine (Geoffrey of Monmouth calls him Constantine's nephew). His name could also suggest that he is related in some way to Ambrosius Aurelianus whose grandsons have already been referred to. Aurelius' brothers and father all died young, while he himself thirsts for civil war and plunder.



We know slightly more about the next tyrant, Vortiporius, tyrant of the Demetae (the people of South Wales). His sixth century memorial stone calling him *Vortiporix the Protector* was discovered on the borders of Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. Gildas describes him as old and grey, the evil son of a good king. His father had therefore borne that title during or soon after the age of Ambrosius. Figuratively he is like a leopard, spotted with his sins: murder, rape and adultery.

Next come Cuneglassus, a bear and charioteer of the bear's stronghold who wages constant war on his countrymen. The meaning of the bear epithets is unknown. *Ursus* might be the name of a person. Arthurian scholars are quick to point out that, according to one medieval writer, the Latin translation of *Arthur was ursus horribilis*. Alternatively, the *Bear's Stronghold* might be a Latin translation of the Welsh *Dinarth*, the name of several fortresses in Wales.

Gildas' animal metaphors (the last tyrant, dealt with below, is called a dragon) are derived from the Vision of the Beast in Daniel, chapter seven. Here the Lion (in Gildas' case two lions), the Leopard, the Bear and the Horned Beast with Steel Teeth (the Dragon) represent various kingdoms destined to have their powers stripped from them by God. The vast bulk of Gildas' work actually consists of similar attempts to apply biblical commands and prophecies to contemporary circumstances.

The dragon of the island

We now come to the last tyrant on the list but first in evil, mightier than many both in power and malice, more profuse in giving, more extravagant in sin, strong in arms, but stronger still in that which destroys the soul - Maglocunus, the Dragon of the Island.

Recent historians have tended to play down the importance of this king. He became known to later ages as Maelgwn of Gwynedd, a tradition not necessarily any more reliable than the many others which arose in the Dark Ages, such as locating Vortigem in South Wales. Later kings of Gwynedd lived at Aberffraw in Anglesey and, although no sixth century remains have been discovered there (in fact, archaeology suggests that the sixth century centre of the kingdom was at Deganwy in North Wales, or possibly at Caernarfon), most historians have considered the epithet *insularis draco* must mean dragon of the Isle of Anglesey.

Throughout the text, however, *insula* (the Island) is used as a synonym for Britain, indeed it is actually the term Gildas uses most often when referring to his homeland, and that is the sense in which the word was last used in the text prior to this passage. Gildas goes on to make it even more clear that the whole of the Island of Britain, not an

obscure western corner, falls under the shadow of Maglocunus.

The King of Kings has made you higher than almost all the leaders of Britain in your kingdom as in your stature. Maglocunus has deprived many of the afore-mentioned tyrants of their kingdoms and even of their lives, a phrase which could be taken as referring to the actual named tyrants or to the tyrants in general. The difficulty with the first explanation is that Gildas has treated the other four as if they were alive. He explicitly says that he knows Constantine is alive as if countering rumours that he is not. They are addressed as if they had the ability to repent and change their ways of life.

On the other hand the vision of Daniel clearly refers to consecutive kingdoms. Moreover, Gildas has previously said that he had considered publishing his book ten years earlier but had refrained, leaving the possibility that some of the kings may have died since the first draft, but had been maintained, possibly for the sake of the animal metaphors, in the published version.

Maglocunus' crimes are legion and are made all the more poignant as earlier he had repented of his sins, broken the chains of royal power and entered a monastery, bringing joy in Heaven. Unfortunately, the conversion was short lived.

In the first years of his youth he despatched the king his uncle and nearly all his bravest soldiers, whose faces were not very different from those of the Lion's whelps - possibly another reference to the family of Constantine and Aurelius. He desired to rule by force. He took as wife the wife of his nephew, then killed his nephew and his own wife in an attempt to make this bigamous and adulterous marriage legal.

Once last point deserves some thought. The mighty Maglocunus, Dragon of Britain, was only higher than almost all the leaders (*duces*) of Britain. At one point Gildas calls the five named tyrants mad and debauched horse from the retinue of Pharaoh which actively lure his army to its ruin in the Red Sea. Is this simply a slightly forced metaphor meaning no more than they, like the Egyptian army, will be destroyed by God, or was there really a "Pharaoh" whom they served? Earlier in the historical part of the book the councillors of Vortigem are called stupid Princes of Zoan, giving foolish advice to Pharaoh...

Beyond the veil

The *De excidio* is certainly a very fruitful source for the history of the period. Some of what Gildas wrote can be seen as being open to very different interpretations than those traditionally put upon it. Although I have kept references to later sources to a minimum, it is certainly possible to see the themes and conception of the age which would form their basis taking shape beyond the veil of Gildas' polemic.



Pendragon holiday!

Ian Forrester Roberts has negotiated a five-day Easter break in Brittany with accommodation at the 16th century *Manoir de Prevasy* at Carhaix, with special offers on travel by Brittany Ferries. The Manor is offering £28.00 per night for two (B&B) and dinners at £10.00 for three of the nights, for a party of eight (or ten if all beds are used in a family room). A larger party could use neighbourhood facilities which the hosts, Clarissa and Peter Novak, could arrange. A local English-speaking lecturer with experience and knowledge of Breton history and Celtic mythology is willing to give talks. The Brittany Ferries offer is £90.00 for a car and four passengers, with the possibility of a further concession.

If you are interested, contact us as soon as possible.

BOOKREVIEWS

Helen Hollick *Shadow of the King*
Heinemann, London 1997 £16.99
ISSN 0 434 00233 X hbk

Helen rounds off her *Pendragon's Banner* trilogy with equally as many twists and turns as her previous two publications. In this conclusion to the story of Arthur she tells the tale in her own way with little being owed to the later medieval versions, and though she does use a couple of characters from the later stories she does not conform to those tales. Helen has created a Dark Age story set in the last desperate throes of Roman Britain but with a strong emphasis on the survival of pre-Christian beliefs. For example, Arthur follows the soldier's religion of Mithras while Gwenhwyfar is the epitome of Celtic woman!

Over the three books the reader will have grown to know the main characters and to feel for them. The losses, gains, tragedy, love, hatred, successes and failures have ebbed and flowed throughout the series and continues to the inevitable conclusion. We all know that Arthur would die after the battle of Camlann, but different authors have dealt with this in different ways. However, I will not spoil the story for you by telling the ending! I think you will find the way Helen concludes her trilogy is not too surprising but does not detract from a marvellous story.

Trying to recreate the period is without doubt very difficult, but Helen gives it a good try. In around 560 pages I was only able to find a couple of historical inaccuracies (for example, a bishop wearing a mitre at this early period) and the language, in general, is not completely modern except for such expletives as "Sod off!" That she has decided to play the story at a much earlier period than other versions is her choice and is based, as she points out, on the works of Geoffrey Ashe. We find Arthur in France not to fight the Romans, like Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthur, but to defend the

collapsing Empire against the Goths under Euric. Arthur is portrayed as Riothamus and a reluctant friend of Sidonius Apollinaris, the famous Gallic writer of letters. She also makes use of the legend that Arthur was in Avalon to be cured and gets around this in a novel way.

The third in the series continues to tell of the love story of Arthur and Gwenhwyfar, and the characters and events that affect their relationship. We meet some new characters like their daughter Archfedd, and learn more about Arthur's sons, Cerdic and Medraut. How Helen deals with Medraut is different, and I admire her for ignoring the accepted version and following a different route. The characters are far from two-dimensional, and the reader will learn more about old friends that have appeared throughout the series.

