

pendragon



# EDITORIAL



XXVII 2

The term given to the creative literature that accumulated (and continues to accrue) around the figure of King Arthur is the Matter of Britain, *la matière de Bretagne* as it was known in the medieval period. This issue randomly explores **The New Matter of Britain** (as we might call it) - modern interpretations, both fictional and factual, of Arthurian lore. There are interviews with modern authors, studies of societies and of fantasy literature, prose and poetry contributions, plus reviews and overviews of other fictional approaches. I hope the resulting *pot-pourri* is a faithful reflection of the vibrancy of our sphere of interest, demonstrating that it displays a continued resonance and relevance for our late twentieth century culture, with enough energy to take it spinning into the new millennium.

Disappointment, then, awaits a few contributors who were anticipating their articles on Tristan, more relics of the Grail, Celtic board games and the like (the *Old Matter of Britain*, perhaps?) but I remain optimistic that these will see the light of day in the autumn issue! A note on a couple of contributors to the current number: Christopher Wheatley is (was?) at the University of Derby, and his article is part of his final year's work for a degree course in writing, while Pamela Harvey was runner-up in a sci-fi short story competition organised by Stylus Press of Wymondham, Norfolk (who also publish *Quiet Lines*, her anthology of poems), with stories and poems published in *Strix*, *Keltia* and other small press magazines.

You will notice a few slight changes in format and content in this issue - let me know if they are improvements or irritations! Also included are reports on **Pendragon 98**, so members unable to attend will now know what they missed! At the AGM, it was agreed that Fred and Marilyn Stedman-Jones be made life members in recognition of their unstinting support of the Society over the years. Their response was to generously sponsor a free year's subscription for winners of a **Jess Foster Prize**. Named in memory of the founder of the Society in 1959, the award will be for "best newcomer" contributing material for the magazine.

Enclosed is a leaflet about the Society for prospective members. Please can you photocopy this *ad lib* to pass on to friends or to leave in libraries, in specialist bookshops or at events so that we can reach more enthusiasts. In addition, John Ford has very kindly set up a Pendragon website - [www.pendragon.mcmail.com/index.htm](http://www.pendragon.mcmail.com/index.htm) - and this has already received hundreds of visits, an indication of the potential interest in sharing news and views in this subject. Do visit if you can, and encourage others to do so; if you can help in any way with developing the website John will be pleased to hear from you. More details in the **Pendragon 98** report.

*The Pendragon Society investigates Arthurian history and archaeology - legend, myth and folklore - literature and the arts*  
**Subscriptions** An X in the box at the top right corner of this page  
 [X] indicates that your subscription is now due



# PENDRAGON

*Journal of the Pendragon Society established 1959*

ISSN 0143-8379 Vol XXVII No 2 Summer 1998

Theme this issue **The New Matter of Britain**

## CONTENTS

<b>Pendragon Letters</b>	4
<b>Pendragon 98 report</b>	7
An Arthurian Fiction Booklist <i>John Matthews</i>	9
Arthur - a Literary King <i>Christopher Wheatley</i>	10
William and Arthur <i>W M S Russell</i>	12
"A Legend in her own Lunchtime" <i>Charles Evans-Günther</i>	13
Moorcock's Grail <i>Steve Sneyd</i>	16
King Arthur at Oxford University <i>Matthew Kilburn</i>	17
Echo of Time <i>Pamela Harvey</i>	21
Arthur and the Yew Cult II <i>Allen Meredith</i>	23
Reviews and <i>BookWorm</i>	26
<i>The Board and Old News</i>	33
<i>Exchange Journals</i>	35
Poems	36

© 1998 Copyright remains with the authors and artists

No part of this publication may be copied or published without prior written permission  
 Opinions stated are those of the writer concerned

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

**Annual subscription** at least £7.50 for three issues UK sample £2.50  
 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** Ian Brown cover, 2 Simon Rouse border 3  
 Chris Lovegrove picture research and other original illustrations

**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

**Advertisement rates** £40 per page and *pro rata*, minimum quarter-page  
 £50 for back page. Enquire for special rates for members  
 These rates are for camera-ready copy at A4 scale for reduction to A5 format

# PenDragon

 PEN-DRAGON

## FRENCH CONNECTION PART DEUX

◆ *From Paul Smith, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs:*  
It was with some considerable interest that I read the letter from Charles Evans-Günther published in the *Relics* edition of *Pendragon XXVI* 4, concerning Grail-origins being sensibly related to historical context, as I have been pursuing this very same line of research myself.

