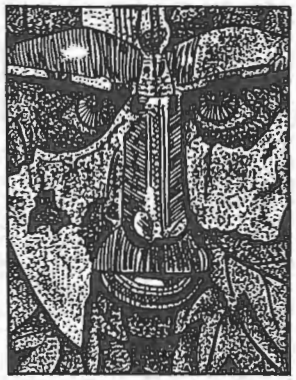
pendragon

EDITORIAL



This issue's theme is **Avatars of Arthur**, inspired by a felicitous phrase in Prof Russell's article. (*Morgan le Fay* also seems to pop up as a secondary theme!) Strictly speaking, *avatars* are of course re-incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu, or of the Buddha. Here the term is taken to mean manifestations of whatever is considered the essence of Arthur, so we have explorations of archetypes, proto-Arthurs, Arthur-types and so on.
As always, discussion seems to me to be vigorous and of high quality, and your letters reflect your often candid appreciation of recent contributions. And Ian Forrester Roberts wins this year's **Eddie Tooke Prize** for a contribution that succeeds in being both lateral-thinking and thought-provoking - even controversial!

Next issue seems to be resolving itself into a literary edition, provisionally entitled **The Printed Matter of Britain** (sorry! that's the best I can do at the moment). I would like future numbers to focus on **Dark Age Saints** and **The Wise Fool**, based on contributions in hand or promised, but what will actually emerge is anyone's guess! As it is, we have at the moment an embarrassment of riches, and some items planned for this edition have unfortunately had to be held over. Apologies to those anticipating being in print this time!

Thank you for your complimentary responses to the last issue on **Relics** - I'm glad it on the whole lived up to your expectations. On my part, I forgot last issue when mentioning the thankless tasks of secretary and treasurer to acknowledge Marilyn Stedman-Jones' often unsung efforts in these areas, and hereby rectify that!

We now look forward to the Pendragon get-together in May, the details of which appear elsewhere in this issue. Please contact Fred Stedman-Jones if you wish to raise any matter at the AGM. This may also be an appropriate place to mention that **1999** will be the fortieth anniversary of Pendragoning, and your committee will be seeking ways to celebrate the occasion.

Pendragon subscriptions An *X* in the box at the top right hand corner of this page [X] indicates that your subscription is now due
Advertisement rates £24 *per* page and *pro rata*, minimum quarter-page
Reduced rates for Society members £12 *per* page and *pro rata*
These rates are for camera-ready copy at A4 scale for reduction to A5 format
Repeat adverts Rates negotiable

PENDRAGON

Journal of the Pendragon Society established 1959
ISSN 0143-8379 Vol XXVII No 1 Spring 1998
Theme this issue **Avatars of Arthur**

CONTENTS

Membership and Enquiries John and Linda Ford
e-mail johnford@mcmail.com 41 Ridge Street, Watford, Herts WD2 5BL
Chair and archives Fred Stedman-Jones, Smithy House,
Newton-by-Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX
Editorial Chris Lovegrove, 125 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5QG

Annual subscription £6.00 for three issues UK, sample £2.00
Cheques should be made payable to "Pendragon"
and sent to the Membership Secretary. Enquire for rates abroad
All letters answered if accompanied by an SAE or IRC

Acknowledgements *Picture credits* Simon Rouse *cover, 24, 42*
Charles Evans-Gunther *22, 27* Forrester Roberts *17*
Picture research Forrester Roberts *15, 16, 17*
Other research and original illustrations Editor

Data Protection Act 1984 Members' names, addresses and telephone numbers, where known, are stored in a retrieval system for Pendragon purposes only
If you object we will remove your entry

Henry Kuttner and Morgan le Fay

W M S Russell

In 1914, a certain Clement Symons enlisted in the army. Being an intelligent young man, and in love, he found he was 'in deadly fear of being killed' (1). His mother's brother, Alfred Edward Housman, sent him a poem to give him courage. According to the poet's brother Laurence, this poem describes 'a man in fear of death who conquers his fear'. Clement told his mother the poem had helped him conquer his own fears, and no doubt it made his life less painful during the months before he was killed at the front.

The poem Housman sent his nephew is about a demonic being called the Queen of air and darkness. With her magic failing, her sinister castle in ruins, and 'her limbecks dried of poisons', she is at the mercy of the young hero who has come to kill her. She screams at him: 'to-morrow you shall die'. He answers: 'I think 'tis truth you say, And I shall die to-morrow; But you will die to-day' (2).

This marvellous poem inspired at least two other works of literature. In 1949, Louis MacNeice wrote a radio play, broadcast the same year, called *The Queen of Air and Darkness*. (3) In 1942, Henry Kuttner published a novella called *Wet Magic*, the subject of my article, bringing the story into the Arthurian tradition by identifying the young hero with a kind of avatar of Arthur, and the Queen with Morgan le Fay (4).

A E Housman

I have long thought this the finest of Housman's poems, so I was delighted to find that in 1952, after reading the radio play, T S Eliot wrote to MacNeice: 'I am most interested ... that you should have made this development of Housman's theme, because this has always seemed to me one of his best, if not actually the very best, of all his poems' (3).

That Housman's best poem is about a young man killing a woman may be connected with his homosexuality. He wrote moving poems, disguised or unpublished, about the persecution of homosexuals, in part provoked by the abominable treatment of Wilde. Some of his poems, which Robert Ross recited to Wilde in prison, may have helped to inspire another great poem about a young man killing a woman and then dying himself, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1). Housman's second-finest poem ("'Tis mute the word... ") ends with the Spartans combing their long hair before the battle at Thermopylae. As a great classical scholar, Housman knew of course of the ancient theory, mentioned with disapproval by the priggish Xenophon (5), that homosexuals made the best soldiers, because each man fought like a lion to impress, defend and, if need be, avenge his lover. But Housman's poems far transcend any personal idiosyncrasies or aberrations: witness the response to the Queen poem of the three heterosexual writers mentioned.

Queen of air and darkness

In the later Roman Empire, and for long afterwards, the atmosphere was believed to be thickly peopled by demons, like the one that got into a nunnery and fathered Merlin (6). The Devil is therefore the Prince of the Air as well as the Prince of Darkness. So Housman's Queen of air and darkness, though mortal, is the feminine equivalent of the Devil. As Queen of darkness, she has affinities with Hecate and Lilith, and when in the poem she 'begins to shrill and cry' she recalls a wicked queen of Irish legend who tried to capture a shipload of heroes, had her hand cut off, and 'began to lament and yell so that the whole earth was nothing but cries, yells and despairs' (7). Essentially, this Queen of air and darkness is one of those diabolical figures that represent a matrilinear ancestress, originally benign, seen in the distorting mirror of later patrilinear culture. Sometimes, such figures have horrific physical features, like the Gorgon Medusa, seen only in a mirror by the patrilineal hero Perseus who slays her (8). Sometimes, like Housman's Queen, these figures are simply evil, and gifted with terrifying magical powers. In Mediterranean lands, where the matrilineal tradition is a persistent undercurrent, the repressed virtues of the ancestress may return, sometimes in surprising ways. 'One aspect of the Virgin Mary worshipped in modern Greece is the *Panaghia* (All-Holy) *Gorgona*. She appears in a nineteenth-century ikon, riding a sea-monster and rescuing a ship.' (9)

Morgan le Fay

In the Arthurian literature, Morgan le Fay (as she is known in English, with an odd disregard for her gender) is treated with ambivalence: she is somewhere between the beneficent and the malefic extreme, though decidedly nearer the latter.

She makes her *debut* rather late, in about 1150, in the *Vita Merlini* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, performing her one outstanding good deed (10). After the last battle, the wounded Arthur is taken to the Isle of Apples (Avalon), a paradisal place, where Morgan receives and tends him, promising to heal his wound. She has eight sisters with her in this wonderful place, and she can change her form and fly through the air. This is the Isle of Women in ancient Celtic legend, of which rumour reached Greek and Latin authors. Morgan's reception of her wounded half-brother Arthur becomes an integral part of the Arthurian tradition, though later she takes him there herself.

Apart from this, Morgan's good deeds are few and far between. She helps the hero of the French verse romance *Floriant et Florète* (between 1250 and 1275), and, in the *Erec et Enide* of Chrétien de Troyes (1170) the hero is healed of his wounds by a magic plaster that Morgan has given to Arthur. And that is about all.

Morgan's evil deeds are numerous. She makes more than one attempt to murder Arthur, including Medea's old trick of the gift of a garment that bursts into flames. Besides Arthur, she plots against Guinevere, Lancelot, Gawain and other knights. She is well established as an evil witch by 1190 (in Hartmann von Aue's *Erek*). In Malory, when her son Uwaine catches her about to murder Uriens (her husband and his father), 'Ah, said Sir Uwaine, men saith that Merlin was begotten of a devil, but I may say an earthly devil bare me'. So really, it was not difficult to assimilate Morgan le Fay to the Queen of air and darkness.

Henry Kuttner

After this preamble, we come at last to Henry Kuttner and his novella *Wet Magic* (11). Henry Kuttner was born in Los Angeles in 1914, of German, Jewish, English, Irish and Polish ancestry. At 21 years old, while working for a literary agency, he began publishing himself. In the same year (1936) he wrote to an author whose work he admired, one Mr C L Moore. To his surprise, Mr C L Moore turned out to be (by all accounts) an attractive brunette called Catherine Lucille Moore. Born in Indianapolis in 1911, she started publishing in 1933. Kuttner and Moore married in 1940, but even before that, in 1937, they had begun the most extraordinary partnership in the history of literature. Because of a heart condition, Kuttner could not serve overseas during the war, and worked in the American Medical Corps. Early in 1958, the heart condition killed him.

Between 1937 and 1958, separately and together, the Kuttners published a host of stories. Moore described how they collaborated on their joint stories. After working out the plot together, they simply wrote alternate sections. Their styles matched so perfectly that it is now quite impossible to spot the joins between sections written by each of them, and they themselves later could not tell where one left off and the other began. They are the despair of bibliographers. For their separate and joint work, they used a host of pseudonyms (17 according to Gunn, 19 according to Moskowitz), and the same pseudonym might be used for a story by one or both of them. During the collaboration, even a story under the real name of one of them might have had contributions from the other: on one occasion Moore found Kuttner sleeping over a story, and finished it for him - he was better at beginnings, she at endings.

They did have their own individual achievements. Before the collaboration began, Moore was famous for the classic short story *Shambleau* and the creation of Jirel of Joiry, the first and by far the best heroine of modern sword-and-sorcery literature. There was little of the comic in her work before and after the collaboration, and friends described Kuttner as 'one of the funniest men alive', so it is likely that Kuttner is mainly or wholly responsible for the comedy published between 1937 and 1958. *The Voice of the Lobster*, published under his byline, is the funniest science fiction short story ever written, no mean achievement in competition with such masters as Sprague de Camp and Eric Frank Russell.

However, both of them were superb and highly literate writers, equally at home in fantasy and science fiction. Their most famous joint efforts were the series about the Baldies, a group of telepathic mutants, and - highly relevant for *Wet Magic* - stories and a novel about a civilisation based on fortress-cities beneath the seas of Venus. Because *Wet Magic* was published after the collaboration began, it cannot be excluded that Moore had a hand in it. But in the absence of any evidence for this, and in view of the comic elements in the novella, I shall assume in this article that it was wholly Kuttner's work.

Wet Magic

Wet Magic first appeared in 1942, in the great John Wood Campbell's marvellous fantasy magazine *Unknown Worlds*. In 1987, it was reprinted in a collection called *Echoes of Valor*, edited by Karl Edward Wagner, himself the author of fine sword-and-sorcery novels (4).

As Wagner observes, Campbell liked comedy in his fantasies. In his great collection *From Unknown Worlds* (first published in 1948, illustrated by the immortal Edd Cartier), most of the stories are comic (12). The collection includes John MacCormac's great comic Arthurian novel *The Enchanted Weekend*, in which the hero releases Merlin from his imprisonment, and is rewarded by being able to win any kind of game, though the enchanter is rather cavalier about the *method* of winning. (My favourite episode is the bridge game, in which the hero bids eight hearts and, sure enough, one of his opponents revokes.)

To return to *Wet Magic*, as Wagner also observes, 'despite its initial lighthearted cuteness, as the story progresses Kuttner manages to inject an unrelenting grimness of his own'. This grimness evidently comes from Housman's poem. Wagner does not mention it, and presumably was not aware of the connection. I have not seen the original *Unknown Worlds* issue, but presumably Wagner did, so Campbell may also have been unaware of the origin of the novella in Housman's poem. Yet, as we shall see, the connection is unmistakeable.

In *Wet Magic*, Henry Kuttner shuffles the pack of Arthurian persons and objects, changing their characters and relationships and producing some odd combinations. Any author has a right to do this. Dumas remarked (according to Sainte-Beuve): 'What is history? It is a nail on which I hang my pictures' (13). This is a much more justifiable use of legend or romance. But, for all his shuffling, Kuttner is remarkably true to the underlying motifs, as we shall see, and reveals a profound knowledge of the medieval Arthurian literature and its background in Celtic folklore.

Ladies of the lake

The hero of *Wet Magic* is an American film actor turned airman in the war, called *Arthur* Woodley. He is shot down by Stukas over the Welsh mountains, bails out, and lands near a giant oak tree by a brook leading into a mountain lake. He is immediately accosted by a beautiful girl who calls herself Vivienne. She declares her love for him, and invites him to join her in her home under the lake. Since he had mentioned he had been flying, she assumes he can fly like a bird as she can, and flies off down the brook. Stumbling after her, Woodley falls and knocks himself out.

He awakes in the castle of Morgan le Fay under the lake. During the course of the next eventful day, he learns about the castle and its occupants. After Camelot fell, the Grail was lost, and the Round Table broken, magic went out of Britain. Morgan le Fay, an incarnation of Lilith or Lilith herself, sank her castle under this small Welsh mountain lake. Vivienne, her companion and perhaps her daughter, was allowed to join her, bringing her lover, Sir Bohort, who possessed magic armour invulnerable to anything except Morgan's magic.

Morgan also brought down the druid Bleys, once the teacher of Merlin. They had lived under the lake for centuries. At first, other lovers for Vivienne were admitted, but when she tired of them she surrendered them to Morgan, the Queen of air and darkness, who killed them dreadfully by magic.

Vivienne was in the process of discarding Sir Bohort, but had not yet decided to give him to the Queen. In order for Woodley to live with her under the lake, she had persuaded Morgan to treat him with *wet magic*, which meant he could breathe under water but *not* in air, so that he was a prisoner in the lake. Vivienne herself had been treated with an additional spell, known to Morgan but not to Bleys, that permitted her to breathe air as well. As for Bleys, he made no more magic, except for attempts, always unsuccessful, to manufacture alcohol that he could drink under water; he had become a disillusioned would-be alcoholic. However, Morgan kept him alive, because he was the guardian of the sword Excalibur, which she feared: more of this later.

Counterparts

How do these four characters relate to their counterparts in medieval literature and Celtic legend (10)? I have already discussed Kuttner's assimilation of Morgan le Fay to the Queen of air and darkness. At first sight, it seems strange to find Morgan under water, but there is plenty of justification for this. Celtic folklore, ancient and recent, teems with stories of wicked women living for long periods in dwellings under the sea or lakes. The most famous of these demonic queens is Dahud, in the sunken city of Ker-Ys (the City Below), in a Breton legend that inspired Abraham Merritt's magnificent novel *Creep Shadow Creep*. But under Lough Neagh in Ireland lived another wicked woman called *Muirgen*. This name, and Morgan's own, derive from an old Celtic word meaning *sea-born*, and in Breton folklore the word *morgan* still means an underwater being. Finally, in the Provencal romance of *Jaufre*, written between 1225 and 1228, Morgan le Fay herself lives underwater.