This, like the previous two, is a long book, and there are many tales within the story. It is about adventure as well as love and she deals with battles in a very interesting way. She doesn't give extremely graphic representations of these events, leaving a lot to the reader's imagination. However, there is violence in this book and Helen, at times, doesn't pull her punches. Here we have a depiction of life in a rather dangerous period and in a society that is trying to cope with changing times. The remnants of the Roman way of life are slowly giving rise to a new society, but it isn't going to be easy. Though I, personally, don't agree with the historic context I find it hard to fault her in the overall image of the Dark Ages she has created.

At times certain influences come out in Helen's work, particularly those of Rosemary Sutcliff, but, in my opinion, that is far from bad! Her somewhat unusual style adds to the depiction of the period. Even if we were able to speak the languages of this

time, I think we would find the people alien. Now to represent this is obviously extremely difficult but I feel Helen, unlike other writers, has made an excellent attempt!

I believe she should be congratulated on producing this book and the previous two. She has been very brave in ignoring the already hackneyed versions with Merlin and Lancelot, though maybe her explanations of events occasionally lack a little of the magic that may have surrounded the people of this period. I welcome and recommend highly her refreshing version of this story of Arthur and Gwenhwyfar. Also, I am sure we haven't seen the last of Helen as a writer - though I am sure the subject matter will be different!

Charles W Evans-Günther.

Anne Berthelot
King Arthur: chivalry and legend
Thames & Hudson 1997 £6.95
ISBN 0 500 30079 8 pbk 160pp illus

First published by Gallimard in 1996, this English version is part of Thames & Hudson's *New Horizons* series and follows a similar format: a well-illustrated chronological survey of the chosen subject, followed by extracts from select documents, bibliography and credits.

The author is Professor of Medieval French Literature at the University of Connecticut (does that make her a Connecticut Frank in King Arthur's Court, perhaps?) and so her discussion of developments in Arthurian literature, from Wace and Layamon up to 20th century cinema, is authoritative and thought-provoking. For instance, she clearly charts how the Matter of Britain moved from chronicle format (eg Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace's *Brut*) to poetry, and then back to chronicle style, and how this reflected shifts in taste from pseudo-history to the flowering of chivalry and courtly love, and then a return to a burgeoning nationalistic stance in England.

It is when she deals with the historical context of the legend, however, that we get some curious interpretations. For example, did you know there were Scots in Pictland during the Roman occupation? That there were Sarmatian legions in Britain and that this definitely accounts for similarities between Arthurian legend and Sarmatian myths? That the Picts were apparently of Germanic origin? Were you aware of an ancient region called West Anglia? Of a

Badon Hill (*sic*) north of Salisbury, of Dorset's Maiden Castle as an ancient castle in Logres, or of Old Sarum as one of the oldest Christian sites in southern Britain?

Which edition of the Welsh Annals was Prof Berthelot looking at when she declares that Arthur's victory at Badon was due to a twenty-four hour penance "reproducing the stages of Christ's Passion"? Certainly not an early one. And which edition of the *Historia Britonum* concentrates in particular on the battle of Camlann?

The first chapter, then, should carry a health warning for those who are liable to apoplectic fits. (This is where editorial departments should take more responsibility.) Nevertheless, these and a few other reservations aside (the bibliography is another strange concoction), this title is good value for the illustrations alone. Which is probably why it has been chosen for the shelves of *Past Times* giftshops. And a apt place for it to be, if you like to consume your heritage with blunted critical faculties.

Chris Lovegrove

Nigel Pennick *Dragons of the West*
Capall Bann 1997 £10.95
ISBN 186 163007 7 pbk

As many of you will know, I am very much a dracophile, and this interesting publication is well worth adding to any dragon collection (though it is rather pricey!).

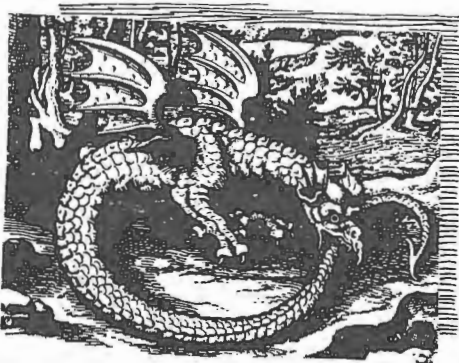
Here we have 210 pages of material on many aspects of dragons, from Ancient Greece to country and national symbols. Mr Pennick begins with a chapter giving various definitions of dragons, and then goes on to explore the beast through Europe. Strictly speaking the title does not include the West beyond the Atlantic Ocean but does an excellent job in discussing European dragons. The author looks at myths, folklore and customs - including dragon slayers, saints and mystics. There are also fascinating sections on the alchemical and herbal connection with our scaly friend.

Only on an odd occasion did I find myself mentally tut-tutting, especially when Mr Pennick makes use of Y *Barddas*, the spoof philosophy created from bits and pieces by Edward Williams, and his ignoring of Nennius' story of Dinas Emrys while only using Geoffrey of Monmouth's introduction to Merlin! In Nennius' work there is no mention of Merlin: the boy calls himself Ambrosius -

Emrys the Overlord. Mr Pennick also uses the anglicised version of the Welsh *gwiber* which is amazingly similar to *gwifr* - the Welsh for a wyvern. It is notable that, apart from references in Nennius, Welsh poetry and Geoffrey of Monmouth, the symbol of the dragon was not found visually in Wales until Owain Glyn Dwr, and both his seals show two-legged dragons - in heraldry, strictly, wyvems.

Of some interest, at the end of this book, is the gazetteer of notable dragons in Great Britain, laying the basis for a useful expansion, if it hasn't already been done. The publication is illustrated throughout, including some intriguing images such as the martial art-like dragon style dance of Hallingen, Norway.

Charles W Evans-Gunther



Henry Lincoln Key to the Sacred Pattern: the Untold Story of Rennes-le-Château
The Windrush Press 1997 £15.99
ISBN 1 900624 7

This book, rumoured by some to be a response to the BBC2 *Timewatch* documentary *The History of a Mystery* (shown September 1996), tells the story of Henry Lincoln's involvement in the Rennes-le-Château affair, from the beginning when he came across Gérard de Sède's *Le Trésor Maudit* while holidaying with his family in the Cevennes in 1969, right through to the present day: the laying-out of geometric patterns over the maps of the Rennes-le-Château region, and elsewhere (begun by David Wood in 1985).

From page 3, Henry Lincoln refers to "the ardent desire of some people to prove ... that the story is a fraud. That there is no Mystery of Rennes-le-Château" - and the closest he comes to actually referring directly to *The History of a Mystery* is in two footnotes, one on page 147 and the other on page 182, stating that "the BBC now pursues the curious path of attempting to prove that the Rennes-le-Château phenomenon does not exist".

In the past, Henry Lincoln himself has been involved with *Timewatch* and *Historical Analysis* - having both written and presented the documentary *The Man In The Iron Mask*, shown on February 3, 1988. This was his introduction to this subject-matter:

The story of the Man In The Iron Mask is not just the story of a search for a man's identity, it's also the story of the way scholars have dealt with the subject over the last 300 years - how in fact some have perpetuated fiction, or even allowed unsubstantiated rumour to colour their accounts: some have even ignored evidence already in the record, in order to present their own favoured theory. (1)

Why didn't Henry Lincoln use this same approach when researching on Béranger Saunière and Rennes-le-Château? Why accept at face-value, uncritically, the claims made by Pierre Plantard and the Priory Documents? And why ignore general facts about Béranger Saunière himself? To quote from *Key to the Sacred Pattern*, page 53:

...Saunière acquired his wealth by trafficking in masses. I have encountered this accusation elsewhere, though never with any

accompanying proof. One would think that if Saunière, as suggested, mounted a large campaign of advertising to attract commissions for the saying of masses in return for payment, then some trace of this would survive.