The story of the Grail surfaced during the reigns of Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Philip II of France and Philip, Count of Flanders.

Interestingly, it is not only Eleanor of Aquitaine who lies buried in the Benedictine Abbey of Fontevrault, but also her husband Henry II, Matilda his mother, and Berengaria wife of Richard I. Eleanor of Aquitaine claimed descent from Charlemagne, who is known to have brought a bowl containing the Holy Blood of Christ from Palestine into Europe: a fragment of which eventually ended up in the monastery of Reichenau, Germany.

Thierry, Count of Flanders (who attended the coronation of Henry II in 1154), had in 1150 brought back from Jerusalem a phial containing some of the Precious Blood and Water gathered by Joseph of Arimathea. The Abbess of Fontevrault Abbey in 1150 was Matilda, daughter of Fulk V and the aunt of Henry II, Fulk's grandson. Thierry had married another of Fulk's daughters, Sybil, thus making his son Philip and Henry II cousins.

The Precious Blood brought back by Thierry was placed in a crypt dedicated to the great Eastern saint, Basil the Great, built on the site of the Bourg in Bruges, the castle and treasury of the Counts of Flanders - an interesting fact since it was Basil the Great who wrote a treatise advising a fuller use of classical pagan literature in preparation for a deeper understanding of Christianity.

A frequent visitor to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury, Philip Count of Flanders has been described as "the first Flemish prince noted as a patron of culture. He was famed for his piety and specifically for his relic collection" (David Nicholas' *Medieval Flanders* 1992); and, according to Ralph of Coggeshall, the most relentless persecutor of the Cathars.

This tie-in between religion and royalty in France dates back to the coronation of Clovis "which became a feature of the history of the

kings of France, namely canonical investiture: in France henceforth the king would be not only a military but also a religious leader, *dux et sacerdos*" (Duc de Castris 1979).

Philip II was only 15 at his coronation on 18th September, 1189. Philip Count of Flanders ceremoniously bore the king's sword in the opening procession and also fulfilled the honoured duties of steward at the concluding banquet. Philip II had married Isabella, daughter of the Count of Hainault and niece of Philip Count of Flanders.

Chrétien de Troyes had written in his *Perceval*, "The highest sword-bearing order, created and ordained by God, is the order of knighthood" - need we really speculate on the meaning behind the Bleeding Lance and the Grail?

◆ *Paul has prepared further notes on this subject which we hope to publish in a future issue. He also draws attention to a letter from Nigel Pennick in Pendragon XXII 3 (summer 1992) which reads, in part:*

Did I ever tell you of my Reichenau / Avalon theory? I was on the holy island of Reichenau in 1990 (Lake Constance). It has a remarkable climate, considering it's almost in the Alps, and was traditionally an 'island of apples'. Irish monks went there in the 8th (I think) century and founded some remarkable churches ... It seems to me that the Celtic monks were re-visiting the sacred island of their forefathers who, some generations before, emigrated from central Europe to Britain and Ireland...

## CAREFUL HISTORIANS?

◆ *From Alistair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland:*

I enjoyed the latest issue [Relics, winter 97] very much, but I daren't make too many comments here, or I'll be all night! I don't think it would be fair to single out items for especial praise, but I was a little concerned by Helen Hollick's piece ["Arthur and the careful historian"]. Are there really still historians so out of touch with current archaeology that they think to deny Arthur on such flimsy grounds? What of the Sarmatian, Parthian and later *catafRACTOI*, heavy cavalry the Romans were only too happy to employ after they had fought them? Her piece was certainly very useful, and this isn't a criticism of what Helen wrote, I should say.

◆ *Helen's quote was from a piece by Myres in the 80s, but contemptuous dismissal of a historical Arthur is still prevalent: see Phillip Rahtz's Glastonbury.*

## WRITE OF REPLY

◆ *From Helen M Hollick, Walthamstow, London:*  
I feel I must reply to Susan Gaitley's letter in the last edition of *Pendragon*, regarding her impression that I was using the letters page to promote my books and criticise Bernard [Cornwell]'s. This I most definitely was *not* doing.

Any criticism implied was intended to be of the constructive kind, not the critical kind, nor was I looking for publicity. Any long-standing member of Pendragon would already be well aware of the existence of my books through the review pages, publishers advertisements etc (eg book one, a full page advertisement on the rear cover of the Summer 1994 edition, was offered at a discount price to members).