Vivienne is obviously Viviane (Malory's Nimue), the Lady of the Lake. As such, of course, she has a perfect right to live on the lake bottom. Kuttner has made changes: he has transferred the guardianship from her to Bleys, and he has altered her relationship with Morgan. In the romance literature, she opposes Morgan, and twice frustrates her attempts to murder Arthur. Kuttner makes her Morgan's companion, and probably daughter. But it is quite fitting for Morgan to have an apparently young and seductive companion. Both in the *Prose Lancelot* and in *Gawain and the Green Knight* she uses an apparently younger woman to try to seduce a hero. In the novella, she evidently uses Vivienne to lure lovers under the lake, whom she can later enjoy killing, and again Celtic folklore often features young men trapped underwater by beautiful water-witches. Vivienne's capacity to fly reminds us of Morgan's connection with the Isle of Apples and the Isle of Women, where she and her sisters could turn into birds. For comic purposes, Kuttner's last change is to make his Vivienne an insufferable chatter-box and gossip, telling scurrilous versions of Arthurian tales, which confirm Kuttner's ample familiarity with the romances.

As for the medieval Sir Bohort (I had nearly written the *real* Sir Bohort!), he is Lancelot's cousin and one of the three successful Grail knights, but unlike Perceval and Galahad he loses his virginity, so he can properly serve as Vivienne's lover in the novella. A particularly neatness of Kuttner's plot is the fact that Bohort (Malory's Bors) is in some traditions the last surviving knight of the Round Table.

Finally Bleys, usually spelled Blaise, is in the romances the companion, secretary and amanuensis of Merlin. Kuttner has promoted him to Merlin's teacher, but his Bleys admits Merlin eventually learned far more than he ever did.

Avatar of Arthur

Having set the scene with Kuttner's modified Arthurian characters, I can now summarize the rest of the action. Apart from naiad and elemental servants, these four are the only occupants of the castle before Woodley's arrival. Soon after he wakes, Bohort tries to kill him. Being already half-discarded, the knight naturally fears that, with this rival around, he will soon be handed over to Morgan. He is restrained just in time by Vivienne, who threatens to do just that if he kills Woodley. She now tells the American Morgan will set him a test: if he fails, he will be killed anyway. Morgan has created a Gorgonian water-monster, consisting mostly of poisonous hairs, and later that day Woodley must destroy it. Meanwhile Bleys shows him round the castle. They pass a disused still room, where Morgan had prepared poisons before she developed more subtle magical devices. These 'limbecks dried of poisons' are the first clear echo (after the Queen's title) of Housman's poem.

Later, Bleys takes Woodley to a gallery surrounding the castle courtyard, where a dragon is kept to dispose of the castle garbage. As Bleys falls into a drunken sleep, Bohort sneaks up behind Woodley and

tosses him into the courtyard. With difficulty Woodley escapes the dragon, and finds himself outside the castle. Overjoyed, he makes for the shore, only to discover that he really cannot breathe air, and must somehow secure the counter-spell in order to escape from his dangerous situation. Returning to the castle, he provokes Bohort into accompanying him to the lair of the monster, and there tricks the magically armoured knight into killing it for him. By threatening to reveal the second murder attempt, he blackmails Bohort into confirming that he, Woodley, has killed the monster.

That evening, Morgan allows Woodley to stay in the castle, but warns him that she dislikes the name *'Arthur'* and that she will deal with him as soon as Vivienne has tired of her new lover. Next morning, Vivienne tells him she has found out about the second murder attempt, and handed Bohort over to Morgan. Woodley is desperate. He remembers from his Arthurian knowledge that Viviane had imprisoned Merlin, and extracts from Bleys the information that Merlin is in the oak-tree near which he had landed, and that Merlin would know the counter-spell to enable him to breathe on land. He bribes the druid with a bottle of brandy to give him the spell that will release Merlin from the oak. But Bleys now has another idea. He has earlier explained that 'legends can affect the past', and re-fashion history. 'Something to do with the fluidity of time. Historically, Pendragon was named Artorius, a petty British chieftain ... around 500. There weren't any castles or knights then - not like this. We're pure Plantagenet.' He now explains that it was the possession of Excalibur that made the chieftain Artorius into the history-changing great king of the legends. There is a prophecy that in Britain's hour of peril Arthur will come again and save her. Woodley is the potential hero, if he accepts Excalibur. 'With it you can be Arthur.' Gawain had refused the offer, Arthur, by accepting it, had become the great hero. Woodley is still unsure of himself, and refuses the offer, intending first to try his luck with Merlin.

He swims across the lake and wades up the brook, constantly refilling a bowl with water and dipping his head in it. He manages to perform the spell and free Merlin. And now, a comic surprise. Merlin had shut *himself* in the tree, to escape the everlasting chatter of Viviane. He is annoyed at being disturbed. But he will give Woodley the spell he needs, before the tree closes again, this time for ever, by a new magic he has invented. But just before he gives Woodley the capacity to breathe air and a protection spell against Morgan, Vivienne flies down. Merlin desperately intones his new spell, but just before the tree closes for ever, Vivienne joins him inside. The wretched wizard is doomed to eternal gossip, and Woodley is still defenceless and afflicted with wet magic.

Excalibur

After this, there are no more light touches, and the ending is in deadly earnest. And here, despite what I wrote earlier, one can after all suspect Moore's influence: she was good at endings, and her most famous story, *Shambleau*, is about a gorgon figure. It is also possible that, in making Woodley an avatar of Arthur, Kuttner was influenced by the marvellous novel, *The Land of Unreason*, published the previous year by Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, in which a certain Fred Barber becomes the re-awakened Friedrich Barbarossa. But above all the ending reveals Kuttner's debt to Housman.

Woodley returns to the castle, finding on the way the remains of Bohort, dying horribly from Morgan's magic. The dying knight tells him the Queen feels the danger from Excalibur is now passed, and there will be no second Arthur, so she has decided to kill Bleys. Woodley goes to the castle armoury for a sword to kill himself, sooner than suffer Bohort's fate. But when he grips the quite ordinary sword, he remembers he told Bleys if he failed with Merlin he would try to kill Morgan.

Courage returns to him. He kills two mysterious armoured knights and two monster, and arrives in the room where

Morgan is waiting with the terrified Bleys. The Queen magically destroys Woodley's sword, but his courage is unimpaired, and he still confronts her. A stone anvil, with a sword embedded in it, suddenly appears before him. He easily draws Excalibur, and the Queen knows she is doomed. She tells him he is Arthur come again, that her magic, including the wet magic, can no longer affect him, and that he will save Britain. This was in fact the year of El Alamein and Stalingrad, Churchill's 'hinge of fate'. But the Queen adds: 'the touch of Excalibur's hilt is as deadly as the touch of its blade. When all is won, on some dark tomorrow, you shall die...'

And Housman, in direct quotation, has the last word:

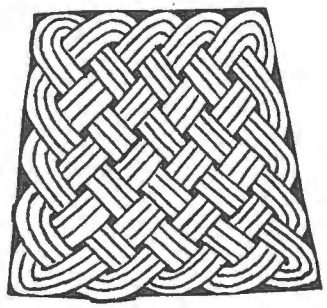
'The sword was a flame of living light. The man who held it did not answer for a moment. Then -

"Yes," he said, very softly. "But you shall die today."

He moved forward.'

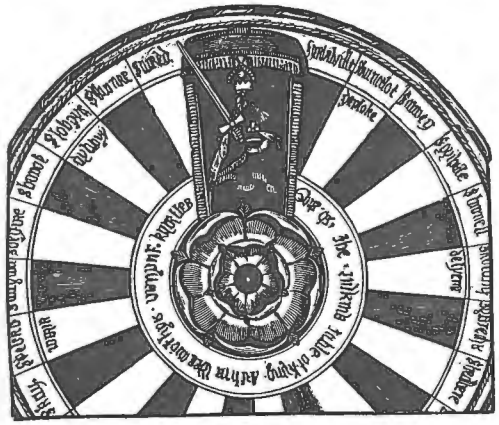
References

1. R P Graves *A E Housman, the Scholar-Poet* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1981
2. A E Housman *The Collected Poems* Jonathan Cape, London 1967
3. B Coulton *Louis MacNeice in the BBC* Faber and Faber, London 1980
4. K E Wagner (ed) *Echoes of Valor* Tom Doherty Associates, New York 1987
5. *Symposium 8* 32-5
6. W M S Russell, 'More about Folklore and Literature' *Folklore 94* 3-32, 1983
7. J Markale *La Femme Celte* Payot, Paris 1992
8. C Russell 'Kinship Symbols and their Evolution' *Social Biology and Human Affairs 45* 119-144, 1981
9. C Russell 'The Dragon' *Social Biology and Human Affairs 57* 17-42, 1992
10. For Morgan le Fay, and later for Viviane, Bohort and Blaise, see R S Loomis (ed) *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* Clarendon Press, Oxford 1959; J Markale *op cit*, *Petit Dictionnaire de Mythologie Celtique* Entente, Paris 1995, *Les Celtes et la Civilisation Celtique* Payot, Paris 1992
11. For the Kuttners, see S Mosowitz *Seekers of Tomorrow* World Publishing Company, Cleveland 1966; J Gunn (ed) *The Road to Science Fiction 3* New American Library, New York 1979; P Nicholls (ed) *The Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* Granada, St Albans 1979; I Asimov *In Memory Yet Green* Avon, New York 1980, *In Joy Still Felt* Avon, New York 1981; E James *Science Fiction in the 20th century* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1994
12. J W Campbell (ed) *From Unknown Worlds* Atlas, London 1952
13. V Giraud (ed) *Sainte-Beuve: Mes Poisons* Plon, Paris 1926



Twice and Future King?

Geoff Roberts



One of the most fascinating, and at the same time frustrating, aspects of the Arthurian myth is that it is full of contradictions and ambiguities - mostly moral ambiguities. A particularly intriguing contradiction is the discrepancy between the image of Arthur as 'most Christian king' and the bad press he gets in many folk tales and particularly lives of saints, where he is often portrayed as little more than a bandit - and a not very impressive one at that. Several recent attempts to pin down the 'real' Arthur have identified him with comparatively minor Celtic princelings who seem a slim foundation for the image of a colossus who bestrides the world like Shakespeare's Mark Antony. In fact, despite the continuing power of the legend, or myth, it is still possible to maintain that there never was an Arthur at all, whether emperor, king, *dux bellorum* or whatever.

There is also, as everyone knows, a vast discrepancy between the various versions of Arthur - Dark Age British war-leader, chivalric monarch and flower of knighthood, Celtic demigod surrounded by fantastic figures from ancient folk-lore...

The chivalric element is easily explained. Geoffrey and the other chroniclers knew nothing of history and, like Shakespeare dressing Julius Caesar in a doublet, saw Arthurian times in terms of their own. The fantastic elements - giants, dragons, fairies, monstrous boars and so on - are usually explained away a folkloric detritus attracted into the Arthurian orbit in the way that meteorites and comets pick up floating debris in the journeys through space.

Proto-Arthur

But it occurred to me one day to wonder whether there could be a different explanation. What if Arthur truly belonged, not with the Dark Age struggle against Saxon domination, but much further back in time, in an era when the fantastic and the fabulous were a universally accepted aspect of life?

By this I don't mean that Arthur was only a fairy story hero, like Jack the Giant-killer, but that the Dark Age leader was not the *original* Arthur. What if the proto-Arthur was a giant figure from a much earlier epoch, deeply embedded in the Celtic collective unconscious, so that maybe the 'historic' Arthur revived the memory of that shadowy hero, was hailed as his reincarnation and so inherited all his charisma and the reputation for supernatural powers that the original Arthur was reputed to possess?

I was approaching his, I should admit here and now, not as a historian conducting academic research, but as a writer of fiction seeking a powerful theme. Nevertheless, there seemed to me much more in this concept than simply imagination.

Motivation

Look at some of the other elements in the story: Morgan le Faye, for example. Her enmity to her half-brother is never properly

motivated, not is the presumed repentance which brings her as one of the chief mourners to the ship which bears Arthur away into the Vale of Avalon to be healed of his grievous wound. Motiveless malignity is unsatisfying, even for a sorceress, but two facts beside Morgan's supernatural powers may help to explain her character: her name, and the fact that she is one of three sisters. Triads loom large in Celtic mythology, especially among goddesses, one such being that of Brigid, Badbh and the Morrigan, the Irish war-goddesses. Morgan's sisters are generally named as Morgawse and Elayne, though in some sources the third sister is called Morgue. It seemed to me that three sisters so similarly named as Morgan, Morgawse and Morgue must be three embodiments of the same personality, probably representing the maiden, mature woman and hag, the three symbolic phases of the moon. In other words, Gorlois' three daughters are the Brythonic equivalent of the Goidelic trio of the Morrigan and her sisters.

To demythologise, since I am not consigning Arthur to the Realm of Faerie, Morgan may well have been a priestess of the Mothers, perhaps High Priestess, and hence regarded as the human embodiment of the goddess(es) she served.

Similarly, Guenevere seems an anomalous but intriguing figure, strangely subject to abduction, even in comparatively old age. Her name - Gwenhwyvar - mean "White Phantom", and one of the Triads (1) claims that Arthur had three queens, all with the same name. This triplication and the suggestiveness of the name indicate that she also may well be an embodiment of the triple White Goddess (probably Cerridwen), who in her various phases paralleling those of the moon is the variously cruel and kind, faithful and unfaithful, propitious and unpropitious, supporting and destroying partner of her consort the sacred king (2). Hence the moral ambiguity. She is also the personification of royal power, making her an automatic target for abduction by would-be usurpers.

One such is Melwas (Meleagant in Malory), King of the Summer Country (*ie* the Otherworld, Hades, Annwvyn) whither in various versions Arthur, Gawaine or Lancelot follow to rescue Gwenhwyvar from kidnapping. This episode could symbolically represent the daily descent of the sun below the horizon into the dark unknown: Melwas is the dark twin and *alter ego* of the bright solar deity with whom he alternates in the favours of the goddess.

So Gwenhwyvar may well have been a High Priestess of the Mothers and hence herself goddess incarnate. Arthur, or Artos, to use the name more appropriate to the epoch, I see as the embodiment of the sun god, sacred king of the tribe, consort of the goddess. (And probably served by twelve companions, the total thirteen paralleling the lunar months of the year.)

If Arthur's predecessor Artos was a sun-hero promoting the worship of his tutelary deity, along with its patriarchal associations, there is obvious motivation for his moon-priestess half-sister's enmity to him, despite the affection born of kinship that re-asserted itself at the end and the physical attraction between them that had to exist since if Artos had only one sister she had to be the mother of the incestuously conceived Medrawt. More moral ambiguity.

Demi-god?

He shares many characteristics of other semi-divine heroes of various mythologies: his birth is mysterious and from a forbidden union; like Oedipus and Moses he is fostered in secret; he is restored to his heritage by unexpected revelation; he performs fabulous deeds; like Cuchulain or Rustum he later tragically kills a son (Amr or Anir) begotten in usual circumstances; and at his death he is spirited away to the Otherworld, promising to return. He wields a magic sword (Caledvwlch/Calibum/Excalibur), consorts with mages and sorceresses such as Merlin (Myrddin) and Niviane or Vivianne, Lady of the Lake, and he establishes himself as the hope, champion and promise of an endangered civilisation.

If the proto-Arthur was indeed such a figure from the pagan past whose magic mantle settled on the shoulders of a Dark Age successor, this could not only help to explain the extraordinary power of the myth surrounding a leader whose identity is obscure, if not totally lost, it could also explain the ecclesiastical hostility which I mentioned at the beginning of this article. If the 'historic' Arthur chose to exploit the charisma of his Celtic demi-god predecessor by reviving pagan Celtic religion as a potentially unifying force among the tribes, it would be natural that contemporary Christian chroniclers should seek to denigrate him, even though later monastic scribes chose to Christianise his memory - the familiar early Catholic tactic of 'If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.'

Several of the imaginative leaps I made have since been used independently by writers such as John Arden and Marion Zimmer Bradley and may seem old hat to *Pendragon* readers. But no one else, to my knowledge, has so far published a novel about the proto-Arthur, set in the fifth century BC, combining the suggestions I have outlined above plus a good many more that there is no room to enumerate here. I still hope that one day my bulky manuscript may emerge from its dusty drawer and find a publisher!