One piece of information about Saunière which is lacking in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, *The Messianic Legacy*, *The Holy Place*, as well as in this latest book, is that Saunière was suspended from his priestly duties on the charge of selling masses by his bishop on 5 December 1911. This piece of information is to be found in the very first series of articles on the "Saunière mystery", published in 1956 (2). However, if this source is not good enough, then the bulletin of the Carcassonne Bishopric should be. It is worth quoting in full.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE BISHOPRIC
Relative advice to M l'Abbé Saunière
Former priest of Rennes-le-Château

Following an account dated 11th December 1910, in the supplement to Nr 13 of Veillées des Chaumières, thus: Always as before inform Violette de l'Aisne, that M l'Abbé Saunière, in retreat at Rennes-le-Château, by Couiza (Aude), France, performs masses at 1 Franc per time and is obliged to receive money for other religious works, literary articles, pamphlets, stamps etc.

The Diocesan authority of Carcassonne deems it right to inform the faithful of this diocese, and so far as is able to inform other dioceses:

1 That M l'Abbé Saunière, former priest of Rennes-le-Château, is in no way authorised to demand beyond this diocese, or to receive from other dioceses, money for saying masses;*

2 That he has not been given any assignment or authorisation to undertake or conduct any works whatever having as their object the Catholic ritual.*

Carcassonne, 1st February 1911 (3)
Saunière's suspension by his bishop for the selling of masses was repeated by René Descadeillas during the early 1970s, and the reference to *Veillées des Chaumières* is to be found in one of Saunière's own letters to his bishopric during his trial, dated 8th April 1911, reproduced in a book by Jacques

Rivière from 1983 (4), and referred to again by Pierre Jarnac in 1985 (5).

The sources of Saunière's wealth is no big "mystery", and his success can be explained by historical context: he was a monarchist priest who hated the French Republic - the 19th century was crunch-time in this conflict between Church and State, and the Church lost: the French Monarchy was not restored. It would be a mistake to isolate Saunière from other monarchist priests who were doing very much the same thing, and had financial support from anti-Republican congregations in case the State suspended them from their priestly duties or, worse still, confiscated their finances.

It has been Henry Lincoln's refusal to acknowledge the importance behind Saunière's selling of masses which led him into taking the Priory Documents seriously, and continuing into the area of sacred landscape geometry. The result? No titles by Rivière or Jarnac in the bibliographies of his books.

Like most titles published in this country on Rennes-le-Château, the value of Lincoln's book lies in its stunning visual material. The reproduction of the sepia photographs of Béranger Saunière, lent to Henry Lincoln by the late Mme Fons, inhabitant of Rennes-le-Château, portray the stark reality of a humble French priest living in a tiny Languedocian village devoted to his Catholic religion, totally devoid of any esoteric inclinations.

Perhaps, one day, Saunière will gain the recognition of having been the priest he was and the village of Rennes-le-Château will shrug off its unwanted, and quite unnecessary, reputation as being one of the occult centres of the world.

Paul Smith

References

1. The definitive work on the Man in the Iron Mask is John Noone's *The Man behind the Iron Mask* (Alan Sutton 1988).
2. *La Dépêche du Midi*, 13th January 1956
3. *La Semaine Religieuse de Carcassonne*, 3rd February 1911
4. Jacques Rivière *Le Fabuleux Trésor de Rennes-le-Château!* (1983) page 218
5. Pierre Jarnac *Histoire du Trésor de Rennes-le-Château* (1985) page 224

Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas
The Second Messiah
Century Books Ltd 1997 £16.99
ISBN 0 7126 7759 4 hbk

Consisting of just over 270 pages, with 16 pages of appendices, a 3 page bibliography and 15 pages of index, this is the second book on the subject of freemasonry by Messrs Knight and Lomas, the first being *The Hiram Key*.

Normally this kind of publication would have little interest to me except that it purports to cast light on the origins of King Arthur and the on the Holy Grail. I am not going to make any great comment on the rest of the book, only to say that there are too many *ifs* and *maybes* to give me any confidence in its quality of research. Also it is very convenient that a good deal of the theories brought up by the authors are backed by information from a mysterious organisation known as *Rex Deum*. The latter is said to translate as "Kings of God" (though surely the Latin then should be *Reges Deum*, though I am willing to be corrected on this) who are descended from early Christians who escaped Palestine in the second half of the first century of the Common Era.

Their knowledge of the development of the legend of King Arthur is rather shaky, to put it mildly! they describe the book written by Geoffrey of Monmouth as being called *The Matter of Britain* rather than *The History of the Kings of Britain*, and the source of this book is credited to a Walter Map, which even the authors cannot accept. The ancient document Geoffrey claimed was given to him was from Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, not Walter Map. There is plenty of evidence that there was an archdeacon called Walter living at this time and documents are in existence that were signed by both Walter and Geoffrey.

However, we are told by Messrs Knight and Lomas that the real source of the history of King Arthur is more likely to be a story told to Geoffrey by one Payen de Montdidier, the first Grand Master of the Temple in England. This story, the authors claim, came from the *Rex Deum* which follows a similar pattern to that of their version of the conception, birth, life and death of Jesus. One wonders if the authors have ever read Joseph Campbell or Lord Raglan, both of whom show that heroes and heroines are often very similar and may owe their

origins not to historical fact but to something primordial. Another point worth mentioning is that, surely, the first Master of the Temple in England was Hugh d'Argentein and not Payen de Montdidier, though Payen, Master of the Temple in France, was in England during 1138.

The authors go on to say that the earliest reference to the Holy Grail is credited to William of Malmesbury. This is certainly inaccurate since William makes no mention of the Grail, and versions of his work which do tell the story of Joseph of Arimathea (still not mentioning the Grail) are late additions. Knight and Lomas use Graham Phillips' *The Search for the Grail* as one of their sources, and even quote perpetuating Phillips' *Didcot Perceval* rather than the correct *Didot Perceval*. (I wonder if the people of the town in Oxfordshire know anything about their famous *Didcot Perceval*?)

They then say that Geoffrey of Monmouth criticised three scholars - William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and Caradoc of Llancarfan. That he did criticise the first two is correct, and it lead to counter-criticisms from various scholars, though later in the 12th century. Knight and Lomas see the reaction to Geoffrey having some connection with the *Rex Deum* story and an attempt, they claim, was made to bring the information under control by scholars whose patron was Robert of Gloucester. What the authors do not seem to appreciate is that Robert was also Geoffrey of Monmouth's patron. I am sure that Robert had more important things to worry about at this time than the indiscretions of a Templar knight, since England was in the throes of a civil war!

When it comes to the Holy Grail, Knight and Lomas may be on firmer ground since there can be little doubt that links with Flanders and Knights Templar were considerably strong. It was Chretien de Troyes who was responsible for popularising the Holy Grail and it is known that he had moved to Flanders from the court of Henry of Champagne (nephew of the Hugh of Champagne who had become a Templar) at Troyes around 1181 following his patron's death. The Count of Flanders was Philippe d'Alsace, one of the greatest knights of the 12th century, and son of Thierry d'Alsace, who is said to have brought a phial of the Holy Blood of Christ from the Middle East.

(The Blood is still kept in the Cathedral in Brugge.)



We are also told that the above mentioned Payen de Montdidier was a cousin of Thierry, but given no evidence to prove this statement, and that the said knight told stories to his relative. Payen seems to be a rather indiscreet character according to Knight and Lomas! Was there really any link between the Templars and the Grail story? Is it possible that this tale is connected to some heresy the Templars were fostering? In fact, was there any real heresy being committed by the Templars?

The connection between the Grail and the Templars needs further discussion, and space does not allow that kind of depth. Personally, I do not think the Templars has committed any heresy against the Roman Catholic Church at all, and the Inquisition forced words into tortured mouths. There is no real evidence of any heretical practices by the Templars except from hearsay and possibly downright lies. The Templars were not secret followers of Early Christian Gnostic teachings or of James, the brother of Jesus.