I strongly felt that a response to Bernard's interview, in the Spring 1997 issue, was needed - and justified. With the first of my trilogy, *The Kingmaking*, being published in 1994, well in advance of *The Winter King* (1995) Bernard's comments could have directly affected my books. I quote from *Pendragon* (p 21):

B.C. [Bernard Cornwell] "...you can't do without Merlin. Arthur without Merlin is hopeless."

I repeat what I answered in my letter. "There is no Merlin in my [Arthurian] books ... without Merlin my books do work."

If anyone should be accused of criticising another author's work, than Bernard is more guilty than I! After all, if by saying that Arthur without Merlin doesn't work - is "hopeless" - was he implying that my books are hopeless? His comment could have been taken that way. I felt that I was being totally fair - to Bernard and myself - when I suggested that people read the two trilogies for themselves, to decide whether Arthur without Merlin does or doesn't work.

I did take slight offence at his later reference to Walthamstow (p 22) - however, I fully realise that this was an extremely unfortunate slip on Bernard's part (at least, I hope it was!). I felt I had to make a reply because many members do, in fact, know me, and know full well that I live in Walthamstow. I did not want any member of Pendragon erroneously thinking that I wrote a "very angry letter about *The Winter King*". I most certainly did not!

Nor was I knocking *The Winter King*, as I think Ms Gaitley feels, for the very basic reason, if for no other, that Bernard's three books and my three books are highly different. There are many wonderful stories about Arthur, written by a wide variety of authors. There will always be room for any novel about Arthur, regardless of whether it has, or has not, Merlin in it. As readers we will always have our own personal favourites. Mine is

Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset*. I fully agree with Ms Gaitley's view: for me it is ... that the telling of the story is vivid and done with feeling." Hear! Hear!

As it happens, I have also thoroughly enjoyed Bernard's books now that, with my trilogy completed, I have been able to read them. (I could not do so before, for fear of unintentional plagiarism.)

I would however, like to add one indignant point! I have been a member of Pendragon for some years now, and before that a very long standing, and highly supportive member of Dragon (which was the "factual" group, as opposed to the Pendragon "fantasy" group). Ms Gaitley, just because I am an author, am I not entitled to express my opinion, in response to an article, through the letters page? Just as any other Pendragon member would be so entitled?

Incidentally, nothing that I have said here, or in my previous letter, is unknown to Bernard personally. You see, as authors with a mutual interest, we have exchanged several letters regarding our "rivalry" and our differing opinions of Arthur. He fully sympathises with my frustration that his trilogy has sold better than mine, on the grounds that his name is known, mine is not. He told me that it has taken several of his *Sharpe* books, much hard work and, yes, a lot of publicity to become as well known as he is. Unfortunately in today's world it is, too often, not the *quality* of a novel that sells a book, but the fact that it has been widely advertised, televised, or banned! Bernard has enthusiastically encouraged me to "hang in there" and keep going, for which I am very grateful. His letters have been of enormous help and support to me.

If I may end by being somewhat tongue in cheek? Could Ms Gaitley encourage her colleague, if he has not already done so, to read one of my novels also? I do not expect him to buy the book, any public library should be able to acquire a copy for him to borrow.

I quite accept that some "Arthurian" people like Bernard's *Warlord Chronicles* better, some my *Pendragon's Banner* trilogy - some even like both of us. Everyone is entitled to a personal opinion - and in my opinion, my trilogy is the better of the two. I expect Bernard thinks the opposite! But then, we are both, er ... biased.

And yes, that is blatant publicity seeking. For myself and Bernard! Yours, Helen Hollick - author and Pendragon member.

◆ *An interview with Helen is elsewhere in this issue; and there is more on Bernard Cornwell in Christopher Wheatley's 'Arthur - a Literary King'.*

## AMERICAN TITLES

## ◆ From John Matthews, Oxford:

Thanks for the latest *Pendragon*, which looks great. In response to the person wanting to know how to get hold of American books [*PenDragon, last issue*], it's comparatively easy to get hold of US publications in this country. If you have internet access you can order direct (and at no excessive extra prices) from the internet bookseller [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). They will ship any title and they have a vast stock.

Failing this - or if you want to look at the books before you buy them, there are various shops in the UK which stock US titles. The best of these are **Forbidden Planet**, 71 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DG (tel 0171 497 2150) and **Other Worlds**, 71-73 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0AB (tel 0171 7343483). Both will order books and both produce mail order catalogues. One of these sources will enable you to obtain almost any book published in the USA. Happy hunting!