References

(1) No 53 - see Bromwich, R *The Welsh Triads*
(2) R Graves *The White Goddess*

The Big Sting

Forrester Roberts

Whoever it was, up there in the cloud-capped towers of *Pendragon*, that dreamed up this issue's Machiavellian theme, must really be chuckling to himself now. 'Avatars of Arthur!' What an innocent sounding theme title, but what a right can of works to tease open. It's a real Pandora's box of simmering belief and prejudice when you start thinking about it. For there's a key figure lying, like a great impassive stone slab, underneath all the mythological undergrowth. It's called God, and God knows how may people have sliced each other up on his account. Good God! You can hardly say the word without taking a stand. Even calling God 'Him' alienates more and more women in the Christian world. But whether you use Him, Her, It, Yahweh, Allah, Vishnu, or any other name tag, you can be sure that when you come to name Him you instantly advertise the place you're coming from. Every label implies a position. Invoke Him and straight away you summon up someone else's devil. Surely 'God' must be the most loaded word in the English language. In any language. No wonder 'heresy' became a feared and dreadful household word.

Alright, let's try and leave God out of it for a minute and concentrate on *avatars*. It seemed a good idea to check the meaning of the word in the dictionary. '*Avatar* ... the descent of deity to earth in incarnate form.' And once again we are faced with another confrontational dispute. Why *descent*? Who says divinities descend? There must be at least as many deities on record as *ascending* as those that *descend*? Has the *Oxford English Dictionary* been brainwashed too?

The difference in direction of a deity's arrival in our presence, or ours in theirs, is more significant than it sounds, for the heavens must be an awfully long way away; somewhere up there, beyond the vast reaches of space. How can we possibly bridge such an awful chasm? The earth, on the other hand, is comfortingly close. And the God within us, even closer. But that's dangerous talk, because if God is that close, who needs a middleman to help us make contact?

Celtic deities

If the Celts ever pictured Arthur as a symbolic deity waiting to make a dramatic comeback on to the world stage, they certainly didn't picture him descending from a Christian heaven. He wasn't borne aloft by angels like Galahad, that insufferably devout clerical creation who was such a latecomer to the Arthurian scene. Instead, Arthur sailed over to some mystic island in a barge and is still sleeping in various caverns all over Britain. No, the truth is that the Celts clothed Arthur in the qualities of a Celtic deity, and whether the historical Arthur was Christian or not, his deity image is unquestionably pre-Christian.

The Celtic pantheon of gods was as much of the earth as it was of the sky. They were at one with their gods, as most of the other pagan religions were, because their gods were straightforward personifications of the energies that shaped and maintained their universe.

In fact they all derived from Indo-European origins. Alexander the Great had no difficulty identifying the gods of India with their Greek counterparts. He recognised Krishna as the equivalent of Heracles, Indra as the counterpart of Zeus. Julius equated Celtic divinities with their Roman equivalents, just as easily. In his sixth chapter of *The Gallic Wars* he writes, 'Among the gods of the Celts, they most worship Mercury. After him, they set Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva. Of these deities, they have almost the same idea as other nations. Apollo drives away diseases, Minerva supplies the arts and crafts, Jupiter holds heaven's empire and Mars control wars... He whom they call Cernunnus, we call

Pluto...' *(fig 1* figure of Cernunnos from the Gundestrup cauldron).

These were natural co-relations, born out of lives totally dependent on nature and the providence of an earth warmed and vitalised by the sun, but recognising man's distinct individuality in the great scheme of things.

Medieval Christendom

It took an organised priesthood to separate the Celts from their gods. It was a task accomplished very successfully by the Roman Church. The homely Celtic gods were banished by papal decree, and the Christian God substituted in their place. However, He remained stern and aloof, in heaven. The only way to reach Him was through the good offices of a duly appointed priest.

So, having inserted themselves effectively between man and his gods, they invented a foul and fathomless pit, as the fate of all those who dared ignore the priesthood by choosing another route to God. Either you co-operated with the brotherhood and paid your dues, or else... The 'or else' was hellfire, either in the afterworld or in the Church's frequent bonfires, here on earth. Just listen to the words of a priestly chronicler writing after Minerve, a small town in the south of France, surrendered to the Pope's army.

We entered the town singing the 'Te Deum'. In front went the Cross followed by the banners of the Count.

Christ had entered the town.

We invited all the heretics there to convert to the Catholic faith, but they replied, 'We do not want your faith. You make us suffer in vain.' The women were even more obstinate than the men (fig 2). *So we took them outside the town, built a big fire, and threw them all onto it ... and burnt them with extreme joy.*

Or again after the sack of Beziers:

They set fire to the town and massacred almost everyone. O supreme justice of Providence. It was the day of St Mary Magdalen. The heretics had pretended that St Mary was Jesus' concubine. How just, then, that these disgusting dogs should be massacred during her festival (fig 3).

The priest who wrote these psychotic obscenities was reporting to the Pope on the triumphant success of a campaign which had been invoked, in all its blood-soaked glory, by Pope Innocent III *(fig 4)*. Pope Innocent ...! You know, you have to admire his sense of humour!

As a foolproof protection racket, the policy of the medieval Church was well worthy of the Mafia, and it was brilliantly successfully. Indeed, with appropriate rewards regularly siphoned off to the ever-receptive State, how could it fail. Christ's message of universal love was turned on its head; inverted into murderous loathing for all those who refused to pay their union dues. Universal AMOR was

reversed into ROMA, and the Church waxed ever more rich and magnificent.

Having separated man from his gods, by creating the illusion of a huge gulf between them, with hellfire roaring below, the church unveiled its own private toll bridge over the chasm. It was available to all those who toed the line and paid tithes and reverence to the Church. Everyone else was consigned to the fiery pit. And these were the keys of the Kingdom - and only the Church held the keys...!

It took an equally ruthless king to wrest Britain free of Rome and a stalwart queen to keep it that way, but the ugly medieval churches still squat like great Quatermass frogs over the pretty hillside towns of France. Some people even think they are beautiful, but then beauty is in the eye of the beholder - as, of course, is ugliness too.

My apologies for digressing, but the vicious cruelty of it all horrifies me, and the bloody hypocrisy of the Church at that time always appals. The damage it did to human relations still runs like a fault line through western society, even today. I guess that's what John Lennon meant when he wrote 'And no religion too' into his last song *Imagine*. He was wrong though. 'Priesthood' might have been better, but it doesn't really scan.

The aura of divinity

However, the old gods of the Celts did not die completely, hence the many tales of Arthur, asleep with his knights, beneath the hollow hills. The oddest thing about him is this semi-divine mantle: this aura of divinity that never quite leaves him. After all, he was no more than a mere warrior chieftain and, apparently, only one of many. Why should he suddenly appear on stage, at the head of half the Celtic pantheon of gods, all of them ready to be metamorphosed into the Knights of the Round Table? Why should

All the background suddenly fill
Beyond the pageant of so many spears,
And by what magic, over western hills,
Has his throne beckoned for a thousand years?

The answer probably lies in his name, for one of the oldest forms of deity revered by man was Artus, the bear.

Bear worship can be traced back to Neanderthal times. In pagan religions, beasts and human beings were inter-changeable, and eventually the bear deity came to be represented as a human possessing the energies and qualities of the animal.

Quite recently, a commemorative stone was unearthed beside Saint-Pé, a little town near Lourdes in the Pyrenees. The stone dates from the first century. Its Latin inscription reads

Lexea, the daughter of Odon,
has gained merit
through her vows to Artehe.

More expert minds than mine equate this with Arthur, the god, and consider it further proof that Arthur the bear was being worshipped as a god in human form, for several centuries before the mantle descended on our Celtic chieftain of history. Thus, through the wistful nostalgia of the beleaguered Britons, the renown of two separate Arthurs became blended and fused into a half-real, half-mythical personage; one who, for a brief period, was destined to hold the alien invaders at bay.

The myth of Arthur

To pursue Arthur into the intricacies of the Celtic pantheon of gods would be beyond the scope of this article and would, in any case, takes us deeper and deeper into the realms of pure speculation. Myth should not be dissected like a helpless rabbit. It is a living, vibrant thing and constantly developing. It were better to accept its personalities in their contemporary image rather than go searching for some ultimate and doubtful truth in their hazy origins. The spirit of an oak tree is surely portrayed more accurately in its fully grown maturity rather than by its acorn. The acorn's development is destined to be shaped by its environment and the myriad nutrients that nourish it along the way.

Similarly with the myth of Arthur. There is more human truth in Arthur's last words to Bedivere in Tennyson's *Idylls* than ever you'll find in convoluted historical research into origins. Maybe we should thankfully accept the Arthur we know, savour the wonderful fruits that fall from his branches and just leave it at that.

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge;
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world
... If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish the blind life within the brain
If, knowing God, they lift not hands in prayer.

References

Caesar *The Gallic Wars*
Joseph Campbell *Transformations of Myth through Time*
Pierre Vaux de Cemay *Histoire Albigeoise*
G K Chesterton *The Myth of Arthur*
Forrester Roberts *The Spirit of Crusade*
Alfred Tennyson *Idylls of the King*

King Arthur meets Guy Fawkes

David Bowers

What has gunpowder, treason and plot got to do with bonfires? Surely this business of burning a guy on a bonfire has something to do with some pagan festival, and nothing at all with trying to kill the king to put someone else in his place?

Yet, according to those who claim to know about these matters, the pagan festival was all about sacrificing an Alder King and replacing him by his successor. Then six months later, at what we now call May Day, that successor would be sacrificed and a new king would take his place.

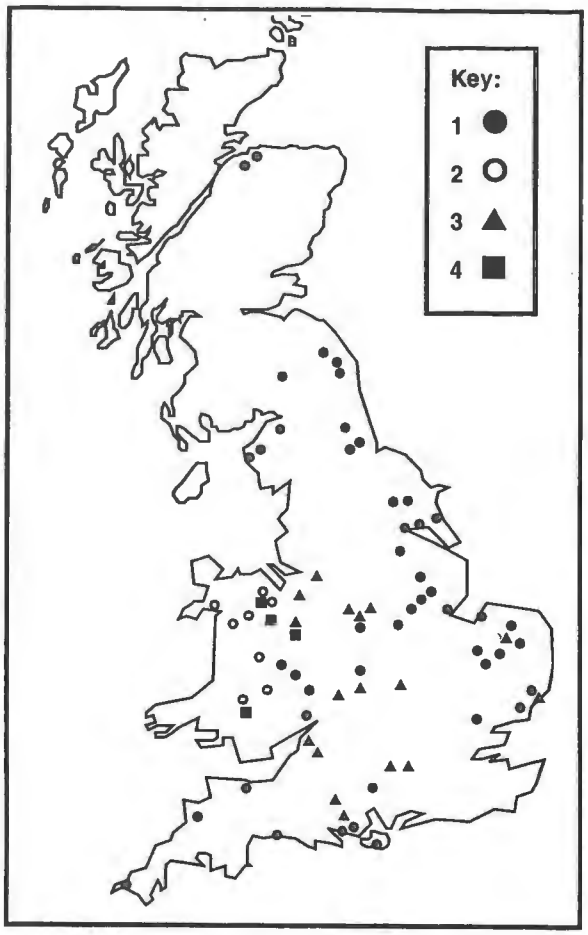
In those far-off days, before our ancestors had learnt how to smelt metal, all technology was based on the properties of different types of trees and stones. We call it the Stone Age and think of hairy men chipping away at flint tools. But flint was rare and precious. Village technology depended on tree lore, especially the usefulness of alder wood. The sap of the alder is very resistant to water. So anything which would get wet had to be made from this one type of wood.

Sometimes our ancestors took refuge in lake villages approached along a wooden causeway. But these could not be built on just any pile of logs. Only alder was impervious to water and would not rot away. Nothing better was ever discovered, and the Rialto in Venice is founded on alder piles, as are some low-lying cathedrals. According to the Roman poet Virgil the first boats were not any old log floated downstream, but specifically alder logs.

So it is not surprising that the spirit of the alder became a primeval god, protector of villages, lord of water and, as alder did not rot away, lord of time. In all probability, our ancestors would ceremoniously plant alder groves and, with equal ceremony, cut down the mature trees. It is no wonder that the spirit of the alder became lord of regeneration and Son of the Earth Mother. In ancient Greece he was called Cronos. To the Romans he was Saturn. In ancient Britain his name seems to have been *Bran.*

Then, at some stage during the Bronze Age, the patriarchs overthrew the

King Arthur meets Guy Fawkes



Key to map:
Modern British placenames with a possible Bran element (taken from a Road Atlas):

1

BRANe *Cornwall*
BRANdish Street *Somerset*
BRANsgore *Hampshire*
BRAN End *Essex*
BRANsley *Shrophire*
BRANtham *Suffolk*
BRANdon Creek *Norfolk*
BRANdiston *Norfolk*
BRANston *Lincolnshire*
BRANston *Leicestershire*
BRANtingham *Humberside*
BRANton Green *N. Yorkshire*
BRANdon *C. Durham*
BRANdon *Northhumberland*
BRANsty *Cumbria*
BRANault *Highland*
BRANscombe *Devon*
BRANksome *Dorset*
BRANstone *Isle of Wight*
BRANdhill *Shropshire*
BRANdon *Warwickshire*
BRANdeston Parva *Norfolk*
BRANd End *Lincolnshire.*
BRANdon *Lincolnshire*
BRANston *Staffordshire*
BRANsholme *Humberside*
BRANdsby *N. Yorkshire*
BRANch End *Northumberland*
BRANton *Northumberland*
BRANthwaite *Cumbria*
BRANchill *Grampian*
BRANdis Comer *Devon*
BRANsbury *Hampshire*
BRANd Green *Gloucestershire*
BRANsford *Herfors &Worcester*
BRANdon Bank *Cambridge*
BRANdon *Suffolk*
BRANcaster *Norfolk*
BRANsby *Lincolnshire*
BRANt Broughton *Lincolnshire*
BRANton *S. Yorkshire*
BRANdesburton *Humberside*
BRANceoeth *C. Durham*
BRANxholme *Borders*
BRANxton *Northumberland*
BRANthwaite *Cumbria*
BRANderburgh *Grampian*

2

FRON *1 in Pembroke, 2 in Powys, 2 in Gwynedd*
FRONcysyllte & FRON Isaf, *Denbighshire*
FRON-goch & FRONoleu *in Gwynedd*

3

ALDERbury *Wiltshire*
ALDERton *Wiltshire*
ALDERton *Suffolk*
ALDERholt *Dorset*
ALDERmaston *Berkshire*
ALDERford *Norfolk*
ALDERley *Gloucestershire*
ALDERshot *Hampshire*
ALDERton *Gloucestershire*
ALDERminster *Warwickshire*
ALDERwasley *Derbyshire*
ALDERsley *Cheshire*
ALDERton *Northamptonshire*
ALDER Moor *Staffordshire*
ALDERley Edge *Cheshire*
ALDERcar *Derbyshire*
ALDERton *Shropshire*

4

Shrewsbury - PENGWERN - *hill of alders*
Oswestry - *hillfort - Caer Ogyrfran*
Dinas Bran - *hillfort near Llangollen, Denbighshire*
Aberbran - *village in Powys*

matriarchs and the sun god overthrew his father Time. The most sacred ceremonies became associated with the winter and summer solstices. But folk traditions were adopted to the new religion rather than discarded. Father Time became an old and merry elf, red-faced from the dye made from alder bark. He would lead the children to the bran tub from which these chips off the old block would draw presents. Only later would the Saxons associate the winter solstice with Yule and the long-lived yew tree.

In Welsh legend the end of Bran's rule is recorded in the tale of Branwen, which can be found in *The Mabiniogion*. The king of Britain is Bendigeidfran, whose name means Bran the Benign. His nephew is Gwern, which means alder, who dies in a blazing fire. When threatened with an invasion Bran orders that his own head be buried on White Hill in London. But Cradawg son of Bran is defeated by Caswallawn son of Beli.