To let the cat out of the bag, the Second Messiah was Jacques de Molay, the last Grand Master of the Templars. He was arrested in 1308, tortured and executed by being burnt to death slowly in 1314. The image on the Holy Shroud, according to the authors of this book, is that of de Molay. The reason why he is the second messiah (the first had been James, rather than Jesus, we are told) is because he kept alive a version of history differing from that of the Catholic Church. At times Knight and Lomas write with considerable venom about the Catholics which to me gives the impression that there is more to these two than just writers!

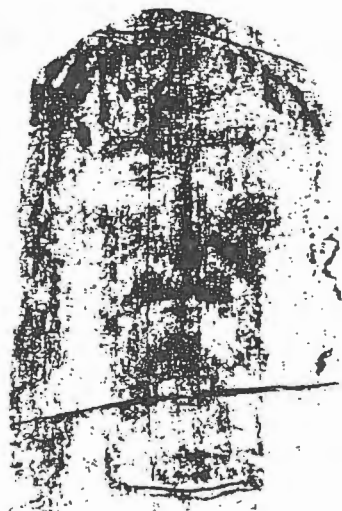
The real de Molay was roasted to death because he had refused to admit to heresy and to deny that he still followed the rules laid down in 1128, put together with the help of Bernard of Clairvaux. Equally, William de la More, the last Master of the Temple in England, refused to admit to heresy and made a long recorded speech which

vindicated the Templars. When King Edward received information from Philippe, King of France, he refused to believe the accusations, and even when ordered by Pope Clement little was done. It took a lot of outside pressure for the authorities in England to do something about the so-called heresy of the Templars, and only after nearly two years of propaganda from France were Templars accused of heretical practices. There is also no evidence that de Molay was at anytime crucified - complete guesswork by the authors of this publication!

If Knight and Lomas' chapter on Arthur and the Grail is anything to go by then the rest of their theories should be brought into doubt! There may have been something heretical about the Holy Grail but that its source was the Templars I greatly doubt. Equally so, the Grail may have had connections with the Templars but there was nothing heretical about them! And that Geoffrey of Monmouth based Arthur on some story belonging to a secret organisation, that seems to have no evidence for existence except a mysterious Frenchman, is without doubt unrealistic. Whether the authors are being conned is another thing, but the origins of the story of King Arthur do not need to be traced to some dubious group who claim to go back to Early Christians. There is plenty to go on from Celtic sources and classical stories to show that Geoffrey's work is not based on tales from a Templar knight.

The authors, in my opinion, are merely replacing one myth with another. Yes, it is possible that James was the true leader of the early Christian church and that Jesus may have been of less importance than normally stated by the later Christians. It is also possible that Christianity is based on a much older heretical group of Jews dating to the beginnings of the Roman occupation of Palestine and that John the Baptist was a leader of that group in the first century. However, the authors hardly prove anything with this publication, and certainly stepped into a minefield when they moved into Arthurian studies. Maybe their research about the Freemasons and Templars will bring some light on to the origins of these organisations, but I get the impression there is a hidden agenda that doesn't at all help those of us who are studying the origins of the Arthur and the Grail!

Charles W Evans-Günther



Tristan Gray Hulse **The Holy Shroud**
Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1997 £1.99
ISBN 0 297 82301 9 pbk 40pp illus

This booklet is part of *Mysteries of the Ancient World*, a new series of accessible and affordable publications. This title deals with the controversy of the Turin Shroud - is it Christ's burial cloth, despite contradictory carbon-dating? or are alternative theories about its origin worth considering?

Profusely illustrated in colour, Tristan's essay is a succinct introduction to the complex world of sindonology. Wisely steering clear of debatable side issues - such as any possible links with Grail romances - he mentions most of the principal modern authors (though not their works) to whom interested beginners should refer.

Chris Lovegrove

Christopher Johnson and Eve Lung
Arthur: the Legend Unveiled
Capall Bann 1995 £9.95
ISBN 1 898307 61 X

Here is another contribution from the publishing company Capall Bann. However, this one is no where near as good as Nigel Pennick's *Dragons of the West*. Basically, this publication is a diatribe about the Great Mother Goddess and how it affected King Arthur. It takes far too much for granted, first

of all, that there actually existed a religion based around a Mother Goddess and, second, that such a belief actually survived into the Early Middle Ages.

We are told that Arthur was, at first, successful because he followed the "Old Religion" and that his failure was due to his acceptance of Christianity. It is terribly hard to make out whether the authors are suggesting that the real Early Medieval warrior is being discussed or the purely legendary King Arthur. If it is the former then it would be fair to say that this book is very unsound, while if it is the latter, there may be something more to it but the theory is still flimsy and old hat! There are ancient tales of the marriage of the hero to Sovereignty of the Land, which the authors link with the Mother Goddess, but these tales don't quite work with King Arthur. They seem also to accept characters like Merlin as being historical, or do they?

I finished this book with mixed feelings. I see the adoption of ancient, long forgotten religions as little different from the Christian belief. This book tries to make out that Christianity deliberately rewrote the story of Arthur and the Grail, yet the earliest version of the Grail story came onto the scene already Christian in tone and content. Making Arthur and the Grail into something pre-Christian is back-tracking! Were the Celts followers of the Mother Goddess? In fact, was there ever a real Mother Goddess religion?

It cannot be doubted that the later legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table are based loosely on ancient legends, some Celtic, some Classical. The legendary King Arthur is, no doubt, just another of the primordial heroes gathering around him many different tales. The warrior Arthur, who fought the Anglo-Saxons, was from the earliest accounts a Christian and it is likely that, at this period, Christianity was the dominant belief system in Britain. The legendary King Arthur acted like a magnet and many myths gravitated into orbit around him.

Finally, even if one finds the theories acceptable (and I don't) you will be put off by some very bad illustrations (by Karen Saul) that bear no connection to our Celtic past but more to Neo-Paganism. Not only is the artwork so poorly drawn but in one illustration a paper clip has been reproduced as well!

Charles W Evans-Günther

Book News

◆ Recent titles on Celtic themes published by Blandford and due to be reviewed next issue include:

Celtic Women in Legend, Myth and History by Lyn Webster Wilde, illustrated by Courtney Davis and Craig Chapman

Celtic Pilgrimages: Sites, Seasons and Saints - an inspiration for spiritual journeys by Elaine Gill and David Everett, illustrated by Courtney Davis

Classic Celtic Fairy Tales selected and edited by John Matthews, illustrated by Ian Daniels

◆ Laurence Main's *Camlan: the True Story?* is a sequel to the same author's *Arthur's Camlan* and promises to shed new light on Arthur's final battle. Both are published by Meirion Publications, Dinas Mawddwy, Machynlleth SY20 9LS and are available separately or together for the bargain price of £5.00 including p&p. Review next issue.

The National Trust has published a number of booklets on walks in and around Trust sites, including Glastonbury Tor (50p), Stonehenge Down (£1.00) and their latest, Avebury (£2.00). Full details from Jo Mumford, Wessex Regional Office, Eastleigh Court, Bishopstrow, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9HW. Cheques payable to *The National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd*. Include 50p for p&p.

◆ Oakmagic Publications publish a wide range of booklets on Cornish folklore and legend, both of reprints of long unavailable works and of original research by Kelvin I Jones. Recent titles include J C Walters' *Arthur's Lost Land* from 1906 (£4.50) and two essays by Henry Jenner published as *King Arthur in Cornwall* (£2.75). Again, reviews next issue. Catalogues available (include an A5 SAE) from Oakmagic Publications, K & D

Jones, 2 South Place Folly, Penzance TR18 4JB.

Cornish earth mysteries in general are explored by booklets published by journal *Meyn Mamvro* (51 Carn Bosavem, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX. These include guides to the Scilly Isles (£2.95), mid-Cornwall and the Lizard (£3.30) and West Penwith (£3.30). All prices include p&p.