## BETTER TO TRAVEL?

◆ From Shelley Turner, Eastbourne, E Sussex: I have just started to delve into the *Avatars of Arthur* issue, and "I like it a lot!" (as they say). This is what we need - more thought-provoking items. I do so like to have my brain tested. I have always thought it incredible how one character, Arthur, can spark off so many trains of thought. But look at what can be achieved: human curiosity is such that we always yearn to find out more, and the more elusive something is, the more we chase it.

And the results of this have been rediscoveries of our culture and history, not to mention the archaeology - leading onto discoveries into science and technology, to again push forward. It seems that human nature needs to be stimulated to find out more, and the more we move forward over time, the more we can travel backwards to find out the truth of origins. So let's hope the "Dark Ages" do not reveal all their secrets at once!

◆ Amen to that!

## MERLIN AND MORGAN

## ◆ From W M S Russell, Reading, Berks:

Thank you very much for the excellent editing and illustration of my piece on Kuttner and Morgan le Fay [*in the last issue*]. The subdivision of paragraphs and the well-chosen sub-heads were admirable improvements.

I should like to add two points I have noticed since writing the article. First, Kuttner was

a much better Arthurian than me: I find Blaise did teach Merlin as a child, in the prose *Lancelot-Graal* of 1215-1235 (1), though as clearly stated in the novella the pupil far outstripped the teacher.

Second, in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (as in Ariosto's more famous sequel) the legend cycles of Arthur and Charlemagne are interwoven. In Boiardo's poem, printed in 1482-3, the wicked fairy Morgana lives in a castle *at the bottom of a lake*, where she holds ladies and knights captive - though apparently able to breathe. She is eventually overcome by Orlando and made to release her prisoners (2). I think it quite possible that the extremely learned Kuttner knew of this.

## References:

1. See Ruth Minary and Charles Moorman *An Arthurian Dictionary* Academy Chicago Publishers, Chicago 1990
2. In Book 2, Cantos 2, 6-9, 13. There is a recent abridged translation of the poem, with introduction and notes, by Charles Stanley Ross, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995.

PS. I very much enjoyed your Arthur-types, and indeed the whole avatar issue.

## AVATARS AND LAUGHTER

## ◆ From Gwilym ap Iorweth, Flint:

I'm sure there are plenty of 'avatars' in Wales alone, never mind the rest of the UK, Europe and the world. Often Owain Llawgoch, Owain Glyn Dwr and Henry Tudor have been linked with the bardic prophecies of the return of Arthur. The former two fit the concept better - one said to be sleeping in a cave in Snowdonia and Owain Glyn Dwr disappearing off the face of the land. Of the two Owain Llawgoch is known to have been murdered in France but Owain Glyn Dwr's death and grave are still something of a mystery.

I must say I disagree with Mike Bannick on two points. Firstly, I see little reason why *Pendragon* should be wholly serious - there is nothing wrong with a touch of frivolity occasionally. Secondly, looking again at the 'central thesis' of Messrs Phillips and Keatman I believe will bear little fruit, though I am a little surprised that the authors who mentioned bears in the Spring issue didn't bring up Gildas' badly misunderstood reference. However, I support Chris Gidlow's point, in the Autumn/Winter issue, that the animals used by Gildas have Biblical significance rather than Celtic!

I would suggest that Wales is not the origin of Arthur but the last bus stop but one! Arthur has been superimposed on the Welsh landscape and it is possible that tales originally

belonging to others became credited to him soon in the 9th century. There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing between the 'North' and Wales and the earliest record of Arthur could be credited to Aneirin who was writing in Scotland at the end of the 6th or early 7th century. I'm not suggesting that Arthur is from Scotland but it is likely that information concerning Arthur was preserved there until it was transported to Wales!

A re-evaluation of the early Anglo-Saxon period in archaeological hindsight, rather than the speculations of John Morris, may bring some light on the subject. If Arthur was a man - and isn't a deity - and if he did have an effect on the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain, then surely the place to be looking would be further east the earlier you expect to find Arthur. Nationalism aside, yes, Wales is the place to find some of the records but not necessarily the origins.

## THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

## ◆ From Reg Baggs, Windsor, Berks:

Thank you to all the organisers for an enjoyable occasion that resulted from the Pendragon AGM in Glastonbury. It started off well with your tour of the abbey, and all legendary associations then rounded off nicely at the amazing Cadbury Castle, including Pendragon tales, sandwiching an excellent meeting at the Library of Avalon Saturday evening, plus a stimulating discussion to follow. When it came to the entertaining songs between sessions I was not sure what to expect - then suddenly was looking forward to the next song. So many interesting people in a very sociable event. In all, a wonderful memory.