According to the poet Robert Graves the same historical event is described in the ancient Celtic poem *Cad Goddeu*, which means the Battle of the Trees. This is probably what Geoffrey of Monmouth alluded to when he described two brothers, Belinus and Brennius, fighting for the British throne. The brothers appear in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* as Balin and Balan. Caswallawn was known to the Romans as Cassibelaunus. He was the leader of the Catubellauni, who led the British resistance against Julius Caesar in 54 BC. So Belinus was the sun god of the patriarchal Belgic 'fighters for Bel' who had invaded and settled southern Britain during the preceding couple of centuries.

Bran's cult still remained strong, a situation shown by the many modern placenames which include a Bran or alder element. Pengwern, which is the Welsh name for Shrewsbury, is an example, as the name means 'a hill with alders'. The map shows placenames with a Bran or alder element which appear in a modern road atlas. By Arthur's time Bran had become Ogyr Fran (Bran the Malign) and father of Gwenhwyfar (Guinevere). He is associated with a number of hillforts in old Powys, including Old Oswestry hillfort, which is Caer Ogyrfran.

In his seafaring aspect he was Morfran son of Tegid, a vassal of Arthur in both *Culhwch and Olwen* and in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*. The name means Sea Bran son of Tacitus.

Bran also appears in *Culhwch* as the oldest creature in the world, the eagle Gwernabwy. As the eagle is recognised throughout the world as a sun bird, Gwernabwy was, perhaps, originally a raven, *Corvus corax*. These long-lived and intelligent crows have short feathers on their throats which give the impression of an old man's shaggy beard. Their association with White Hill and the Tower of London is well known. The tame ravens which are still kept at the Tower are supposed to secure Britain from invasion, which is the exact same legend originally told about Bendigeidfran's head. A thousand years after Arthur's time and Bran was still to be found in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* as both Brandegoris and Brandiles.

Bran as the spirit of regeneration is the original Once and Future King. So it is fitting that his christianised counterpart, Arthur, was carried to Avalon in a boat, which is an aspect of the alder. In a different legend Arthur is sleeping at Alderley Edge, in Cheshire.

The sap which makes the alder so water-resistant also makes it so slow burning that alder forms exceedingly good gunpowder charcoal. So those seventeenth-century rustics who first put Guy Fawkes on a bonfire may have known what they were doing after all. They were following their age-old custom of burning a guy on a Bran tree.

References

Collins Handguide to Trees

Robert Graves *The White Goddess* Faber

Peter Hayman *Birdwatcher's Pocket Guide* Mitchell Beazley

A H A Hogg *Hillforts of Britain*

Jones and Jones (trans) *The Mabinogion* Dent

Sir Thomas Malory *Le Morte d'Arthur* Penguin

Peter Salway *Roman Britain* Oxford

Arthur and the Yew Cult

Allen Meredith

What I am about to write I confess I do not fully understand, knowing all the time that to unravel one mystery simply leads us into something more mysterious; and so it is with King Arthur.

The name Arthur

As great leaders played out their role from some ancient theme now lost to us in the mists of time, some took up the mantle of Ceann Arthur and Eochaid Ollathair, names from the distant past, unfamiliar to us. However, we have come to know the modern versions of King Arthur and Robin Hood.

Now we know that King Arthur was not a real king in the sense of a human royal lineage coming from the Saxons or Britons, but a human chief of some particular tribe is plausible. Uther Pendragon is supposed to have been a chief of the Silurian tribe in an area covering Powys to the Severn Valley. The area of the Silures is rich with ancient yews.

This King Arthur is a name taken on from what some might describe as an ancient cult or ancient order. To simplify matters I have put Yew Cult in the title, a play on word association, but not the whole story. I do know that many mysteries were involved, and the person who took on the mantle had become the chosen one, became also the fated one, knowing that this role was beyond any ordinary human role. So the individual had been chosen from beyond the physical world, and seemingly there was no intervention in these matters.

Perhaps before I begin I should illuminate a little on the origin of where Arthur may have come from, and also the names Ceann Artair, Eochaidh Ollathair and Eochaidh Airem - names that take us back some *6000 years*. So I concede Arthur is more than a medieval figure, and to trace that origin we have to move through the Celtic period and the more distant Neolithic times, for we are dealing with something which is very ancient and shrouded in mystery.

From the Gaelic *Ceann Artair*, meaning Chief Arthur, the link with Eochaidh Ollathair may not immediately seem apparent. especially in terms of the vast age and time when Eochaidh Ollathair and the mysterious Ollamh Fodhla were spoken of. In the Irish manuscripts called *The Annals of the Four Masters*, the reign of the king Ollamh Fodhla

began in 3883, his death was said to be 1277 BC, making his reign over 2000 years. Also mentioned in the *Four Masters* is a High King of Ireland, Eochaidh Airem, the death of whom is assigned to the year 110 BC. As Prof J Rhys indicates, the names Arthur and Airem proceed from a common verbal root.

The death indicated in the figures of Ollamh Fodhla and, indeed, King Arthur, are by no means ordinary; they indicate some ancient theme, they merely sleep or rest waiting for a new age or beginning, a kind of resurrection. We are probably dealing with something of a supernatural or divine nature, which I hope will be partly explained here, though never completely answered. These terms listed below are open to interpretation:

Olam - everlasting - future world - chief
Oll - ancient meaning for a tree
Ol - a tree

Eochaidh Ollathair at times appears to be some divine personage; if this king was still alive he would be at least 5800 years old - this would be comparable in age to the ancient yew at Fortingall (see below).

There do appear to be many early variations of the name Arthur, which are in a mixture of languages including Gaelic. These include Uther, Iuthair, Artair, Iubhair, also yet unfamiliar are Aradr and Urdr (Urdr I will attempt to explain later). These names and others appear to link Arthur with the sacred yew. In earlier writings we have King Arthur son of Iubhar, Ceann Artair mac Iuthair, King Arthur son of Uther, various old names for the yew. The ancient name Eochaidh indicates yew wood, as modern Eogan and Eoghan indicate, from the yew or yew fork. With such names it becomes difficult to know if they refer to a person or some divinity.

Fortingall

Now we come to a vital link with the small hamlet of Fortingall in Scotland. I would not have considered this on any one coincidence, but the link with Arthur in terms of topography, etymology, age and mystery are certainly worth investigation (though this is preliminary and not yet complete).

Fortingall is remote, on a hilltop site overlooking the River Lyon, situated in the heart of Scotland. Or, to be more exact, the traditional centre of Scotland, according to Prof W J Watson. Here in the churchyard is the oldest tree in Scotland and one of the oldest in Europe. It has seen more than 5000 winters. As a tree in the centre it represents an *axis mundi* and would have been fiercely protected as a tribal tree.

The area of Fortingall is an ancient landscape with prehistoric stones, ancient burial mounds and of course the ancient yew, now broken and storm-withered, yet resurrected also from its decayed remains. Some of the old names of the area survive, mentioned by Watson: Tir Artair, "Arthur's Land", Duneaves (1), Dail Chiarain, Fotherdun. The nearby river Lyon may derive from Lug. (Coicidentally an old yew comparable in age to Fortingall's overlooks the River Lug at Discoed in Powys.)

Tacitus mentions a great battle between the forces of Agicola and the Britons led by Gallawg, who appears to have been a Strathclyde chief, though this battle took place at Forten-Gall camp, sixteen miles beyond Perth. The Stone of Destiny or *Lia Fail*, according to some local tradition, is not far from Fortingall, and this would make sense of it as a centre.

Placenames

Placenames can be a bit of a minefield. However, I will attempt to explain a possible link with Arthur and the yew. It is said that Fortingall was of old called Fotherchill, and coincidentally there is a place nearby called Dun-Fother. *Cel* or *cell* may also be *cill* or *chill*. Now, *chaille* and *chill* also mean "wood". Futher, we have *Killeochaille*, "church of the yew wood" and *Killure* and *Cell Iubhar*, "cell of the yew", and also *Cill Dara*, "cell of the oak".

We also know from the the early lives of the saints and hermits that they led a secluded life, and some of the old texts and manuscripts tell us of their lives in woods and hollow trees. Some of these hollow trees were

called "cells". St Kevin was said to have lived in a hollow yew for seven years, old manuscripts mention St Kevin's Yew, and in recent times an old yew did exist at Glendalough in Co Wicklow. Similarly St Molling of St Mullins lived in a hollow yew for seven years. There is a famous old yew at Gresford, and nearby in the Dee Valley, at a place called Rhydyglafes, a hermit used to live in a hollow yew near a Bronze Age burial mound. St Brigit of Cell Dara is one of the more notable accounts.

The monks of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire used to use the old yews there for shelter before the abbey was built: they used to be known as the Seven Sisters, though now only two survive. The old name for York, incidentally, was Eburacon, which historians suggest was a centre of a yew cult. Another strange coincidence is that many scholars believe the tales of Robin Hood originate from this area. The River Ure, coming from "yew", still retains its ancient name from Celtic times.

There is a Fothergill near Hadrian's Wall on the England side, and a Fotheringhay in Huntingdon. I have seen these names confused with Fortingall in the past: I wonder if there is any link?

Dr George Petrie informs us that from the Old Irish we have *gul*, *gail* or *gal*, which could be names for "ancient round towers" or big trees (2). The ancient yew at Fortingall must have been used as a landmark for thousands of years, a meeting place, an *axis mundi*. Could this tree have been "the chief", some remote link with Ceann Iubhar, "Chief Yew" - King Arthur?

Arthur and yew associations

Ancient yews are not common outside churchyards, therefore it is even more remarkable to associate Arthur with ancient yew tree sites. So could there be a link?

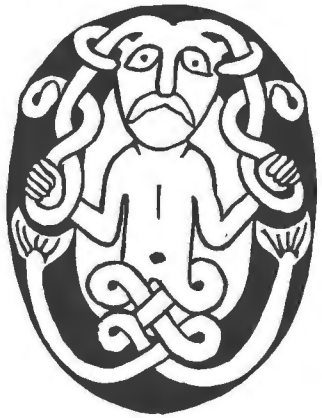
King Arthur has been linked with **Kentchurch Court**, a large deer park with ancient yews (one thought to be 2000 years old) and also the home of Owen Glendower. **Wychbury** hillfort, according to Dr Calder, is the last resting place of Arthur. This would be fitting with its 1500-year old avenue of yews leading up to the *seven* ancient yews, the "warriors" or "guardians" of the site. **Merdon Castle** hillfort, just outside Winchester, is a remote ancient site identified as a British camp site from the Bronze Age period. Some of the old yews on the hillfort clearly date back to the Bronze Age. This unique site should be recognised and protected. **Glastonbury** - excavations by Dr Rahtz in the 1960s discovered the stump of an ancient yew at the base of the Chalice Well.

There are Arthurian links also in some of the remote areas of Cumbria: Wordsworth's "Fraternal Four", the ancient yews of Borrowdale, also link in with Merlin.

Bibliography: works consulted

Anand Chetan and Diana Brueton (1994) *The Sacred Yew* (Penguin)
J Rhys (1886) *Hibbert Lectures*
W J Watson (1927) *Celtic Place Names of Scotland*
Horae Britannicae Vol I *106* 1791-1810
Kuno Meyer (1912) *Miscellaneous Studies*
Volsunga Saga
Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology
Etudes Celtiques 13
The Ley Hunter 1993-4
Robert Graves (1956) *The White Goddess*
George Petrie *Round Towers* Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy Vol XX *65*

To be concluded



Arthur-types

Chris Lovegrove

In his youth the hero does menial tasks, but displays great strength and courage despite his humble upbringing. He defends the honour of women, but his beloved is much abducted. He gains possession of a magnificent black steed, and discovers an almost supernatural sword under a stone. After a lifetime of great feats with a band of followers he is mortally wounded by treachery, though his renown protects his people from harm.

Sounds familiar? Of course it does - you knew I was outlining the romance of 'Antar (or 'Antara), a folk hero from the Abs tribe of central Arabia, whose exploits also ranged across Iraq, Persia and Syria. He died at a great age in a raid around 600 AD, but already by the 8th century stories of his life and deeds were being developed (Ranelagh 1979).

The point is surely this: here we have a folk-hero who flourished not long after Arthur is alleged to have existed but who also shares some similarities with the British hero as described in Arthurian epic and saga. Is there a direct relationship between them? Before we tackle this question, it might be instructive to look at another near-contemporary hero, but from a little closer to home.

Beowulf

As students interested in the historicity of Arthur have noted (*eg* Pollington 1987), there are some rather obvious parallels between Beowulf and Arthur:

both are heroes of the Dark Ages, flourishing in the late fifth and/or early sixth centuries;
the historical existence of both are doubted;
and both have a similar body of lore attached to their names.

Could this mean that Beowulf is a candiate for Arthur?

Two folk tale types embedded in *Beowulf* can be related to Arthurian lore. The first type, **The Bear's Son**, has a number of motifs attached to it (Garmonsway 1980). The relevant ones are:

1. The hero has the strength of a bear due either to his parentage (his father, for example, may be a human magically transformed into a bear) or his upbringing (raised in a bear's cave or similar spartan environment).
2. Going out to seek his fortune he acquires companions with specialist skills.
3. These Skilful Companions are unable, separately, to resist the attacks of a night assailant in an enchanted dwelling, but the Bear's Son does.

4. The Bear's Son follows a trail to a hole in the ground. Despite the treachery of the Companions, he defeats the assailant (or assailant's mother) rescues princess(es) and/or gains treasure, later confronting the Companions who then get their come-uppance.

Now, both Arthur's and Beowulf histories have traces of such a tale, intermingled with another folktale known as **The Waterfall Trolls** (known also from Scandinavian, particularly Icelandic, analogues).

The Bear's Son

Beowulf literally means 'bee-enemy' *ie* the honey-loving bear. Related Scandinavian accounts call the hero Bjarki or Biarco, 'little bear'. *The first element of Arthur's name is claimed to derive from Celtic* arth, *a bear.* Beowulf has the strength of 30 men. *Nennius records that at Badon Arthur alone defeated 960 men.* Beowulf crushes a Frankish champion, Dayraven, to death in his bear-like grip. *Geoffrey of Monmouth records Arthur's strength in the memorable fight with the cannibalistic giant of Mont Saint-Michel in Brittany. This is presaged in Arthur's dream of a dragon (himself) defeating a bear.*

Skilful Companions

Beowulf sets out from Sweden, journeying to Zealand in Denmark. He acquires no specialist companions, however, and the motif of treachery, if present, is very muted. *With him, Arthur takes Kay and Bedivere who, though we know them from* Culhwch ac Olwen *to be Skilful Companions, are merely supporting figures in Geoffrey.*

The assailant

The hall of the Danish king is periodically assailed at night by Grendel, a cannibalistic troll-like monster. Beowulf alone takes on Grendel, ripping off his arm in the struggle. *The giant of Mont Saint-Michel, having abducted not a princess but the niece of the Duke of Brittany, is attacked by Arthur in a typical* berserk *fury. Arthur slips out of the clutches of the giant's bear-hug and kills him with his sword.* The monster Grendel, mortally wounded escapes. *Bedivere hacks off the head of the giant.*

In the Bjarki-Biarco versions, the monster is a bear, and is defeated outside the hall. *Geoffrey reminds the reader of the parallel with Arthur's defeat of another giant, Ritho, who is known also from Welsh tradition.*

The Waterfall Trolls

Beowulf follows the trail of Grendel's blood to a lake or mere. He plunges into the mere, and in a cave behind a waterfall discovers Grendel's mother, who savagely attacks him. *In the Arthurian version the final element, the battle with the Waterfall Troll, is found in* Culhwch ac Olwen. *The last in a series of tasks to be accomplished by Arthur and his men is to obtain the blood of the Black Witch from 'the Valley of Grief in the Uplands of Hell'. Arthur's companions are both humiliated by their encounter with the witch.*

At his moment of greatest need Beowulf calls on the Almighty and a shaft of light illuminates the cave, revealing a sword on the wall. (Normally, of course, daylight turns trolls to stone.) With this magic sword he kills the hag and beheads the lifeless body of Grendel which he finds in the cave. *In a fury, Arthur, from the entrance to her cave, cuts the hag in half with his knife, Carnwennan. The tale is sometimes localised at Wookey Hole in Somerset, where the River Axe issues from a cliff in the Mendips, but this can hardly be classed as in "the North" as stated in the text.*

For Beowulf, there is no princess to rescue, and essentially that is the end of this episode. *Arthur, however, was unable to prevent the death of Helen, the Duke of Brittany's niece. She is subsequently buried on a nearby island which, as a result, becomes known as Tombelaine, Helen's Tomb.*

Motifs

There is no need of course, after noting the parallels, to jump track and assume that Beowulf and Arthur are one and the same

person. The comparisons above are a cheat: the Arthurian episodes are taken from different sources, not from one unified saga (despite what scholars like Markale might like to imply). So, while *Beowulf* mixes in some chronological references which seem to place its hero around 500, it is quite clear from study of its analogues, and of hero tales from other cultures, that the Beowulf character has been carefully grafted into a historical context. The mythic elements are powerful, but not historic - Grendel's attack on the Danish king's hall is reminiscent of the motif of the Monstrous Hand as found in the Mabinogion story of *Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed*, but no-one would want to suggest that Beowulf is identical with Pwyll.