◆ Member Cherith Baldry has a story, "Hunt of the Hart Royal", in a new collection of twenty-one stories by various authors (it includes a reprint of Arthur Machen's "The Great Return") entitled *The Chronicles of the Holy Grail*. Edited by Mike Ashley, this 440-page paperback is produced by Robinson Publishing Ltd, 7 Kensington Church Court, London W8 4SP (ISBN 1 85487 433 0) at £5.99 and comes recommended by several members as very good value. Review next issue.

Other fiction with an Arthurian slant is represented by Jay Russell's *Burning Bright*, also from Robinson Publishing at £5.99 (paperback). "From a secret voodoo temple in the slums of Liverpool, to arcane Druidic rituals in Arthurian Cornwall, the hero races against time and fate to save the soul of a nation" from a neo-Nazi cult with mystical powers!

◆ New editions of standard reference books on history and archaeology of interest to Dark Age students deserve mention (both published by Routledge):

An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms by C J Arnold was first published in 1988 and now updated for 1997

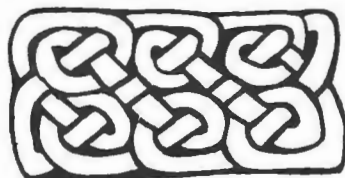
Roman Britain: a Sourcebook by S Ireland also includes new material findings to go with Latin text translations, some relevant to fifth century Britain (1996)

Oxbow Books, Park End Place, Oxford OX1 1HN, specialise in both self-published and other imprints' history and archaeology titles, some at reduced prices. Recently they have offered Stephen Pollington's *The English Warrior from the earliest times to 1066* (Anglo-Saxon Books 1996) at £14.95, Ann Hyland's *The Medieval Warhouse* (Sutton 1994) down from £19.99 to £7.95, and Charles Thomas' *Tintagel* (English Heritage 1993) down from £15.99 to £9.95. Online catalogue available at <http://www.oxbowbooks.com>.

STAR are offering *Hillforts of Southern Scotland* - reports on the excavations of five hillforts including Eildon Hill North - for £7.50 plus £2.00 p&p (reduced from £15.00). The Eildon Hills have their own sleeping king legend - did they find him? Find out from STAR, The Schoolhouse, 4 Lochend Rd, Edinburgh EH6 8BR.

If your taste includes authors writing in Latin in Late Antiquity (eg Boethius, Sidonius, Bede) then the **Loeb Classical Library**, with its parallel text and translations, is still hard to beat, with all hardback volumes at £11.95 (\$18.95) each. A complete catalogue is available from Harvard University Press, Fitzroy House, 11 Chenies Street, London WC1E 7ET.

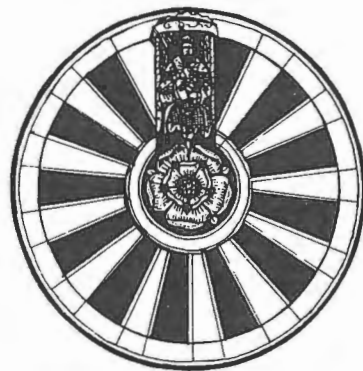
Finally, if you are looking for that particular Arthurian title, newly published or not, try **Excalibur Books** at Rivenoak, 1 Hillside Gardens, Bangor, Co Down BT19 6SJ, Northern Ireland. Recent titles include Laurence Main's *In the footsteps of King Arthur and Camlan*, Goodrich's *The Holy Grail*, P F J Turner's *The Real King Arthur* and Alby Stone's *A Splendid Pillar* (ideas on the grain). Tel 01247 458579.



Pendragon AGM 1998

Members might like advance notice of the Pendragon Society get-together planned for next year. **Glastonbury** will be the venue, with visits to the abbey, slide shows and an open evening after the AGM provisionally arranged. Suggested dates are the weekends of **17th May** or the **24th May**. If you have strong feelings about either contact **John Ford** as soon as possible - the address is on the contents page. Further details in the spring issue.

The Board



FOR WHEN YOU'RE BORED?

The latest *Past Times* catalogue has a board game called **The Celtic Game**, price £6.99, "full of thrust and parry, dating back to at least the 9th century." Called *Tawlbwrdd* in Welsh ("throw-board") "it involves two players competing to capture or defend the king." The board is ten and a half inches square with 37 playing pieces. Other items include Nigel Pennick's *Celtic Saints*, Mick Sharp's *Holy Places of Celtic Britain*, CDs of Celtic Christmas and Celtic Harp music, Celtic mini-cards and initial mugs. Order freephone 0800 106666.

Monitor: Fred Stedman-Jones

The **Bits and Pieces** catalogue includes Ancient Board Games (devised by the British Museum). The pack, costing £12.95, contains Hounds and Jackals, Mehen, Senet, and The Royal Game of Ur. PO Box 3, Diss, Norfolk IP22 3HH, or order from 01379 649 629.

Also, in the same catalogue, a rarity: the Court Clock of King Arthur! "This medieval cardboard clock will transport you back to the days of Camelot and the Knights of the Round Table, while keeping present time with remarkable precision. Enter a mythical dimension as you read the accompanying storybook featuring Arthurian legends and rekindle the timeless clockmaker's art." Thrill to the copywriter's puff, and all at £29.95.

Monitor: Ade Dimmick

ARTHUR AND THE WITCH OF WOKEY

The *Witch's Magic Cavern* is billed as **Wookey Hole's** spellbinding new magic and light show attraction, and opened in Spring 1997. "Set in the magnificent Cathedral cave, the new show is a spectacular climax to the cave tour," the blurb bumbles. "Hear the Witch telling the story of the cave's many inhabitants and visitors through the ages. The Ancient Britons, Celts, Romans. She saw them all come and go. Then there was King Arthur who tried to kill the Witch..."

Sadly, Arthur seems to be modelled on Alfred the Great's statue in Winchester!

If you want further information on the show, access www.wookekey.co.uk. For other details phone 01749 672243 or e-mail admin@wookekeyhole.demon.co.uk.



SENSE OF PLACE

"The Writer and the Sense of Place" is the title of three Saturday study days aiming to combine the academic and the creative at **Keele University**. The third is entitled *The Mythic* and includes a morning visit to Ludchurch in the Staffordshire Moorlands on 25th April 1998.

Ludchurch "provides a genius loci rich in history and myth," we are told. Steve Sneyd reminds us that it is one of the suggested locations for the Green Chapel in *Gawain and the Green Knight*.

The fee is £16.00 (reduced fees available) and prior application and enrolment is two weeks before. Contact Helen McGarry, Centre for Continuing and Professional Education, Keele University, Keele, Staffs ST5 5BG. Tel 01782 583436.

Monitor: Steve Sneyd

Courses also run at the **Porth y Waen Study Centre** at The Paddocks, Porth y Waen, Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 8LX. It offers a range of non-residential short holiday archaeology breaks, some practical, some on topics as diverse as hillforts, pagan and early Christian Celts and Anglo-Saxons, and, of course, Offa's Dyke. Groups can also arrange special courses to suit their needs. Contact Margaret Worthington at the Centre for further details.

TRANSATLANTIC CELTS

If you are interested in Celtic enclaves in what became England, Steve Sneyd's "Last East of the Mountains" is an outline of the story of the lost British kingdom of **Elmet** centred on modern Yorkshire. Part Two of this enlightening article appeared in *The Celtic Chronicles*, issue 28 (September-October 1997). Contact Kevin O'Callaghan, 5100 NW 137th Avenue, Portland OR, 97229 or e-mail: kevindoc@teleport.com.

Arthurian enthusiasts are targeted by another American publication, *British Heritage*. The March 1998 issue will focus on **The Age of Arthur**, featuring a range of articles, including one by Geoffrey Ashe, on history, key sites, reviews of Arthurian "classics" and so on. Their on-line story, *On the Trail of Arthur*, is at www.thehistorynet.com/britishheritage/. Call 413-622-2610 from outside the US or 800-358-6327 (US or Canada) for a single copy, or write to 6405 Flank Drive, Harrisburg PA, 17112-2753 USA.