## FROM THE DRAGON'S MOUTH

## ◆ From Charles Evans-Günther, Japan:

I await the next issue of *Pendragon* with some impatience - though I have plenty to do. I know it is me telescoping time! I certainly need an Arthurian fix as there is nothing here - though plenty of Samurai programme on TV and a few good films. Some Japanese know of Arthur and call him 'Arthur King' - probably to do with the grammar of the Japanese language rather than giving him a new surname, since surnames come first here and given names second. However, their image of Arthur is far more romantic than the American attitude and likely to have arisen from links with America rather than Britain.



## Pendragon 98

Arthur's Ascension Day court was, according to Chrétien's *Lancelot*, once held at Camelot - wherever that was! It was entirely appropriate then that *Pendragon 98*, held the weekend before Ascension Day, took place at South Cadbury, synonymous for some with Camelot, and at Glastonbury.

In amongst the various events, very ably organised by John and Linda Ford, the traditional marvel took place, a Pendragon Society AGM! This confirmed the following officers: Fred Stedman-Jones (chairman), Chris Lovegrove (vice chairman), John Ford (secretary), Linda Ford (treasurer) and committee members Marilyn Steadman-Jones and Simon Rouse. Matters discussed included ways to increase finances and the forthcoming fortieth anniversary.

Preceding the AGM was a tour of Glastonbury Abbey, while subsequent to it were talks by distinguished authors. John Matthews' theme concerned trends in the way we see Arthur, particularly in fiction. His contention was that every decade has one or two key Arthurian books - T H White in the 40s and 50s, Rosemary Sutcliff in the 60s, Marion Bradley for the 80s. In his overview of recent Arthurian fiction John categorised novels into the *strictly historical*, the *somewhat Celtic*, the *fantastic Arthur* (with *Mordred* novels as a sub-type) and *future Arthurs*. As the millennium approaches how will the New Matter of Britain develop?

Anne Lister sang *Bedevere's Song*, accompanying herself on guitar, before Mary Caine's elucidation of her version of the Glastonbury Zodiac. Mary is no stranger to the pages of *Pendragon* (eg "Child and man - ancient mystery" in XXVI 2) and thus many readers will be familiar with her identification of the zodiacal figures with Arthurian legend - Lancelot is Leo, Arthur Sagittarius, Capricorn Merlin, Virgo Guinevere and so on - refined from Katherine Maltwood's reading of *Perlesvaus*, *The High History of the Holy Grail*. Her most recent publication, *Celtic Saints and the Glastonbury Zodiac* is published by Capall Bann (£9.95 150pp). Mary also linked the calendrical nature of the zodiac with the seasonal aspects of the tale of Tristan and, fittingly, Anne Lister then performed her own song of *The Madness of Tristan*.

The third of the evening's speakers was Geoffrey Ashe, author and adopted Glastonian, whose *Traveller's Guide to Arthurian Britain* has been recently issued by Gothic Image at £12.95.

He recalled that the three sites most associated with the romantic view of Arthur have all yielded genuine archaeological links with the so-called Arthurian period. Tintagel has been re-interpreted as a Dark Age citadel rather than monastery, while Glastonbury Tor could well be a pre-Christian maze though in 1130 Caradoc of Llancarfan was the first to record that Guinevere's abduction was located here. Meanwhile the 12th century excavation of Arthur's alleged grave at the Abbey has long been denounced as a fake, but Geoffrey said there was no contemporary evidence to support a fund-raising publicity stunt, and traditional sceptics such as Robert Dunning and Aelred Watkins have over the years softened their dismissive tone. Finally, South Cadbury, the third of the traditional sites, has proved to have been refurbished in the right period as a high status site by an Arthur-type figure.

The open forum which followed included the three speakers plus **Fred Stedman-Jones**, **Helen Hollick** and **Denise Stobie**, author of the forthcoming *Exploring the Sites and Legends of King Arthur* (Parkgate Books: Collins & Brown). Questions ranged through St George, the Nanteos Cup, Theosophical masters and nerdishness, amongst other topics, before the evening drew to a close.

**John Ford** writes: Most of the members who were there Saturday night met up again Sunday morning to drive down to Cadbury castle. The sun was shining bright as we set off up the hill to the summit and armed with the factsheet Chris had supplied for us we walked the ramparts for a couple of hours soaking in the atmosphere and of course the gorgeous weather. By the south gates we sat on the grass and Fred read a couple of stories from the early days of Pendragon, mainly Jess Foster's experiences on the famous dig which took place in the 60s. Also we had Anne reciting the lovely cat story which was printed in an earlier edition of *Pendragon*.