And so, despite some points of contact, neither 'Antar nor Beowulf could be regarded as candidates for Arthur - geography alone nullifies any possible claim, despite their near contemporaneity.

What relationship then do they then have with Arthur? If, as other essays in this issue argue, Arthur was preceded by prototypes - *proto-Arthurs* as Geoff Roberts puts it - then contemporary parallels or analogues like 'Antar or Beowulf could perhaps be distinguished as *Arthur-types*.

This may pre-suppose that a historic Arthur existed. Not necessarily. Alcock suggested (1971) that a pre-eminent figure with the appropriate authority was responsible for refurbishing South Cadbury hillfort in Somerset. This individual he labelled as an "Arthur-type figure", thereby sidestepping the issue of who that individual was. Later, Alcock was to declare himself "agnostic" as regards Arthur's existence.

But if Arthur, as a pre-eminent authority figure, did not exist in the years around 500, where did the concept come from? Can we argue for an Arthurian *archetype*, just one of the facets of "the hero with a thousand faces"?

In other words, if Arthur didn't exist, did we have to invent him?

References

Leslie Alcock (1971) *Arthur's Britain*

Patrick K Ford (1977) trans *The Mabinogi and other Medieval Welsh tales* Berkeley: University of California Press

G N Garmonsway *et al* (1980) *Beowulf and its Analogues* Dent

Jean Markale (1976) *Le Roi Arthur et la société celtique* Paris: Payot

Steve Pollington (1987) letter in *Dragon* Vol 2 No 9

E L Ranelagh (1979) *The Past We Share: the near eastern ancestry of western folk literature* Quartet

[Parts of this article formerly appeared in Dragon, *Vol 2 Nos 10 & 11, edited by Charles Evans-Gunther]*

*Pen*Dragon

LAST BUT ONE

◆ *From Annette Johnstone, Livingston, West Lothian:*

I have just finished the final part in Helen Hollick's Pendragon trilogy, *The Shadow of the King*. Although I have much to learn about Arthur and his life, for me this is how it could have been. Helen's trilogy was so real, and her ability to make me feel as though I were there, part of the story and experiencing everything that Arthur and Gwenhwyfar were experiencing was excellent! I have never read or heard a tale like it before, Arthurian or otherwise. To have a character like Gwenhwyfar in Helen's books, loyal and loving to Arthur, her king and husband, strong and intelligent, was a refreshing change from the weak queen so often portrayed.

In reply to some comments made in the past couple of editions about the exclusion of Merlin and Lancelot, and does it work? Yes, I think it does work, and in fact much better so! For me all the stories with Merlin although fantastic are enjoyable, and if it wasn't for them I wouldn't have been introduced to Arthurian history, but they seemed a little unreal, unearthly even. The most interesting and fascinating things about Arthur are the ones that are factual, the ones that almost definitely were.

I enjoyed the article by John Ford, "Birth, Life, Death" [XXVI 3] and found it very informative. I have to say I find all the articles excellent and well researched.

◆ *An interview with Helen Hollick will appear soon in these pages.*

NIGGLES, NOT GIGGLES

◆ *From Susan Gaitley, Castleford:*

I enjoyed the summer edition of *Pendragon* [XXVI 3], especially John Ford's "Birth, Life, Death" which was straight-forward and an interesting read. Two little niggles:

1. Three books reviewed were pub-lished in America and John Matthews says of one 'Do anything to get these books.' Can someone tell me how to get access to books published in America because it is frustrating to be told there is a good book that I've no way of getting hold of.

2. It was a shame to see the letter page used by one author to criticise another and to publicise their own work ["Cornwell interview"]. Though I prefer Merlin to be in the books I read and Lancelot to be well out of the story I can still enjoy any combination of characters in or out of the story is well written. For me it is not that the facts are correct but that the telling of the story is vivid and done with feeling.

In defence of *The Winter King* (which I haven't read yet), a colleague of mine, who teaches English, says this is one of the best books he has read and he isn't interested in King Arthur at all.

◆ *From Mike Bannick, Halesworth, Suffolk:*

I think the Journal is at its best when it discovers sources and evidence which enables each reader to piece together a coherent account of the Arthurian narrative and its evolution through the course of time. Slowly but surely, new archaeological and literary scraps emerge, and to get news of these things fires the reader to speculate; to make the imaginative leaps that bring us close to the source of the mystery. *Pendragon* does this best.

There are many serious questions still unanswered. Why, and by what unwritten contract, was Arthur so comprehensively 'written out of history'? Some argue that the poet Shelley was to some extent sidelined by academics throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The historians under

Stalin did worse to Trotsky. So why did Arthur suffer so? What was his crime? Was he Pagan or merely Pelagian? And how are we to reach him now?

Beowulf survived in the Old English narrative, its mixture of Christian and Pagan notwithstanding. But Beowulf, of course, survives as a conquerors' hero. Perhaps he, by contrast, would have been elevated by the triumphant Anglo-Saxon hierarchs and their ecclesiastical servants, the clerics.

Whatever the case, I cannot believe that the trail is completely cold, and I look forward to sharing through *Pendragon* the ideas, the understanding and the erudition of your contributors.

For my money, the clues are most likely to be found to have their origin in Wales. Phillips and Keatman, despite a poor press (even in *Pendragon*) have made the most adventurous attempt so far to unravel things, and to speculate intelligently as to what might have happened. Perhaps we need to look again at their central thesis, and see how it might be refined.

One final note. The least successful aspect of *Pendragon* are its supposedly humorous bits. If I want a chuckle, I reach for Steve Bell, watch my grandchildren at play, see television, buy *Punch* or *Private Eye*. Let's keep *Pendragon* serious; we do not know enough to be funny about our subject. Perhaps the time will come...

◆ *Thank you, Susan and Mike, for your points, both plusses and minuses. In a way these are challenges to contributors, but an editor has to take some responsibility for a balanced presentation; I'll endeavour to do that in future.*

On the subject of humour, I'm not sure I agree with keeping Pendragon *serious! However, if Mike is refering to* Little-known Arthurian Facts, *for which there was virtually a resounding clash of silence, then I am pleased to announce that the cartoonist (much like Steve Bell) is at present "on holiday".*

GEOGRAPHY AND GERMANIA

◆ *From Phillip Clapham, High Wycombe, Bucks:*

Reference *Pendragon* XXVI 4, page 39 ("Can't see the wood for the Saxons") and the apparent anomaly that woodland re-growth was patchy and poor in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. A connection would seem to exist with the climactic downturn found in tree rings in Ireland and NW Europe at this time. See Professor Mike Baillie of Queens University in Belfast, author of *A Slice Through Time*, Batsford 1996.

◆ *From Archie Mercer, Truro, Cornwall:*

There are a couple of matters that I would like to enlarge on.

The first is [*the review of Anne Berthelot's* King Arthur: chivalry and legend *last issue*]. Although some of the allegations look reasonably reasonable, I would have to be given a lot more evidence before I could accept that "the Picts were apparently of Germanic origin". My understanding of the matter - though I plead ignorance of the *very* latest scholarship, if any - is that the Picts were strictly a political entity, not an ethnic nor a linguistic one. The southern Picts seem to have spoken a Brythonic (Celtic) dialect. The northern Picts spoke a language that, despite the existence of numerous inscriptions in a recognisable script, has never been deciphered. Philologists who have studied the corpus, however, are confident that the language cannot have been Indo-European - and thus is entirely unrelated to either Celtic or Germanic. In fact it was the language - or one of the languages - spoken in Britain before the Celts arrived.

During the Dark Ages, of course, this northern Pictish was steadily being sidelined by Gaelic (Celtic) pushing in from the west, and by English (Germanic) pushing up from the south. Furthermore, Vikings (Germanic) settled thickly around the coast of northern Scotland at this time (or just after, depending on how one interprets "Dark Ages"), and almost certainly interbred with the native Pictish population. The resultant hybrid population, however, could no longer strictly be called Pictish.

◆ *I entirely agree with you over this, Archie. My point is that Prof Berthelot's assertions (of those I listed) were at best contentious and at worst misguided when dealing with purely Dark Age matters. Archie continues:*

ON RELICS

The other matter is more general - concerning the entire corpus of what may be termed "personalised artifacts" - objects in museums, in private collections, or allegedly hidden for safe-keeping, that are associated with a specific person or a specific sequence of people. My point is that the whole lot can be regarded as, at the very least, highly suspect, and in fact are almost certainly spurious. There is even doubt about the authenticity of the Stone of Scone, and if some Scottish patriot was suddenly to wheel out an alternative stone that he claimed to be the original, I don't think that anybody would be able to prove which of the two (if, indeed, either) was the original and genuine article.

The Stone of Scone is a fairly substantial object. Most items in this class are a lot smaller, and over the years there has obviously been simply too much opportunity for the trail to be muddled - even supposing that the object originally was genuine. This can happen even to recent artifacts. A pen perhaps, a "lucky" coin, an article of clothing - associated with a celebrity can become a substitute under a variety of scenarios. For instance:

- *Scenario A.* A hero-worshipper finds an opportunity to substitute an identical replacement and takes the original home for private devotions. At his death the object, unrecognised by others for its true associations, is junked or dispersed.
- *Scenario B.* Some curatorial type, considering that the object does not look distinctive enough, substitutes something that does, disposing of the original.
- *Scenario C.* Simple carelessness - the object is lost, misplaced, allowed to mingle irrecoverably with similar others, or so on.

As I said back there, the whole lot, from BC to the present day or thereabouts, can be regarded as strictly dubious. The best that can be claimed is that you are seeing the sort of quill pen with which King John signed Magna Carta or George Washington signed the Declaration of Independence (if he did), the sort of nightdress that Queen Victoria might have owned and worn, the sort of beaker from which the dying Nelson might have sipped water, and so on. Of many earlier example, though, even this claim cannot realistically be made.

Of course, a small percentage of these personalised relics *may* still be genuine. But since they cannot be effectively segregated from the substitutes and fakes, the whole class can be condemned *en bloc*.

◆ *Archie takes a bleak view of relics and their provenance! Do other readers have strong views either way?*

WHOSE LANCE IS IT ANYWAY?

◆ *From Charles Evan-Gunther, Japan:*

I would like to make a few comments about Ian Forrester Roberts' interesting article on "The Lance of Longinus". The Spear of St Maurice in the Hofburg was given to Otto III by King Boreslav of Poland in 1000 AD and was probably forged no earlier than 300 years previous to this date! The weapon is obviously not from the first century and is unlikely to have been the piece of metal Peter the Hermit dug up.

In *Pendragon XXV 2* (summer 1995 *4-10*) I went into considerable detail about the Nazi-Arthurian connections. There is no evidence that Adolf Hitler "dabbled extensively in mysticism, and for many years he had been fascinated by the spear". The only real interest Hitler had in the Spear of Maurice in the Hofburg was that it was part of the regalia of the Hapsburgs - a dynasty he particularly disliked.

In *The Spear of Destiny* (published in harback by Neville Spearman with numerous photographs in 1972, and in paperback, *sans* photos, two years later) Trevor Ravenscroft created a story where Walter Stein finds in a bookshop, in the old quarter of Vienna, a copy of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parsival* containing annotations by its previous owner, Hitler. He makes enquiries and later meets Hitler. This is set in 1912, and though both were in that city at that time there is evidence that Stein did not meet Hitler until the 1930s, and no evidence that such a bookshop existed (see Charles Lawrie in *Shoreline* 2, 1989, 22 and *The Household of the Grail*, "'Doctor Stone' - Walter Stein and the Holy Grail" *135-6*). Nicholas Goodrick-*Clarke*, in his *Occult Roots of Nazism*, suggests that this incident is based on a similar one in Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Zannoni*.

Hitler committed suicide at around 15.30, 30th May 1945, not 14.10. General Patton did see the Spear, again according to Ravenscroft, but this was sometime after the war was over, at least in Europe. The 'mystical power' of the Spear, which never seemed to do anybody much good, never really came into the hands of the US and was returned to Vienna in January 1946!

BLARNEY AND *HUBRIS*

◆ *From Fred Stedman-Jones, Cheshire:*

In his article "The Lance of Longinus" Ian Forrester Roberts warns us that the tall tales told of this corroded spearhead are 'pure blarney' as everything physical is bound to conform to the laws of physics, which are really God's Laws and therefore inviolable.

This may be good news (gospel) to Ian but the implied egotism - that only the hypotheses of scientific minds, which are often at variance with each other, can express the Laws of God - is alarming, to say the least.

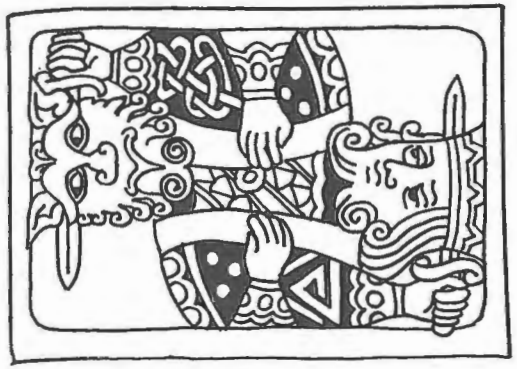
Can it be true that until a prophet of the god named Physics stuck a name tag on a twig of yew every wise woman or medicine man who gave it to his patients to chew to help alleviate a cancer was practising self-deluding 'Disneyesque' magic? This sounds like the same process by which the goddess Isis gained power over the mighty god Ra - by learning his secret name. Can it be true, or acceptable, that the scientist has now become God's spokeman on earth?

Our early ancestors decorated their flint tools and clay bowls with symbols, to invest these precious artifacts with the power to fulfil their functions. Today we print invisible symbols on tiny chips of silicon to empower them to perform miracles that would have brought us to the stake a few hundred years ago. I suppose we could try out our glib second-hand explanations of the laws of God, which allow us to perform these miracles, on our stern Dominican judges but we would have to think quickly on our racks to avoid the flames when the Devil caused viruses to grow where no laws allowed.

While we wait for our latter day scientific prophets to enact new inviolate laws we have to make do with other explanations for the inexplicable. For instance, why an old priest, completely crippled with arthritis for many years, was able to rise and walk unaided after praying and drinking water from the Nanteos Healing Cup. He lived another nine years and was able to resume his ministry with great joy. This was a psychosomatic cure of course, brought about by his faith (the power of his own mind perhaps). Then why is it that a veterinary surgeon, by education trained to be sceptical of miracles (but by experience aware of their reality no doubt) has gained remission from leukemia by drinking the water of the Cup?

I don't know but it might be as well for mankind to remember that thinking we know the mind of God can be a dangerous thing for our mental health. Carried too far it is a recognised psychotic condition, or so we are told by those scientists who understand the laws which govern 'the unfathomed potential of the human mind'. The Greeks called it *hubris*, I believe.

Perhaps, after all, there *are* more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio. Which leads me to wonder what discipline Hamlet's friend was studying at Wittenburg that he should say this to him. Physics, perhaps?



MORE ON *RELICS*

◆ *From Matthew Kilburn, Newcastle upon Tyne:*

Thank you for another enjoyable and stimulating edition of *Pendragon*. I read several numbers of *Pendragon* from the early 1980s in the Bodleian Library a couple of years ago (though those same numbers never returned to the library's stacks, as far as Bodleian records show - a great pity).