HISTORY MYSTERY

In September 1996 BBC2 had broadcast an edition of *Timewatch* entitled *The History of a Mystery*, which investigated a theory that the tomb of Jesus Christ was located near Rennes-le-Château in France.

Henry Lincoln, who had made films on Rennes for the BBC *Chronicle* series in the 70s, had complained to the Broadcasting Standards Commission that the programme was unfair and unjust to him.

In its June 1997 findings, the Commission said it was not its task to solve the mystery of Rennes. Statements in the programme which were "parodies of the truth" of Lincoln's position were not found, and the programme did not suggest he was a fantasist.

The complaint was not upheld. (See also *Book Reviews*.)

Monitor: Paul Smith

Finally, that address for the **National Well Index**: c/o Richard A Lee, Spey Cottage, Doctors Commons Road, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 3DW.

PenDragon

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

♦ From Charles Evans-Gunther, Flint:

I enjoyed working on the three journals and became obsessed by theories about the Holy Grail. I am still convinced that too much is read into this mystery, but a study of Chrétien de Troyes' sources is really necessary!

I have come up with a theory which I am unable to follow up. I believe there is a link between the hermit founder of Fontevraud Abbey, Courthly Love, the Troubadours and the family of Anjou. At least two writers - Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gerbert - pointed out that the family of Perceval (Parzival) was of Anjou. This family played a big part in the history of Europe and when Matilda married Geoffrey Plantagenet the family became linked with England.

Their son, Henry II, married Eleanor of Aquitaine who had previously been married to Louis, King of France. Eleanor's first two children were Marie and Alice, and the former was wife of Chrétien de Troyes' patron, Henry of Champagne. Also, Eleanor was steeped in the poetry and culture of the troubadours, becoming very influential in the Courts of Love. Amongst her compatriots in these courts were her daughters and Isabel of Vermandois, Eleanor's niece and wife of Philip d'Alsace, Count of Flanders, who was patron to Chrétien de Troyes when he wrote his unfinished work on the grail.

The founder of Fontevraud Abbey was Robert d'Arbrissel, a hermit born in Arbrissel, near Le Guerache de Bretagne, Brittany. He first became a hermit in the Forest of Craon, and then later established a mixed monastery near Fontevraud at a spring, the Fons Ebraldi, in 1099. It grew into one of the most famous abbeys in Europe. The community, interestingly, was ruled by an abbess rather than an abbot. It is equally fascinating that the first abbess, appointed in 1114 (three years before Robert d'Arbrissel

died) was Petronilla de Craon, who was widowed at twenty and renowned as a beauty and wit. P Bezzola, in *Romania* 66 (1940), suggested that Guilhem IX of Toulouse promulgated courtly love as a response to the spiritual seduction of Robert d'Arbrissel.

The Abbey was given considerable support by the Angevins, and many famous women retired to Fontevraud. Eleanor of Aquitaine is buried there! Could this Order of Fontevraud have had an effect on writers like Chrétien? Was the mysterious book given to Chrétien by Philip of Flanders anything to do with Robert d'Arbrissel or Fontevraud? That women played an important role in the story of the grail, courtly love, the culture of the troubadours and the monastic order established by Robert d'Arbrissel can not be doubted, but are they linked?

It is impossible to go into any greater detail in a letter, but I am sure that there is a member who would be able to continue down this road of investigation. It would be useful to be able to read French and to have access to a good reference library. I would be happy to discuss this with anyone interested. With this theory I may well be barking up the wrong tree, but I am going to bark anyway!

♦ Any takers? Charles' address is 9 Earls Lea, Flint, CH6 5BT, if you wish to write directly. While he is in Japan letters will be forwarded to him.

RIPPING YARNS

♦ From Elizabeth Oakland, Stroud, Glos:

I am writing to thank you for reviewing my leaflet, *Where you see a Black Horse*, sometime last year (XXVI/2). I am now organised enough to have subscribed to *Pendragon* and wish that I had got round to it sooner. Yours is a welcome forum for the subject of Arthuriana and I am delighted you are so catholic in your views - long may the Chronicle continue!

I would like to respond to a few points made in the Summer 1997 issue. Firstly, Ian Forrester-Roberts undoubtedly has a point about Arthwys son of Mouricius being the Pendragon, but I would take issue with him about Saint Dyfrig crowning him as only by allowing a thirty year margin of error for date on both sides does it become plausible that Dubricius could have crowned a 15 year-old

Arthwys, at least if one believes the chart reproduced. It is my belief that it was the previous Pendragon, the 'Cornish usurper Arthur,' whom Dubricius crowned at the not-so-elusive 'Caer Vudei' (Woodchester). This argument is outlined in my leaflet mentioned above, and I hope to produce more evidence in the fullness of time.

I was pleased to read Gwilym ap Iorwerth's letter, particularly his suggestion that someone write a novel using the 'real language'. I have been working on just such a novel for the past twenty years (haven't we all?!). Provisionally entitled *Lyfr Glas Guined* ('The Green Book of Guined'), there are two volumes at the planning stage: *The Black Horsemen* (partly in tribute to S G Wildman) set in the time of the 'usurper Cornish Arthur', and *Moon of Rhiannon*, set in the time of the South Wales Arthwys/Arthur. I hope to incorporate as much as possible that I have learned over the years, both historical and mystical, whilst still writing a ripping yarn! Gwilym, hwyll! Publishers... agents... ??? Thank you, Pendragon, for existing. Vivat!

♦ Thank you, in turn, for such a glowing tribute, Elisabeth! "Welcome forum ... catholic views..." All this, even though the review wasn't entirely favourable, is generous indeed. Elisabeth's booklet (under the by-name of Lisa Jarvis) is available at 50p from Hexapen Wordsmiths Publications, 2 Spring Cottages, The Vatch, Stroud, Gloucester GL6 7JY, and we anticipate reviewing King Arthur through the Kaleidoscope when that is issued, too!

ABOUT FACE

♦ From John L Hughes, Battersea, London:

I shall not be renewing my membership subscription as I find the close-set microtype of the magazine is becoming difficult for me to read.

♦ We are sorry the format has caused you problems. The Arial font currently used does generally have a no-frills clarity to it, and the reproduction when reduced from A5 to A5 compares favourably to many newspapers and pro magazines. Any larger and you would sadly get less text for your money!

RETURN OF TALKING HEAD?

♦ From Alison Skinner, Leicester:

I was happy with the last magazine [XXVI/2] but missed the *Talking Heads* feature. Does Fred receive a lot of information which could be turned into this feature if someone else did the work? I would be happy to help in this respect as I edit a magazine in my work.

♦ Thank you very much for the offer! Fred tells me he did not get much help at all, an indication I think of the amount of research he did to produce the feature. In the meantime *Old News* and *The Board* are intended as pale imitations of Fred's *Talking Head* and Charles' *Quest* and *What the Papers Say*. All snippets received in future from readers will be credited when used. When the trickle becomes a flood we would be very happy, Alison, to call on your services!



ROMANCING THE TOME

♦ From Rosemary Longworth, Simpson, Illinois:

I've been writing up a storm this year. Have been trying my hand at writing long romances (100,000 words or longer) and so far have written two. Am in the process of writing a trilogy now. The first book was a paperback that I had published in 1970, and I am working on a sequel to it and then have a third book to write. I totally rewrote #1, and am presently working on volume two. I'm going to try to sell all three as a very large romance. Sorry, but my expertise isn't really in Arthurian matters, although I have always wanted to do a huge romance about Morgan. When I sell a romance or two, then maybe I can do my Morgan book. God knows they don't seem to ever lose interest in the "matter of Britain," do they?