We then made our way back down to the ancient watering hole at the bottom (the Red Lion pub). That couple of hours sitting in the pub garden summed up what Pendragon should be all about. People from all walks of life sat round tables and just talked, debated, told silly stories, laughed and forged friendships, which would last for many years to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who gave their time freely to this event. A special thanks to Geoffrey, John, Mary and Anne who gave us a great evening of thought provoking entertainment. Also thanks to the entire panel at the end of the evening and

Keith and the Library of Avalon who allowed us to hold the event in their library.

#### Pendragon Membership prices

After a lot of discussion I am afraid I have to announce a price rise for the yearly membership. The price of £6.00 for British members has been held for over five years now but the increased costs of producing the journal has finally forced us to take this action. We discussed it at the AGM, and various ideas and prices were suggested and we eventually agreed to raise the price to

*British members*: at least £7.50 per year

*European members*: at least £10.00 per year

*Outside Europe*: at least £12.50 per year

The phrase 'at least' was suggested by members who expressed a wish to pay more for the membership. So I will take this opportunity to say that we are a non profit-making society who produce the journal on a shoestring and that any payment over and above the minimum is most gratefully received. Most members at the AGM were more than willing to pay £10.00 for the journal but the committee agreed that 'at least £7.50' would be more realistic. Please note that the advertising rates have increased as well.

#### The future of Pendragon

One of the most frustrating things that I have found since taking over as secretary is when people join and say they have been an Arthurian all their lives but never knew about Pendragon. How many Arthurians are there out there who still do not know about Pendragon? The potential is enormous. So let's give the membership a kickstart. We need more members and any ideas on how to get the gospel of Arthur spread across the nation would be accepted with pleasure.

In this issue you will find an A4 sheet advertising Pendragon. Please get 6 or so photocopies of this sheet and spread the word with them. Pin them in your local library, village notice board, college or anywhere where it will be noticed. There must be hundreds of places where you could pin it and attract the attention of those Arthurians who have yet to hear of us.

#### Pendragon Website

Another idea I have had is to set up a Pendragon website:  
[www.pendragon.mcmail.com/index.htm](http://www.pendragon.mcmail.com/index.htm)  
 The pages are just basic stuff giving info on how to join us, but I have plans for it and if anybody with a little experience of web pages or design work would like to help with this project, I would be most grateful.

#### Pendragon 40th anniversary

Next year is Pendragon's 40th year and we would like to organize a weekend for the members to celebrate this, but due to the lack of support at this year's AGM (10% membership turnout) I am putting it to the membership and asking you, *What do you want?* So there is a questionnaire in this journal. Please fill it in and return it to me and I will assess the reaction and try to plan something accordingly. Of course if the membership do not bother to reply then I will presume that you do not want these kind of events and will not go ahead with any plans!

*John Ford and Chris Lovegrove*

## An Arthurian fiction Booklist

*John Matthews*

#### Historical

- ♦ Bradley, Marion Zimmer  
*The Mists of Avalon; The Forest House; The Lady of Avalon*
- ♦ Cornwell, Bernard  
*The Winter King; The Enemy of God; Excalibur*
- ♦ Hollick, Helen  
*The Kingmaking; Pendragon's Banner; The Shadow of the King*
- ♦ Lees, Frederick  
*The Arthuriad of Cartimandua*
- ♦ Whyte, Jack  
*Sky Stone; The Singing Sword; Eagle's Brood; The Saxon Shore*
- ♦ Wooley, Persia  
*Child of the Northern Spring; Guinevere; Queen of the Summer Stars*

#### Celtic

- ♦ Kiernan, Sean  
*Roar; The Cauldron*
- ♦ Lawhead, Stephen  
*Merlin; Taliesin; Arthur; Pendragon; Grail*
- ♦ McCormick, Patrick  
*Albion*

#### Fantasy

- ♦ Barron, T A  
*The Lost Years of Merlin; The Power of the Stones*
- ♦ Bennett, Nigel & Elrod, P N  
*Keepers of the King*
- ♦ MacDonald, Ian  
*Merlin's Gift*

- ♦ Monaco, Stephen  
*Parzival; The Grail War; The Final Quest*
- ♦ Telep, Peter  
*Squire; Squire's Blood; Squire's Honour*
- ♦ Yolen, Jane  
*Passager; Hobby; Merlin*