One of the subjects I remember taking up a few feet of column inches in those old issues was that of the mystery of Rennes-le-Château, and more particularly the 'solution' proffered by Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. I thought that the book was wonderful when it was first published - I was eleven years old at the time - but on returning to it a few years later I could see that there was a good deal of 'creeping certainty' used to 'prove' its assertions, as stone-inscribed facts were wrought from imaginative speculation.

It seemed fitting that the latest version of Henry Lincoln's theories should be reviewed in the first of the new series of Lovegrove *Pendragons*. Paul Smith's article on *The Key to the Sacred Pattern* was very informative and clear-headed. Perhaps someone could translate the books of Rivière and Jarnac into English, though realistically one can't expect that the task would stop the flow of books on Rennes and Saunière.

I enjoyed all the articles and it was good, as a graduate of the Oxford Arthurian Society, to see an article by Chris Gidlow finally appear in *Pendragon*. Chris's article complemented that by Helen Hollick in that both concerned the historical silence concerning the 'Arthurian period' which attracts and infuriates many Arthurians by turns. I tend to think that any mention of Arthurian cavalry reflects the later mediaeval world than any folk tradition concerning Arthur but Helen Hollick suggested convincingly that a small mounted elite could have existed.

◆ *Much thanks for your kind words, Matthew! A shame about those missing* Pendragons *from the Bodleian. Having an ISSN means copies of the journal being held at a number of national libraries, including the Bodleian. We don't generally keep back issues so it is particularly unfortunate when runs of any journal disappear permanently from public shelves. See also* ***The Board****.*

◆ *From Simon Rouse, Cambridge:*

Just a note to say thanks for the new *Pendragon*. I'm really enjoying it - excellent articles all round and nicely produced. I like the lettering you've used for the titles very much ... I'm looking forward to some great editions!

◆ *Simon was responsible for hand-lettering titles for many editions, not to mention some splendid front covers, including the striking design for the* ***Relics*** *issue.*

◆ *From Prof Bill Russell, Reading, Berks:*

Hearty congratulations on a splendid issue of *Pendragon*! Claire and I very much enjoyed it. Since Kuttner's hero is explicitly an avatar of Arthur, any chance of putting my Kuttner paper in the avatar issue?

◆ *Thank you! And yes, he is, we can, and we have!*

CROSS WORDS

◆ *From Reg Baggs, Windsor, Berks:*

Regarding your interesting article about the lead cross ["Arthur's Cross?" *last issue*], there must be a large number of copies in existence as they were advertised in both the 1928 and 1936 guide books for Glastonbury among a host of souvenirs. I have the 1936 copy with me. The 1928 book was donated to the Tribunal Museum years ago. The curator's eyes popped open wide when he saw it.

By the way, Charles Knight (1791-1871), one of Windsor's writers, in his great volume of 1844 *Old England, a Pictorial Museum*, states that [Windsor] Castle's round tower was *the* Round Table (200 feet in diameter).

◆ *Reg's copy of the ad reads, in part:*

UNIQUE SOUVENIRS of Glastonbury and the Abbey, In SILVER PLATE, BRASS and CHINA, including: the Glastonbury Bowl, Abbot Whiting knockers, King Arthur's sword "Excalibur", King Arthur's cross, King Arthur ash trays, toasting forks etc. All obtainable at The Souvenir Pavilion, Abbey Entrance.

I do remember members being shown a toasting fork in deepest Somerset in the mid-sixties, with a four-inch version of the cross at the top. In brass, though, not lead!

◆ *From Chris Street, Southgate, London:*

Unfortunately, we are unlikely to hear any further news about Mr Mahoney or his Arthurian Cross. Following a strange confrontation in which he entered Enfield Council offices brandishing a home-made gun, Derek Mahoney was reported to have committed suicide at his home in Enfield. I don't have a record of the exact dates, but I think it was at least seven years ago.

As far as I remember, there was a final reference to the cross, possibly in a note, to the effect that it had been moved from its original hiding place and that its whereabouts were now a matter of Nemesis. Nothing further has been heard of it since.

I personally made some attempts to locate it with the help of local psychics, but none of the leads turned up anything tangible.

◆ *From Gwilym ap Iorwerth, Flint:*

I have not been able to find any early inscribed stones in Wales that bear any strong resemblance with the Glastonbury Cross, except in Llangaffo where there are some crosses inscribed on gravestones, though without any wording. These are no earlier than the 9th century and may be as late as the 13th. It is suggested that they are copies of wooden crosses which had a spike at the base so they could be stuck in the ground. If the lower piece is for putting in the ground then, in the case of the Glastonbury Cross, the *NIA* of *AVALONIA* would disappear beneath the soil!

It may have been of English or Norman origin, thus making it unlikely to have been a genuine Arthurian relic, unless you take on board Leslie Alcock's idea of it being a copy of an earlier inscription. As for the shape of lettering - the square *C*s, *H*-like *N*s, *A*s with bar and so on are very rare in Wales.

It must also be remembered that the only visual reference to the Glastonbury Cross is from the late 17th century. The one found in recent times seems to fit well with the reproduction in William Camden's *Britannia*, which is 17.5 cm or six and seven-eighths inches in height, but the text mentions that it was about a foot long.

There seems little reason to believe that both are anything more than forgeries. Apart from the Llangaffo crosses there is nothing to support the Glastonbury Cross, and connecting Arthur with Glastonbury is equally dubious.

◆ *Gwilym has also written at length about the difficulties presented by the text on the cross, much of this anticipating the arguments of a follow-up article.*

LADY OF THE LAKE

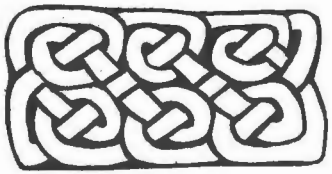
◆ *From Beryl Mercer, Truro:*

[Something] which rather stopped my book-writing in its tracks was Earl Spencer's announcement that his sister's body was to be buried on an island in the middle of a lake.

I went gooseflesh all over, and had to sit down fast. Because, a few days earlier, I had written up Gwenhwyfar's death in Camelot - and 'my' Camelot is situated on an island in the middle of a (Welsh) lake ... actually a real one: Llyn Syfaddan at Llangorse, which has its own legend of a sunken city. And now - if the book ever does get published - I suppose readers will think that I put Camelot ther *after* Diana's funeral ... but I didn't, honest!

I do feel that the great outpouring of grief for Diana was a very definite sign of an almost universal longing for a return of the Great Goddess - or, better still, a divine partnership.

◆ *Extract from a letter to Fred Stedman-Jones. Beryl's poem 'Lament' appears elsewhere. See also* **The Board**.



*Pen*Dragon *Notes*

◆ *From Dr A R Kraaijeveld, Sunningdale, Berks:*

I am interested in the history of board games in general and chess-like games in particular ... Do you have any information on how Celtic board games were played?

◆ *From Chris Lovegrove, Bristol:*

Pending a proper answer by a games authority, readers might be interested in a modern game produced by Waddington's in the sixties entitled *Camelot*. Designed for two players, red and white, each player's force has ten Men and four Knights.

The object of the game is to occupy the enemy castle at the opponent's end of the board, but the game can be won when one side is destroyed. There are plain moves (one square), jumps (a capture), canters (passing over a friendly piece) and a knight's charge! The game is played on a seven by seven board, with two extra starred squares at either end representing the castles. I have not seen this game available since the sixties.

*Pen*Dragon *Queries*

MARIGOLDS AND MAZES

◆ *From Dianne Binnington, Clifton, Bristol:*

Where in the likeness of a marigold
Meridianus sitteth in a maze.

Before she died, Jess [Foster, *founder of the Pendragon Society*] gave me this quotation - and I've never forgotten it! The marigold is obviously a sun-emblem, also indicating the zenith of the meridian/north point of the horizon.

◆ *Any ideas on the origin of this quote, or its significance?*

CELTIC HERITAGE

◆ *From Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks:*

It struck me that the incestuous relation of Arthur with his sister that produced Modred, so that the latter was both his son and his nephew, might echo the matrilinear system of inheritance (*eg* the Pictish) whereby a sister's son inherits. Incest would then form a compromise between that and an attempt to supersede by patrilineal descent: the custom of Egyptian Pharaohs marrying their sisters, adopted even by their Ptolemaic Greek successors, would perhaps reflect such a merging of two apparently contradictory inheritance systems.

I wondered if there has been any work done on this possibility, and if it did occur among Celtic cultures?

Reviews

Sources of the Grail: an anthology
selected and introduced by John Matthews
Floris Books 2nd ed 1997 *pbk* £14.99
ISBN 0 86315 249 X *575pp*

Of the several virtues exhibited in this volume the chief is the provision of key texts relating to the grail legends. Granted, some are in translations of relative antiquity, but it must be a rarity to find assembled together extracts from sources such as *Die Krone*, *The Elucidation* and the Breton folktale of *Perronik*, as well the more available *Perceval*, *Parzival*, *Perlesvaus* and *The Quest for the Holy Grail*.

This anthology also looks both backwards and forwards. The first part examines the Celtic wellspring of the legends - though whether this is their sole origin is debatable - while the final part looks at more recent interpretations, including those of A E Waite and Jessie Weston. The Celtic connection has been well aired over the years and will cause little surprise: *The Spoils of Annwn* is here, as are *Branwen* and *Peredur*, and essays by Sir John Rhys and by A C L Brown on the Irish contribution. "The Continuing Search" showcases, one might argue, mutually incompatible views of the grail - theories of gnostic, pagan, Templar, Cathar or Rosicrucian ritual are expounded, but also hypotheses of psychological and orthodox Christian origins and a study of native American analogues.

John Matthews' commentary is authoritative but light in touch, and while his selection of essays is eccentric it makes available a range of material not always easy to obtain. Nearly six hundred pages long, this is excellent value, though it seems we are little closer to Arthur Machen's *cri de coeur* in his *The Mass of the Sangraal*: "But at the last, what do we know?"

Chris Lovegrove

Mike Dixon-Kennedy
Heroes of the Round Table
illustrated by Chris Owen
Blandford 1997 *hbk* £18.99
ISBN 0 7137 2619 9 *192pp*

Who knows actually how many knights there were of the Round Table by the time Malory wrote his classic. Mike Dixon-Kennedy explores this with a background history looking at various aspects, including chapters on the historical and legendary Arthur, the origins of the Round Table and a round-up of 101 knights. The latter is not a complete list and is from various periods and traditions. Amongst them are a good number of Welsh names, mainly from a collection known as *Pedwar Marchog ar Hugain Llys Arthur* - the Twenty Four Knights of Arthur's Court. This is a late piece of work, highly influenced by French Arthurian tales. (This may be nit-picking, but it appears a number of times in the book - the author uses the word *hugan* instead of *hugain*.)

With a useful section on authors and sources, notes, further reading and index, the main body of the publication is taken up with material on characters from the legends, including Arthur, Merlin and a variety of knights. Amongst these are Bedivere, the Black Knight, Bors, Galahad, Gareth, Gawain, Kay, Lancelot, Lanval, Mordred, Perceval, Tristan, Yvain and, strangely enough, Morfran ab Tegid, who only appears in a couple of Welsh stories. Each of these knights are given a chapter to themselves, illustrated by pictures and, occasionally, a genealogy.

This collection is made up of a combination of different periods and traditions, often looking first at the Welsh sources and then building up a picture from the later tales. It is not a history book but rather a celebration of chivalrous characters from some of the classic adventure tales of the Middle Ages. Knighthood, however, is not really relevant to Wales until after the wars of 1277 and 1282, since before this period the *marchog* was basically a person entitled by the Laws to ride into battle on horseback. There were no tournaments in Wales until after the

Conquests and often the *marghog* dismounted before fighting in a battle. The origins of the king with his warriors goes back into the mists of time, but in the Middle Ages Welsh leaders always had a group of fighting men called the *teulu* (meaning the household guard, but a family in modern Welsh). There is little doubt that the Anglo-Norman form of chivalry didn't affect Wales until the 14th century and even then the Welsh were considered an unchivalrous rabble.

Despite the less than glorious origins of the adventures and tales, the Knights of the Round Table are part and parcel of the Arthurian scene, and Mr Dixon-Kennedy's publication is well worth a read. It makes an excellent introduction to the subject and is only let down by the wooden illustrations of Chris Owen. It is worth mentioning that the earlier part of *Heroes of the Round Table* is illustrated by photographs and a handsome drawing, by Steven Brown, of the Bertinus Chalice.

Charles W Evans-Gunther

Henry Jenner **King Arthur in Cornwall**
ed Kelvin I Jones, Oakmagic Publications
1996 £2.75
ISBN 0 9520166 9 *illus 36pp*
J Cuming Walters **Arthur's Lost Land: the legend sites of North Cornwall**
Oakmagic Publications 1997 £4.50
ISBN 1 901163 90 3 *illus 62pp*

Kelvin Jones has edited two 1911 essays by Jenner ("Some possible Arthurian Place-names in west Penwith" and "Tintagel Castle in history and romance") into one handy publication. Despite their age, they are remarkably unhysterical explorations of aspects of Dark Age Cornwall. The Tintagel piece takes a sceptical look at the supposed Arthurian associations, echoing Aad van der Geest's conclusion in *Pendragon XXVI 3*. The other essay looks at sites suggestive of links with Igraine, Gorlois, Cadoc, Modred, Gawain, Owein and others, and with Camlann. Jenner discusses the mechanisms by which such Arthurian names may have become located in west Penwith, warning that "when there is a choice between an interpretation of a name which is romantic, historical, mythological or poetical and one which is commonplace and prosaic, the latter ... is more likely to be correct." Although this may not be a popular conclusion, Jenner's background as a philologist lends authority to his more enthusiastic detective work.

First published in 1906 as "the lost land of King Arthur" Walters' piece looks at three specific sites - Tintagel, Nectan's Glen and Camelford - and finds little that is substantial. Mainly romance and poetry fill the pages, and "you will be free to reconstruct here in imagination the vanished realm of King Arthur." Even F J Snell's disappointment in 1926 was evident: of St Nectan's Glen (or St Knighton's Kieve) near Tintagel the latter wrote "Mr G Cuming Walters [*sic*] has a tale to tell which he gives as a genuine Cornish legend, but its antiquity may well be doubted."

Both books are excellent value and, together with a growing catalogue of titles on Cornish folklore and legends, are available from Kelvin and Debbie Jones, Oakmagic Publications, 2 South Place Folly, Penzance TR18 4JB. Send an A5 SAE for further details.

Chris Lovegrove

Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas
The Holy Grail
Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1997 £1.99
ISBN 0 297 823183 *illus* 40pp

Another glossy booklet in the *Mysteries of the Ancient World* series, it contains 21 whole pages of illustrations but only five complete pages of text; a small space in which to discuss this complex cultural symbol.

This may not be the purpose of the series, however: the cover blurb defines the aim as 'a re-evaluation of man's history, using the high-tech tools of modern archaeology, geology and astronomy in order to explain the mysteries of the ancient world.'

As we would anticipate from the authors of *The Second Messiah*, they use their high-tech tools to conjure up an Indiana

Jones scenario of heretical Templars, duplicated Messiahs, secret priests, Jewish resistance fighter and ancient bloodlines. The story ends up in Scotland at Roslin castle which, because the building has never been excavated, is 'almost certain' to contain an undisturbed secret.

A curiosity for the saddlebag of the seasoned grail questor; those newly dubbed should be wary of the enchantments of high-tech re-evaluators.

Fred Stedman-Jones

Classic Celtic Fairy Tales
selected and edited by John Matthews and illustrated by Ian Daniels
Blandford 1997 £18.99
ISBN 0 7137 2618 0 *hbk 192pp*

With a forward by R J Stewart, bibliography and index, these seventeen tales are primarily Gaelic but with one Breton and a Welsh story. Here is a marvellous collection of heroic adventures linking the world of man with that of the Otherworld. The reader can revel in the Celtic tales to his/her heart's delight. Each story has a set of notes compiled by John, consisting of its origin (what publication it came from) and a discussion of aspects such as symbolism. Many fit well into the standard heroic pattern - a quest, helpers and the like - followed by the success of the hero over seemingly insurmountable odds. Connections with other tales can be found and possible relationships with more famous stories, like the Quest for the Holy Grail, cannot be ignored.