It's really difficult to sell books over here, so many women are now cranking out romantic fiction - many of them not so good,

but their names are well known and popular. And they have agents. Some companies won't even look at unagented material. I feel I have an uphill battle in getting someone to look at my work.

◆ *Good luck with your romances - and don't leave that Morgan book too long!*

GOOD NEWS!

◆ *From Cherith Baldry, Reigate, Surrey:*

I wanted to give you some good news. I don't know if you have seen the new Mike Ashley collection yet, *The Chronicles of the Holy Grail*, but if so you will see that I have a story in it. You've been so encouraging about my writing in the past that I know you'll be pleased. I hope you like the story - I'm sure you'll read it sooner or later - and I'd be delighted to know what you think. It's about Kay, of course, and it knits together the Grail with the story about the white stag, when the knight who kills it gets to kiss the most beautiful lady in the court.

◆ *Extracted from a letter to Fred. Mike Ashley's collection is available now - see Book News for further details.*

INDEXING THE WELLS

◆ *From Richard A Lee, Berkhamsted, Herts:*

And then Galahad put him in the earth as a king ought to be, and so departed and so came into a perilous forest where he found the well the which boileth with great waves, as the tale telleth to-fore. And as soon as Galahad set his hand thereto it ceased, so that it brent no more, and the heat departed. For that it brent it was a sign of lechery, the which was that time much used. But the heat might not abide his pure virginity. And this was taken in the country as a miracle. And so ever after was it called Galahad's Well.

One of many fantastic Arthurian tales (17:18 *Morte D'Arthur*), but what is the truth behind it, and where does it fit into the British folkloric world? I don't know, but there is a new project, that of the National Well Index, that might help.

The Index is a non profit making cataloguing program that is trying to record all of Britain's remaining Holy Wells, their associated folklore, history, samples of the water, customs and so on. This is a bit of a logistical nightmare in that the numbers of wells far outstrips the numbers of people

who are researching such sites. Therefore we need help.

The Index requires researchers, interested individuals and people who have knowledge on such sites to help by filling in index-issued surveys of individual wells that can be contributed to the project, which it is hoped will be a powerful weapon in the fight to preserve such sites, as well as being a useful tool for researchers in the field.

◆ *Further details from the writer from the address in The Board.*

STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

◆ *From Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland:*

I was fascinated by several aspects of Phillip Clapham's letter in *Pendragon* XXVI/3 (Summer 1997, 33-4), but I wish to comment primarily here on the plough and furrow concepts, and the allied idea of fertility. These have very ancient links with the area of sky Boötes/Arcturus lies in, dating back to at least c 2000-3000 BCE with a reasonable degree of certainty, and very probably much further than that, in the texts and artwork of ancient Mesopotamia.

In the ancient Mesopotamian constellations, Spica, the brightest star in the modern constellation Virgo the Virgin, and probably part of Virgo too, has been identified as AB.SIN, "the furrow". Spica lies almost due south of (effectively "below" as viewed from the northern hemisphere) Arcturus in Boötes. "Furrow" was also a Mesopotamian metaphor for "vulva", as was the meaning of the name we still use, Spica (= "the Ear of Wheat"). "Ploughing a furrow" was metaphorically used the physical act of intercourse in Mesopotamia, with the plough being used in the same sense to represent the male member. Arcturus has been almost always depicted or described as lying between the legs of Boötes, not at the waist or knee as a few have occasionally suggested.

The entire half of the Mesopotamian sky centred on Arcturus seems to have been closely associated with fertility, fertility deities (Virgo seems to have represented the love/lust and war goddess Inanna, later Istar, also identified with the planet Venus as evening and morning star, for instance), and their allied symbols and creatures. Inanna's husband in Sumerian myths was often Dumuzi, or another variant on the dying and

rising god associated with fertility and vegetation. Dumuzi is represented in the stars by HUN.GÁ, "the Hired Man".

The Hired Man, however, is not Arcturus or Boötes. Arcturus has been identified as ŠU.PA, who represents the wind god Enlil, mythologically father of the various fertility deities in this region of sky, by his wife, the wind and variant mother goddess, Ninlil. Dumuzi's associated constellation is thought to be the modern Aries the Ram, who stands by the Mesopotamian Plough constellation APIN, identified as modern Triangulum. Aries and Triangulum lie almost exactly opposite Arcturus and Boötes in the sky north of the celestial equator, and so are linked in that one pair cannot be seen when the other can (in an approximate sense). This could well be one reason why we now see a herdsman/ploughman and his plough in the "Arcturian" region. The British choice of a Plough as the seven brightest stars in Ursa Major is pretty well unique in modern sky lore, however; a chariot or wagon is a far more popular object here.

Naturally, the matter is not quite so simple as the picture I have painted here, but these are the overall effects. As Mesopotamian ideas seem to lie behind virtually all the Western myths at least (although whether because the ideas came from, or before, the Mesopotamians is not known), the links to the Arthurian myths, though unprovable directly, are certainly very heavily implied. The Arthurian cycle contains frequent fertility symbolism, whether overt or not, and Arthur is a dying and rising god if ever there was one, as "the Once and Future King".

Certainly, it is unsurprising to find the interpretations suggested by Phillip Clapham associated with this region of sky, and we could go on to cover oxen, Orion etc, in the same way too, if space allowed!

The above is largely based on my own interpretations of the appropriate mythology, but the constellation identifications are from Hunger & Pingree (1989) *MUL.APIN - An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform*, Archiv für Orientforschung 24, Verlag Ferdinand Berger & Söhne Gesellschaft MbH, Horn, Austria. To rapidly find out the basics of the various Mesopotamian deities, as modernly known, see Black & Green (1992) *Gods,*

Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: an Illustrated Dictionary, British Museum Press, London.

◆ *Alastair McBeath tells us he has been Hon Vice-President of the International Meteor Organisation since 1989 and, since 1983, Hon Director to the Meteor Section of the Society for Popular Astronomy - so he should know what he is talking about! He writes on matters astronomical for various English-language periodicals, and has an article (jointly with a Romanian colleague) in press with Dragon Chronicle on possible links between Romanian and British myths and legends concerning dragons, Arthur, Trajan and the Romanian King Decebal.*

PET PROJECTS

◆ *From Sid Birchby, Didsbury, Manchester:*

What a fine *Pendragon* you have produced! The latest one, Summer 1997, arrived last morning, and it's a cracker!

The editorial, on "Arthurian Topography", could be extended indefinitely, and one would have liked to hear more about some of the less well-tilled pastures such as Edinburgh [Arthur's Seat] and Alderley Edge, where a big dig is due to begin in this autumn.

My own pet project is to find out more about the scene of Gawain's journey from Camelot in search of the Green Knight, a tale recounted in all its 14th century obscurity long overdue for refurbishing.

◆ *It's good to hear from Sid Birchby, sometime frequent contributor to these pages and indefatigable researcher into Arthuriana, as well as a former distinguished co-ordinator of The Newsletter, which investigated anomalies of various kinds, such as Hummadruz. Thank you for your sincere wishes for Pendragon's future, and hope it lives up to your expectations!*

◆ *From Ward Rutherford, Brighton:*

Thanks for your kind remarks about two books. I'm longing to do more in these areas, but for the moment *Ancient* is taking up most of my time.

I'm sure you must act like a magnet to Arthurian and divers other varieties of nutters. I also suffer from their attentions, but perhaps the only thing one can say is that at least in most ways they're harmless.

Your involvement with the Cadbury Hill dig must mean you know Geoffrey

Ashe? And were you, like him, involved in a recent American television production? A girl researcher who rang me from New York seemed quite shocked when I told her that the gentleman who calls himself 'Arthur Pen-dragon' may not be as genuine a scion of that stock as he claims and obviously believes.