#### Mordred

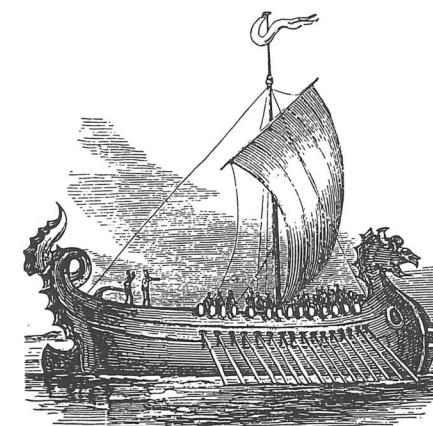
- ♦ Middleton, Haydn  
*The King's Evil; The Queen's Captive; Knight's Vengeance*
- ♦ MacDonald, Ian  
*Mordred's Curse*
- ♦ Wein, Elizabeth C  
*The Winter Prince*

#### Futuristic

- ♦ Charette, Robert N  
*A Prince Among Men; A King Beneath the Mountains; A Knight Among Knaves*
- ♦ Cochran, Molly & Murphy, Warren  
*The Forever King; The Broken Sword*
- ♦ Kenelly-Morrison, Patricia  
*Hawk's Grey Feather; Oak above the Kings; The Hedge of Mist*
- ♦ Whitborne, John  
*The Royal Changeling*
- ♦ Saberhagen, Fred  
*Merlin's Bones*

#### Apocalyptic

- ♦ Attanassio, A A  
*The Dragon and the Unicorn; The Eagle and the Sword; The Wolf and the Crown*



# Arthur - a Literary King

Christopher Wheatley

Lust, infidelity, mortal combat - an epic struggle between good and evil, with an ending tragic enough to make even the hardest of hearts weep. The story of King Arthur remains one of the most enduring and popular tales in the history of literature, constantly explored by factual and fictional writers alike.

Four authors of factual Arthurian works - Linda Gowans, Dr Juliette Wood, Linda A Malcor PhD, Frank Reno - and three writers of Arthurian fiction - C J Cherryh, Nancy McKenzie and Bernard Cornwell - gave me their opinions as to why this is so, and on the wider subject of literature in general.

## Background

"The Arthur story has everything," says Dr Wood, "and just enough mystery about the origin and meaning for it to be re-interpreted constantly."

Linda Gowans suggests Arthur gives novelists the opportunity to "set the eternal triangle of the love interest within a mysterious 'Dark Age' or a colourful medieval background."

"Most people are intrigued by the Dark Ages, and Arthur fits right into this milieu," adds Frank Reno.

Having been sold on the idea that those 'historical' novels considered to be 'high-status' literature, such as the *Iliad* or *Le Morte D'Arthur*, bear little resemblance to the real facts behind the story, I was eager to discover the 'factual' writers' opinions as to the accuracy of contemporary fictional Arthurian novels.

"A great many of the modern novels reflect that their authors are indeed very knowledgeable about Arthur's history," says Frank. "Bernard Cornwell is excellent in his grasp of Arthurian history." Dr Wood also cites Cornwell, and adds, "what is really important is the 'feel' of the period rather than the authentic details."

Linda Malcor is not so positive: "Most of the modern novels are based on trendy books about the subject rather than any serious historical research. Most modern authors have

the culture resemble an idyllic Celtic culture that just simply never existed."

Cornwell stresses his desire for historical accuracy: "I think the reader deserves a background that is as accurate as possible - otherwise it just becomes a fantasy novel. I suppose that even in the most hack-like, profit-motivated historical novelists there is a teacher trying to get out. What a ghastly thought!"

I asked if factual work was intrinsically of a 'higher status' than fictional works on the same subject. "No," exclaimed Linda Malcor. "A well-told retelling of these traditional stories is more valuable in many ways. My work could be rendered obsolete by new historical discoveries or any of a number of other factors. A fine piece of literature does not become obsolete easily at all."

Frank expounded on the practicalities of the matter: "My work appeals to a very narrow audience - scholars, academics, historians, libraries, etc. Only when I blend history with the legends and romances do general audiences become absorbed. Publishing companies are interested in volume sales - nowadays they're not looking at just 50,000 books but more like 500,000 books."

## Status

This led me to pose to all seven a more general question concerning popularity and the issue of why certain books are singled out as 'great literature' and therefore valued above others. Do you believe, I asked, that it is generally the case that widely popular books (such as Jackie Collins) are not very good, whilst those hailed as literary classics do not appeal to the 'average' reader?