I would only question the notes accompanying one of the stories and that is *The Legend of Llyn-y-Fan-Fach*. This, the only Welsh story in the collection, is very famous and, as the notes suggest, said to be linked with the famous *Physicians of Myddfai*. However, research has brought to light that this connection may be as recent as the nineteenth century and that there is no true link between the two stories. This, of course, should not spoil the reader's enjoyment of this classic tale.

Though this is a fascinating collection I found myself being put off by the often inappropriate illustrations of Ian Daniels. Warriors and heroes are depicted with white skins, long. sharp finger nails, feminine features and unrealistic gear - one character looked like he was carrying a case for a mobile phone! A couple do fit very well, however, such as the stag in the tale of *The Eagle of Loch Treig*. Strangely enough, a number of the illustrations are not done by Daniels and are not credited.

Despite the artwork this is a really excellent collection of tales. Don't take my word for it - read it!

Charles W Evans-Gunther

Book News

FICTION

Member Anna-Marie Ferguson of Red Deer, Canada, writes that she is illustrating a new, complete and unabridged edition of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. 'This is a collaboration with John Matthews who has done some editing of the text and written a new introduction, which I shall follow up with a word on the history of the illustration of Malory. I'm not quite halfway through the paintings, of which there are thirty-two, and haven't even begun the pen and inks. As you may imagine, it's a bit overwhelming at times, and I do have my periods of panic. However I do feel most privileged to be illustrating Malory.'

Several members have drawn our attention to Bernard Cornwell's latest Arthurian saga, *Excalibur* (**Michael Joseph** £16.99 hardback). Michael Arditti in *The Daily Mail* [13.12.1997] declares that Cornwell presents Arthur as "a prototype US Marshal struggling to establish a code of honour and decency in the Wild West" - that wild west being the west of England. Meanwhile, Nesta Herbert informs us that Marion Zimmer Bradley's prequel to *Mists of Avalon* is this year available (also from Michael Joseph). Entitled *Lady of Avalon* it too retails in hardback at £16.99.

'Camlann', a poem by Fred Stedman-Jones which appeared in *Pendragon XIX 4* 1989, is to be published this year by Alan and Barbara Lupack of 'The Round Table' New York in their forthcoming anthology of Arthurian poetry.

Some recent Arthurian titles noted by Susan Gaitley include
Stephen Lawhead *Grail*. Lion Publishing 0745938825
Nancy McKenzie *The Child Queen*. Del Rey Books 0345382447. Also *The High Queen*
Return to Avalon: twenty original stories edited by Jennifer Robertson 0886776791 £5.99
Anne McCaffrey *Black Horses for the King*. 0552529737 £3.99
The Legend of Arthur, published by Brockhampton Press (01860195547) is, writes Susan, "a book of passages taken from Tennyson, Malory, Morris *etc* with beautiful illustrations"
The Chronicles of the Holy Grail edited by Mike Ashley 1854874530 £5.99
Susan notes "in the *Past Times* catalogue (01993 770440) there is a book set called *Chronicles of King Arthur* £11.99.
This has two books - *Tales of the Round Table* and *Quest for the Holy Grail*, both edited by Mike Ashley.
The Quest for the Holy Grail and *The Chronicles of the Holy Grail* are probably different editions of the same book."

Haydn Middleton *The Queen's Captive* (a "Mordred Cycle novel") **Warner Books** £5.99 0751516619. Fred Stedman-Jones spotted the completion of the trilogy of these "dark and powerful retellings of the Arthur legend", *The Knight's Vengeance*, in **The Softback Preview**. Normally a Little & Brown hardback at £16.99, this is available as a TSP exclusive at £9.99. It completes the sequence begun by *The King's Evil*.

Ronan Coghlan of **Excalibur Books** highlights a recent work of the late Vera Chapman (1898-1996): she was "the foundress of the Tolkien Society and wrote a well-known Arthurian trilogy. The manuscript of *The Enchantress* - an Arthurian novel featuring Morgause, Vivian and Morgan - was discovered after her death." Published by Gollancz, this 223-page hardback retails at £16.99. Also, Patrick MacCormack's *Albion, the last companion* (Raven £9.95) is described thus: "Ten years after Camlann, a band of adventurers seeks to save Arthur's dream of Albion; but a band of Irish warriors with a witch-doctor are searching for a magic chalice procured by Arthur years before from the Western Isles..."

NON-FICTION

Geoffrey Ashe's *Traveller's Guide to Arthurian Britain* (1997) is a re-issue by **Gothic Image**, Glastonbury of his classic *Guide to Arthurian Britain* but in a new format, with reset text, redrawn maps and new photographs. The inappropriate drawings of the previous editions have disappeared into a twilight zone, and the whole is designed to fit into, one supposes, the side pocket of a backpacker's rucksack.

Michael Holmes' *King Arthur - a Military History* (from **Blandford**) appears in a news item ("Historian 'finds site of Arthur's last battle'") by the science editor of *The Weekly Telegraph* [10.9.97] provided by Beryl Mercer. The retired physicist claims that the battle of Camlann was at the Goring Gap. Medraut, with an Anglo-Saxon force, challenged Arthur

somewhere on the line of the Icknield Way joining South Cadbury with Ipswich. The Goring Gap, where the Thames winds through the Chilterns, best fits the meaning of "crooked glen" in fields just north of Streatley, at a point where the ridgeway meets a Roman road. A large find of weapons of the period was apparently made in the Thames nearby.

Bossiney Books publish *King Arthur in the West* (95pp £3.25), *King Arthur in Somerset* (94pp £3.50) and *King Arthur Country in Cornwall* (101pp £3.75), titles obtainable from **Excalibur Books** - postage extra - *tel* 01247 458579 (or 011 44 1247 458579 from USA). Other publications offered include
Geoffrey Ashe *Dawn behind the Dawn*, the search for the lost golden age (Holt £6.99)
Chris Barber *Arthurian Caerleon* (**Blorenge** £3.99)
Jack Gale *The Circle and the Square*, psychic questing at Glastonbury (Capall Bann £10.95)
Ronan Coghlan's own *Handbook of Fairies*, an alphabetical guide to the different kinds of fairy and to faerie lore (**Capall Bann** £9.95)

Among new archaeological reports published by **English Heritage** is Tony Wilmott's *Birdoswald* (ISBN 1 85074 646X). The eleventh fort from the east end of Hadrian's Wall, described as the 'great ruynes' in 1599, is sometimes identified as *Camboglanna* (and the alleged site of the strife of Camlann), though modern research suggests otherwise. The 1987-92 excavations add to the picture of settlement there from the 2nd to the 20th centuries, though the £60.00 price tag might put you off. *The Baths Basilica Wroxeter* (by Philip Barker and others, ISBN 1 85074 528 5, price £70.00) provides important information for the study of the late and post-Roman periods in Britain. Viroconium Cornoviorum, of course, features strongly in the theories of Phillips and Keatman regarding Arthur's *alter ego* as Owain Danwyn.

Chris Barber launched his latest book, *In Search of Owain Glyndwr*, at the Celtica Centre, Machynlleth on Saturday 14th March 1998. It was at Machynlleth in January 1400 that Glyndwr was crowned in the open air, 'by the grace of God, Prince of Wales' - the first true Welsh Assembly and Parliament. A review will appear next issue - Fred notes that his disappearance has Arthurian resonances in Wales.

MEDIA

Fred Stedman-Jones is also, by invitation, writing with his son Richard a playscript for a Millennium Arthurian production at the famous clifftop Minack Theatre in Cornwall.

The Search for the Holy Grail was shown on *BBC2* on Thursday, February 12th 1998 at 9.30 and the 50 minute film was produced and directed by Michael Symmons Roberts. Beryl Mercer writes: "Personally I found this recent TV programme about the Grail disappointing. I expect Fred Stedman-Jones will have something to say about the section which dealt with the Nanteos Cup in the present guardianship of the Powell family, but the programme did not say - or speculate upon - how or whence the Cup reached the Strata Florida Abbey. Neither did any of the experts deal with the possible mistranslation of *pêcheur*; if it was *pêcheur* with a circumflex, then yes, it was 'fisher'. But if it was *pécheur* with an acute accent, then it was 'sinner' - which might have made more sense of the legend, in my opinion.

The third omission, in this context, was not quoting the question which Parsifal/Perceval should have asked; viz *Whom does the Grail serve?* I wish they didn't concentrate so heavily on the medieval legends, most of which are chivalric, Christian-based rubbish grafted on to the earlier - and admittedly darker - pagan Arthurian history."

STOP PRESS *The Small Press Guide*, the 3rd edition of 'a detailed guide to poetry and small press magazines' (including *Pendragon*) is published by Writers' Bookshop of 7-11 Kensington High Street, London W8 5NP, price £9.99 ISBN 0 9529119 6 5

The Guardian

Sheltered in caverns, deep underground,
Wrapped in dreamless sleep, with peace refound.
Covered by legend to keep him warm,
Wound tightly around his sleeping form.
The rock over him, his castle wall,
Soaring heavenward above him tall.
Over that, deep coverings of earth,
With soft grass his eiderdown of worth.
Arthur, born of an unforgotten sin,
Sired by Uther, raised by Merlin.
Cloaked in magic, he stood for the right,
King in Camelot, ready to fight,
To conquer evil, to make its reign cease
And welcome in years of tranquil peace.

Until betrayed, he wearied and fled,
Interned here with prayers for the dead
By knights so plagued with guilt and fears,
Bereft of their king, defeated by tears.
They did not perceive they mourned in vain,
Arthur merely slept before waking again.
So he lies entombed with sword to hand,
Awaiting the call to make his last stand.
Arthur and Excalibur, man and sword,
Our King forever. This land's true Lord.

Jean Benson

Pendragon

Arthur of Albion. The Pendragon banner held high.
A time of splendour as the world was set to rights
When the sun shone down from an unclouded sky
And sensuous pleasure filled the warm dark nights.
Eternities of Glory lighted torches to lead us,
Undimmed even now, despite the way it ended,
Evoking lingering images conjured to feed us
Of one who still exists. In spirit transcended
Into myth and legend, part of our world,
His banner still aloft, proud and unfurled.

Jean Benson

Lament

The Goddess is dead.
And who shall take her place,
Now that our shining star of hope
Is lost in Time and Space?

The Princess is dead.
And who shall fill the role
So splendidly interpreted
By that noble, loving soul?

Diana is dead.
And where in all the world
Shall we find someone to follow
That much-loved, golden girl?

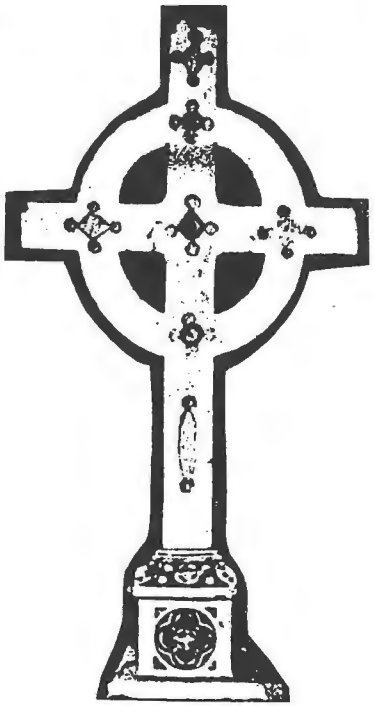
Now all the hymns are sung,
And all the prayers are said;
A nation's tears are shed
For one who died too young.
Sad, muffled bells are run,
Memorial flowers are flung ...

The Goddess is dead.

Beryl Mercer

In Search of Camelot

Ray Turley

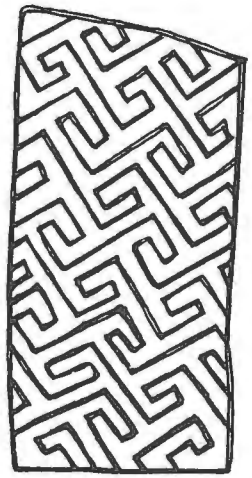


Here in a nest of staring eyes,
uncaring in the hollow ring of unlove's love;
a broken grail drips wine
and blood,
beneath the crush of tarmac fields.
Tyre treading and unheeding, rush the speeding nowhere,
bleeding grimaces locked in a jaw,
where smiles belong.
And who, inside a noisy head,
may hear the subtlety of nature's song?

Who spares a thought for this man-magic lost?
Lost to a time which tears apart
the heart of beauty time once made.
Who sheds a tear for Camelot?

Did we once believe, between these running hills?
conceive a citadel, where river tides spell out
an ocean's longing to return and bring
his touch again upon Caerleon's bridge
- the longing of a King.
And, if we watched, who were we then,
urging not gain or loss?
but merging with the music of the feasting hall,
feeling the unknowable and knowing all,
beneath the Celtic cross.

Those hearts who lived what isness calls to test
loved only what is love;
rode out upon a wildflower path
to watch the golden turrets set a sleepy sun to rest.
Could I have nestled there, upon the thigh of twilight's lap,
with whispered stories of a sword which heals
amid the swords which cut?



Dare I feel it here again
beneath the sooted urban clouds,
the rain which stings the eye;
and be devoid of pain?
Shall I release the breath of Merlin from the bits and bytes,
which spin him on a floppy disc of endless days and nights,
in treasuries where blades of grass
are sentenced for their loss
of cost effectiveness?

Can I shut out this stoney-faced insensitivity

which so ungraced the worldly poise
in IBM compatibility
and need's unheeding noise?

Oh yes;
I will not wail the stranger's dirge!

The ancient magic wells up beneath my feet,
where blood-wine lives in earth
and calls upon the stars
to mend its broken cup;
and looking up, and reaching out to share,
I find a gathering of friends among the knights,
and hear a minstrel's song upon the air.

A flowing lady comes, spun out of white-fleeced clouds,
inviting me to fly a mystic space where time forgot;
a space where earth and heaven truly touch;
and here, for me,
is Camelot.

Guinevere

Greetings, My Lady, High Queen of Albion
Daughter of Leodegrandz, Heir to his Throne
Born of the Summer Seas, Princess and Beauty
Wife of Pendragon, yet ever Alone

Symbol of Beauty, Truth, Love and Honesty
Honour and Power, Elegance and Might
Set on your Pedestal, Duty, Serenity
Idol and Legend, Shining and White

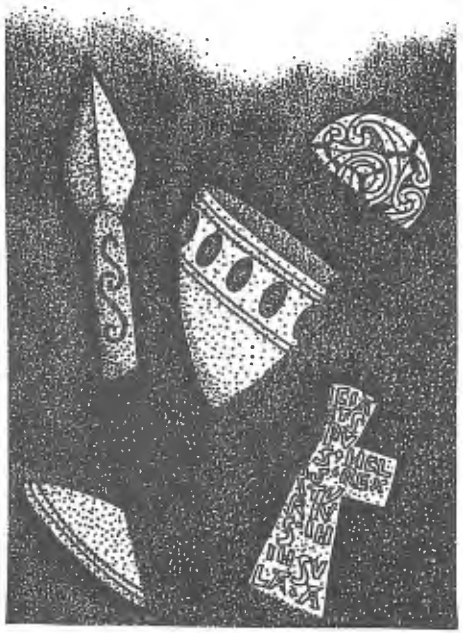
Virtue personified, Maker of History
Darling and Moppet, Jewel in the Crown
Standing for Purity and Wisdom and Dignity
But a Look from your Champion, and all falls down

Barter

See now where her greed has brought her
Darkening the silvered water
Fragrant smoke from herbal slaughter
Tortured by this priestess daughter
Far from sight, where Morgan taughter
Striving then, the Wildness fought her
She sang so sweetly, the Darkness sought her
And as she jumped, it stretched and caught her

Anne-Marie Lewis

The Board



SUMMER QUESTS

A major international Arthurian conference is due to be held this summer in Lampeter in Welsh-speaking west Wales [see ad on back cover]. The New York Open Center's **The Grail: Arthurian Mysteries and the Grail Quest** will bring together a glittering line-up of 'scholars, writers, artists and visionaries to explore this most evocative and elusive of themes'.