◆ Extracted from a letter to Fred. Ward Rutherford is author of *Celtic Mythology* (1987) and *Celtic Lore* (1993), both by Aquarian Press, and *The Druids* (1978). See also *Exchange Magazines*.



SEEING DOUBLE

◆ From Mary Caine, Kingston, Surrey:

Very interesting to read of the Stedman-Jones connection with the Nanteos Cup! Being Cornish myself I attribute my fascination for Arthur to genetics. If not reincarnated genetics!

As you left out any representation of the Messianic figure in Gemini, important in my article, is it possible to include this one in your next production? If possible next to the Maltwood Gemini Babe that *did* appear. It was my fault it got left out, for I believe I gave you an air-photo, which I suppose you couldn't reproduce. The next article to mine, "Arthur in the Stars", was a very happy juxtaposition.

◆ Mary's article on the Glastonbury Zodiac was two issues back. Reproduced below is her version of the Gemini figure: "His bowed head on Dundon must be remembered by the odd name of Lollover Hill, his body: here lynchets model his rib-cage, Celtic fields his ribs, the ramparts of Dundon's British camp emphasises his profile."



MINSTREL, MYSTERY AND MAGIC

◆ From Ray Turley, Caerleon:

The journey matters, not the arrival. Any search for Camelot, for the history and legend are so inexorably interwoven, so steeped in mystery and magic, that to arrive would be to miss the point entirely - which is the joy of the journey.

For me Camelot is Caerleon. Where else could it be, when this is where I live, but if you find yourself on a conducted tour, I have failed to give you poetry. If, on the other hand, you find a little magic as you turn these pages in your search for Camelot, then the magic will be yours much more than it is mine.

◆ There are twenty-two poems in Ray Turley's collection entitled *In Search of Camelot*, but, Fred notes, only two are actually 'Arthurian'. The poems are available (price £3.99 plus postage) from Alec Hinch at Ffwrm - 'Awen Celtic Spirit' - or ring Ray on Caerleon (01633) 422877. The title poem appears elsewhere in this issue.

Old News



CADBURY: CAMELOT?

The famous dig at South Cadbury in the sixties revealed a major re-occupation of the hillfort in the so-called Arthurian period, but many have balked at its identification with Camelot, first reported by John Leland in the 16th century.

But Professor Harvey, an expert on Hereford Cathedral's famous *Mappa Mundi* dares to suggest otherwise.

"In south-west England, Glastonbury and South Cadbury, supposed site of Camelot, are a tribute to fashionable interest in the legends of King Arthur," he writes in a new publication when identifying placenames on the map.

Cadbury "is surely the identity of *Cadan*", neither a seriously misplaced Caen nor a seriously miscopied Salisbury. Though its identification with Camelot is first recorded in the mid-sixteenth century," he continues, "it was probably a long-standing tradition."

The map is dated to the late 13th century.

* P D A Harvey *Mappa Mundi: the Hereford World Map* British Library 1996

CAN'T SEE THE WOOD FOR THE SAXON?

The post-Roman Dark Ages may be a fertile field for research in pollen analysis, it was suggested at a Science in Archaeology conference held in London in February 1997.

Pollen sequences for the first millenium show patchy woodland regeneration in the north-east, reported Martin Bell (not the Martin Bell, presumably) of Lampeter. But for Essex and East Anglia in the 5th and 6th centuries there was no regrowth at all. What is the significance of this?

* *Current Archaeology* 152 (April 1997) 291

SAXON CHIEFTAIN

A seventh-century warrior burial has been discovered by a Roman road at Wollaston, near Wellingborough in Northamptonshire. The body was accompanied by sword, hanging bowl and boar-crested helmet.

Hanging bowls are usually dated from 550 to 650. The sword, with horn grip and guard, was probably originally worn from a shoulder strap. It was made by pattern welding, a sign of a quality weapon.

The helmet is only the fourth such helmet to be found in this country (the others being Sutton Hoo, Coppergate in York, and Benty Grange in Derbyshire), and is only the second helmet known to sport a boar's crest.

* *Current Archaeology* 154 (September 1997) 391ff



THROWING IN THE TROWEL?

Nearly a quarter of a century later, the dig inaugurated by the Pendragon Society has culminated in publication in the pages of a prestigious national journal.

As mentioned from time to time in these pages, the Llanelen Research Committee has been preparing the final report on the excavations of, among other things, a Dark Age church in the Gower peninsula in Wales.

The dig began in 1973, and publication was finally achieved in August 1997. An abridged version is in preparation for general Pendragon readership. Is this the end of the line? Have we thrown in the trowel? Oddly, no! There are still many unanswered questions, and research (plus the occasional trenching) goes on. No peace for the diggers!

* A Schlesinger and C Walls, with J Kisson, C Lovegrove, K Pollard and N Wright (1996) *An early church and medieval farmstead site: excavations at Llanelen, Gower* Archaeological Journal 153, 104-147

Exchange Journals

ANCIENT The bimonthly review of antiquity, devoted to the entire Ancient World from Sumer to pre-Columbian America. *Editor* Ward Rutherford, 76 Stanford Avenue, Brighton BN1 6FE. *Sample* £1.80 *Year's sub* (6 issues) £11 **A4 ANIMALS & MEN** The journal of the Centre for Fortean Zoology, takes a lively up-to-date look at Cryptozoology and Zoomythology. *Editor* Jonathan Downes, 15 Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter EX4 2NA. *Sample* £1.75 **AT THE EDGE** Successor to *Mercian Mysteries*, explores new interpretations of past and place: archaeology, folklore and mythology. *Editor* Bob Trubshaw, 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough LE12 6UJ. *Sample* £2.50 *Subs* (4 issues) £9 **A4 CAERDROIA** Mazes and labyrinths. *Editors* Jeff and Deb Saward, 53 Thundersley Grove, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB. Yearly £6, write for details with SAE or phone 0126 751915 **THE CAULDRON** Intelligent journal of the old religion, wicca, folklore and earth mysteries. *Sample* £2.00, £8.00 for four *Cheques* M A Howard, Caemorgan Cottage, Caemorgan Road, Cardigan, Dyfed SA43 1QU **Don't put The Cauldron** on the envelope **A4 CELTIC CONNECTIONS** All aspects of Celtic culture, especially the arts and crafts. *Editor* David James, Sycamore Cottage, Waddon nr Portesham, Weymouth DT3 4ER. *Quarterly subs* £7.00 *Sample* £1.75, add 60p overseas *Cheques* 'David James' **A5 DALRIADA** All aspects of Insular Celtic culture, traditions and beliefs, ancient and modern. Also a Celtic Heritage Society and extensive database archive. *Sample* £2.25, four issues £10.00 from Clan Dalriada, Dun-na-Beatha, 2 Brathwic Place, Brodick, Isle of Arran, Scotland KA27 8BN **A5 THE DRAGON CHRONICLE** Dragon-related and dragon-inspired myth, magick, paganism, astrology, folklore and fantasy. *Sample* £2/\$5 *Annual sub* £7/\$15 for four issues *Cheques* 'Dragon's Head Press' PO Box 3369, London SW6 6JN **A4**

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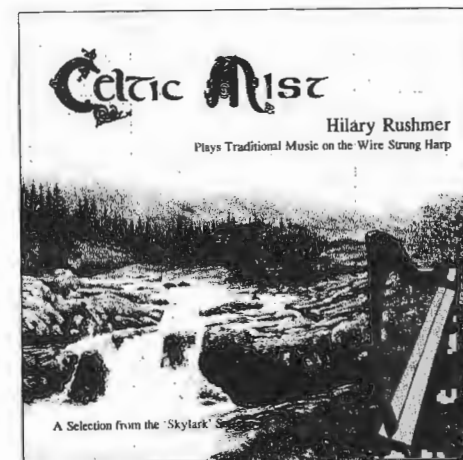
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