Presenters will include John Matthews (*Wasteland and the Wounded King*), Sioned Davies (*The Arthur of the Welsh*), Caitlin Matthews (*The Head in the Dish*), Miranda Green (*Cauldrons of Regeneration*), Geoffrey Ashe (*The Grail of the Golden Age*) and workshops from Nicholas and Clare Goodrick-Clarke, Gareth Knight, Paul Bembridge and others. There will also be a contribution from Tristan Gray Hulse on *Relics of the Grail*, and other events yet to be confirmed.

In the evenings storytellers, poets and musicians are promised, including Robin Williamson of The Incredible String Band, a harpist, singers and a showing of the film *Perceval le Gallois*.

Members will not need persuading that the grail quest 'continues to be a challenge to the understanding after hundreds of years, urging the modern reader to reach a spiritual comprehension suitable to our time. Its echoes increasingly haunt psychology and literature; what unique mythic potency does the grail possess that has enabled it to endure so long?'

A complete brochure is available from New York Open Center, 83 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012. *Tel* (212) 219-2527 *or fax* (212) 219-1347 *or e-mail* NYOCreg@aol.com *or access website* http;//www.opencenter.org

The Summer Academy is running its "quality" study holiday courses in *Aberystwyth* and in *Exeter*. 1998 themes are Heritage, Countryside, The Arts, and Personal Development and include

King Arthur: Legend, History & Literature Gerald Morgan runs this course at **Aberystwyth** from 15-22 August, and there will be a chance to see manuscripts in the National Library which contain the earliest Arthurian stories

The Once & Future King is led by Fran and Geoff Doel at **Exeter** 25 July - 1 August, exploring *the evolution of the Arthurian legends* and visiting Tintagel and Glastonbury

Both courses cost £430. The 1998 programme brochure is now available from Summer Academy, Keynes College, The University, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NP *Tel* 01227 470402 / 823473 or *fax* 01227 784338 or *e-mail:* summeracademy@ukc.ac.uk. Early booking is advised, with a deposit of £50 per person per course.

Monitor: Fred Stedman-Jones

NOMS DE PLUME

A US horror/fantasy poetry magazine called *Penny Dreadful* is published by **Pendragonian Publications**, and has as editor/publisher someone with the resonant penname of M Malefica Grendelwolf Pendragon Le Fay. S/he may be contacted at 407 West 50th St, #16, Hell's Kitchen, NY 10019.

Meanwhile **Arthur Uther Pendragon**, Honoured Pendragon of the Glastonbury Order of Druids, Official Swordbearer of the Secular Order of Druids, and Titular Head and Chosen Chief of the Loyal and Arthurian Warbands, was arrested in April 1997 for being in possession of his sword Excalibur and a ritual dagger at a demonstration in Trafalgar Square.

On November 5th 1997 he and his sword were re-united by a judge at Southwark crown court. Ronald Hutton, professor of history at Bristol University had left the court "in no doubt that this defendant's druid credentials are genuine." According to Judge Stephen Robbins, it was "not in the public interest to pursue this case" [reported *The Guardian* the next day].

Monitor: Steve Sneyd

MERLIN'S MART

Dark Age personages were well represented in British **philately** in 1997: Saint Columba was featured on 26p and 37p stamps, while Saint Augustine graced the 43p and 63p issues. All designs were based on generalised medieval manuscript illustrations, and celebrated the 1400th anniversaries of, respectively, Columba's death and Augustine's mission to the pagan English.

"The Queen's Heraldic Beasts" features on stamps issued on 24th February, marking 650 years since the Order of the Garter was founded. This organisation, of course, took the place of a projected Order of the Round Table.

The King Arthur Collector Knife is a limited edition folding knife "accented with sterling silver and genuine onyx" and created by "world-renowned" artist Donato. Authorised by the International Arthurian Society, the $37.50 features a portrait of the young Arthur in sword-pulling mode, but the offer from The Franklin Mint (Franklin Center, PA 19091-0001) ended December 1997. Also available is **Excalibur**, America's Best Dehydrator, from 6083 Power Inn Road, Sacramento CA 95824-2320. Its horizontal trays dry vegetables, fruit, flowers etc in hours.

Monitors: Mary (Long) Mayer, Beryl Mercer

Caledon BC publish **The Celtic Wheel of the Year**, a calendar of the monthly lunar cycle. Beginning in November, "the start of the Celtic year", the wheel incorporates the Gregorian calendar, quarter festivals, lunar phases and an "ogham wheel". The 1997-8 Wheel of the Year costs £5.50 (cheques etc to "A Quinn") from Caledon BC, 14 Cluny Gardens, Glasgow, G69 7BL, Scotland.

STORYTELLING

Some performance storytelling with an Arthurian theme will sadly be done and gone by the time this is in print, but productions are often resurrected!

January 25th: Kelvin Hall's *Parsifal* at the Norwich Crick-Crack Club, The King of Hearts, Fye Bridge Street, Norwich

March 14th: Hugh Lupton's *Tristan and Isolde* at the Watermans Arts Centre, Brentford

Workshop

27th April - 2nd May: *The Totemic Animals of Britain* exploratory retreat with Hugh Lupton and Eric Maddern at the Taliesin Trust, Ty Newydd, Llanystundwy, Cricieth, Gwynedd *tel* 017665 22811

Audio cassette

Branwen by Hugh Lupton and Helen Chadwick (COS T9) for £8.00 inc p&p payable to "COST Tape Account" from Company of Storytellers Tapes, c/o 8 church Terrace, Aylsham, Norfolk NR11 6EU.

Further information on traditional storytelling from Ben Haggarty, c/o Marley Bank, Whitbourne WR6 5RU *tel* 01886 821 576

ARTHURIANA

Dragons, stones and ravens feature in some of the recent crop of exchange journals. *The Dragon Chronicle* ***11*** has the usual range of dracophile material, including a number of contributions on the origins of the beast, whether in China, Europe or elsewhere. *Meyn Mamvro* ***34*** has incidental references to Arthur in a couple of articles: Andy Norfolk's "Cornish Dragon Lore" recaps Arthur's request to St Carantoc to deal with a dragon infestation, while editor Cheryl Straffon (in "Chapel Idne and the Holy Well") cites a Cornish Arthurian tale, The Battle of Vellan-Druchar, where Arthur and nine other kings beat off a Danish invasion of Land's End. The same issue also includes news of St Nectan's Glen and waterfall, by Tintagel, which the National Trust might be interested in acquiring. Local tradition claims the quest for the Holy Grail began from here (see *Book Reviews*).

Various exchanges carry news of the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire (well, alright, it's not strictly speaking Arthurian, but check out Penelope Lively's *The Whispering Knights*, 1971). After much publicity the site has been bought by the highest bidder and a Trust is being established (*Northern Earth* ***72*** and *The Cauldron* ***86***). Arthur's Stone at Dorstone, Herefordshire, gets detailed mention in George Nash's "At the centre of the Neolithic World" (*3rd Stone* ***28***), this being a landscape study of chambered monuments in the Black Mountains of central Wales. Of course, other than the name, Arthur's Stone has nothing to do with our hero (has it?) but nor has *At the Edge* ***8***, a "Rock Art Special Issue" anything to do with album covers, but both are recommended nevertheless.

Tina Deegan's "The Morrigan" (*Dalriada* ***12/4***) mentions in passing that Morgan le Fay has been suggested as a later British version of the Irish goddess. The author however prefers the interpretation *Mór Rigan* meaning "Great Queen" (or "Phantom Queen") whilst drawing attention to her connections with land and cattle, war and ravens.

MEDIA

A new mini-series, *Merlin*, is in preparation for NBC Television in the United States, starring Sam Neill as Merlin. "Apparently some of the team who made 1996's *Gulliver's Travels* are involved, and principal photography is being undertaken in Wales, seemingly to Cornwall's ire," writes Matthew Kilburn.

"America seems more enthusiastic for the Matter of Britain than Britain itself at the moment," he adds. "Certainly most of the enquiries the Oxford Arthurians receive by e-mail comes from North America, and a growing proportion of the Oxford membership comes from that continent too, including this year's President and Secretary."

Old News

ARTHURIAN CARHAMPTON

Imported Mediterranean pottery has been found near Eastbury Farm at Carhampton in Somerset, according to a report in the *Western Morning News*, January 13th 1998. "The pottery goes back to the 6th century, which fits in well with the so-called Dark Age period," announced Somerset County archaeologist Bob Croft.

Evidence of a Dark Age settlement, with a burial ground and remnants of metal working, came to light after surveying for a by-pass four years ago stumbled on a Saxon cemetery.

Local legends link the area with St Carantoc, reputed to have built a church at Carhampton on land given to him by Arthur. Stories of floating altars and pacified dragons now have something more substantial to go on - a high status settlement comparable with Tintagel, South Cadbury and Glastonbury.

Monitor: Beryl Mercer

KING ARTHUR'S CAERLEON

Recent headlines like *Town lays claim to Arthur* and *Haven of calm in seat of King Arthur*, plus statements like "Caerleon is one of the most important archaeological sites in western Europe" sits oddly with local newspaper reports that the place "has yet to fulfil its potential as a major tourist attraction".

However Caerleon is due to receive up to £1.8 million for development as part of the Wales Tourist Board's Historic Town initiative. One key project is an "Arthurian Experience" - a new feature to exploit Caerleon's links with Arthurian legend, as Glastonbury and Tintagel have already done.

Retired GP Dr Russell Rees is keen for the Ffwrwm Arts Centre to be the focus of a new visitors centre and exhibition. Its sculpture garden already contains carved wooden thrones of Arthur and Guinevere, and Ffwrwm even gets a mention in the *Rough Guide to Britain* [reports the *South Wales Argus* 1.12.97].

Dr Rees also hopes to develop interest in the nearby Lodge Hill 17-acre hillfort, reputedly built by the Welsh king Belin.

Meanwhile, the Caerleon Traders and Marketing Group assert in a promotional leaflet that "Arthur was a King in Gwent from AD 480 to AD 537 and was crowned in St Cadoc's Church in Caerleon", though whether or not this was the "mythical" Arthur will be "the subject of on-going debate".

Monitor: Fred Stedman-Jones

Archie Mercer

It is with deep regret that we have to inform members of the death in March of Archie Mercer, of Truro in Cornwall. We send Beryl, his wife, our condolences in her sad loss, and remember his occasional contributions, always thoughtful and measured, to the pages of *Pendragon*.

Exchange Journals

ANCIENT Bimonthly review of antiquity, devoted to the entire Ancient World from Sumer to pre-Columbian America *Editor* Ward Rutherford, Agora Publications, 18 Springfield Road, Brighton BN1 6DA *Sample* £2.00 *Year's sub* (6 issues) £11 *A4*

ANIMALS & MEN 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) £9.00 *A4*

CAERDROIA Mazes and labyrinths *Editors* Jeff and Deb Saward, 53 Thundersley Grove, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB *Yearly* £6.00, 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* £2.00 *Cheques* David James *A5*

DALRIADA All aspects of Insular Celtic culture, traditions and beliefs, ancient and modern, also Celtic Heritage Soceity 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* £2.00/$5 *Annual sub* £7.00/$15 (four issues) *Cheques* Dragon's Head Press PO Box 3369, London SW6 6JN *A4*

HALLOWQUEST Newletter published by Caitlin and John Matthews giving news of their publishing and teaching programmes and related events, often contains special offers *4 issues* £6.00 *Cheques* Graal Publications BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX *A4*

MEYN MAMVRO *Stones of our Motherland* Earth energies, ancient stones, sacred sites, Cornish prehistory and culture, legend, folklore *Editor* Cheryl Straffon, 51 Carn Bosavern, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX *Sample* £2.00 *Annual sub* £6.00 *A5*

NORTHERN EARTH Earth mysteries, antiquarianism and cultural traditions *Editor* John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W Yorkshire HX7 5NP *Sample* £1.70, four issues £6.00 *A5*

THE RENNES OBSERVER Journal of the Rennes Group: the mystery of Rennes-le-Chateau and its priest Sauniere - meetings, visits *Editor* 'Cilhaul', Tylwch, Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6QX *Sample* £2.00, three for £6.00 *A5*

THE ROUND TABLE Journal of poetry and fiction, strong Arthurian interest, including special editions *Editors* Alan Lupack, Barbra Tepa Lupack *Enquiries* The Round Table, Box 18673, Rochester, New York, 14618, USA (enclose IRC) *A5*

THE SILVER WHEEL Journal of Native Pagan Tradition *Sample* £2.00, four issues £7.50, published at the fire festivals *Cheques* A Franklin, PO Box 12, Earl Shilton, Leicester LE9 7ZZ *A4*

THIRD STONE (Earth = 3rd stone from the Sun), no nonsense approach to ancient sacred sites and symbolic landscapes *Sample* £2.75, £10.00 for four, from PO Box 961, Devizes, Wilts SN10 2TS *A4*

***Editors** please check your entry **Readers** please mention **Pendragon** when writing to editors and advertisers and include an SASE (IRC abroad)*

Pendragon 98

Glastonbury 16th - 17th May

Saturday 16th May

1.00 Meet at Glastonbury Abbey car park
1.30 ***Tour of Abbey*** led by Chris Lovegrove
3.00 Free time exploring the Tor, Chalice Well and shops
6.30 ***AGM*** (followed by Open Evening) in the Library of Avalon, off High Street
As you stand at the bottom of the High Street there is a passageway 50 yards up on the right. The library is at the end of the passageway on the first floor
Notices pointing out the location will be posted on the day

Open Evening

8.00 **John Matthews**, author of several Arthurian works
8.30 **Mary Caine** will introduce her book and video on the Glastonbury Zodiac
9.00 **Geoffrey Ashe** on the Arthurian connections in Glastonbury and surrounding area
9.30 *Open Forum and question time*
Panellists to include **Helen Hollick**, author of *Pendragon's Banner* trilogy **Keith Pickett** (the Library of Avalon) plus the evening's guest speakers

Sunday 17th May

10.00 Meet at the Abbey car park before setting off for ***South Cadbury***
[approximately 10 miles]
This is claimed as the original of Camelot,
and is the site of a major archaeological exploration in the late sixties

Pendragon members wishing to attend please contact John Ford by mail, phone or e-mail
41 Ridge Street, Watford, Herts WD2 5BL
***tel** 01923 440636 **e-mail** johnford@mcmail.com*

Pendragon members and partners admitted free
Non members £2.00 admission

Tourist Information Centre
The Tribunal
9 High Street
Glastonbury BA6 9DP
tel 01458 32954
Approximate cost of B&B
£15.00 per person

Raffle! *Book prizes signed by guest authors*
Other member authors are very welcome to donate signed copies
Guest authors have agreed to do book signings of members' own copies

The New York Open Center Presents:

THE GRAIL:
Arthurian Mysteries & the Grail Quest

AUGUST 8–13, 1998

Lampeter, Wales

The Quest for the Holy Grail is an eternal symbol of the search for meaning and transcendence and speaks to the deepest yearnings of the psyche. The first references to Arthur and the Grail appear in the stories and legends of Wales. Join us for a profound week in the beautiful hills and valleys of West Wales with scholars and visionaries to explore this most evocative and elusive of themes. For this conference suggests that humanity is still inwardly in search of the Holy Grail and its meaning.

John Matthews:
Wasteland & the Wounded King
Miranda Green:
The Cauldrons of Regeneration
Caitlin Matthews:
The Head in the Dish
Paul Bembridge:
The Grail & the Knights Templar
Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke:
The Gnostic Vision of the Grail
Gareth Knight:
Faery Tradition, the Crusader Kingdoms & the Holy Grail
Geoffrey Ashe:
Why the Grail Today?
Sioned Davies:
The Arthur of the Welsh
Christopher Bamford:
What Ails Thee?

For a full brochure contact:
New York Open Center
Box 100, 83 Spring Street, New York, New York 10012
Tel: (212) 219-2527 Fax: (212) 219-1347
e-mail: nyocreg@aol.com http//www.opencenter.org

NY Open center