Bernard Cornwell: "Probably, but of course it depends on what you mean by good. The chattering classes like to deride John Grisham, but he tells a bloody good story, and what most popular books do is satisfy the age-old hunger for story-telling. Literature does something else." Nancy McKenzie agrees: "Some stories are told for entertainment alone, classics are attempting something more profound while they entertain. This is what makes them timeless. Long after the social environment is hopelessly out of date, the author's true message still has meaning. All too many widely popular books have nothing to say beneath the surface."

"Notice, though," says Linda Malcor, "that most novels that achieve the status of literature must be set in the 'real' world, usually at a time period roughly contemporary to when the author is writing. Something such as Frank Herbert's *Dune* can be absolutely phenomenal yet,

because it is written in something considered by literary critics to be a 'substandard' genre, the work doesn't quite attain the status of 'great literature'."

Nancy McKenzie takes up this point: "Most Arthurian novels here [US] are classified as 'fantasy' because Merlin is an Arthurian character and he uses magic. Many reviewers (including *The New York Times Book Review*) will not review fantasy. It isn't taken seriously." "Some literature does both," C J Cherryh argues: "Books that are widely popular have to have a fifth grade reading level, for the practical reason that that's the public skill level. Whether you can do great literature on a fifth grade reading level is up for debate. My definition of a classic?" she adds. "A book that one generation will pass to the rest by word of mouth."

"I suppose the problem arises," says Cornwell, "because a product by Jackie Collins is superficially like a product by, say, Anita Brookner. They both have hard covers, both sell in the same shop, so inevitably they are judged by the same criteria, yet in truth they are utterly different. One writer aims very high and is trying to do something difficult, the other is aiming at a much closer target and really shouldn't miss. One sets out to educate us about ourselves, the other to tell an entertaining story."

So which category do Cornwell, McKenzie and Cherryh fall into? "My works are being recommended from one generation to another at least in these decades," says Cherryh. "We'll see how they fare." Nancy McKenzie: "I very much doubt my books will ever be considered 'literature'. I did not intend that they should be. I told a story I wanted to tell and I know I have moved people by it. That's enough for me."

Cornwell is emphatic: "I'd be scared stiff if I thought my books were 'high status' literature. I'm trying to make a bloody living! I consider myself solely a story-teller. Most folks live dullish lives, I mean I do, and maybe they're not quite 'lives of quiet desperation', but routine does control most of us and we are constantly being thwarted by bosses, bureaucrats and officials, so escapist books merely let us imagine what it would be like to lift two fingers to the aforementioned b b and o's."



## Literature

Plainly though, the story of Arthur as exemplified by Malory, contains all the elements, plus the timelessness, of great literature. Might the fact that a novel is based on, or draws information from, historical events or major works elevate it to a higher status than other works of fiction?

"Good lord, no!" exclaims Cornwell. "Inevitably most historical fiction enjoys a very low status in the literary world. I suppose it is arguable that writing a tale of Arthur is worthier than writing one about Conan the Barbarian, if only because the first might contain a gem of educational usefulness, but most writers if they could make more money from writing sword and sorcery bodice rippers would happily abandon 'real' history. And most people would consider *Lord of the Rings* better than many painfully plotted and minutely researched tales drawn from reality. I don't think there's any hard and fast rule here, other than the fact that most of us write for money (Samuel Johnson, of course, said it best - 'Only a blockhead doesn't write for money'). Status doesn't come into it - unless you measure it by the bottom line of the bank account."

Frank Reno: "Some of Shakespeare's most powerful plays are based upon what he drew from history: *Cymbeline*, *Lear*, *Othello*, *Richard*, *Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Titus*. I haven't thought this through yet, but can it be that 'great literature' echoes history, and the more ancient the history, the greater the literature?? My God, I love that!! Be sure you quote me on that, because it's going down in my archives!!! Mission accomplished, Frank!

## Non-fiction

To the factual authors I asked, Why is it, do you think, that factual works are seldom, if at all, regarded as great literature? I wondered if they thought it possible, or indeed fair, to compare the two, or if they saw them as completely separate things...

Linda Malcor replied: "In answer to the first question, there are two basic problems. One is that for most people, 'literature' implies 'fiction'. The other is that literature by definition expresses a certain beauty through its form and use of language, something that scholars can rarely achieve because of the restrictions imposed on them by their methodologies and the need to convey data to their readers. Scholarly works that achieve the status of 'literature' tend to lose respect in the academic community because there is the impression that too much art and not enough scholarship went into creating them."

The desire of the academic community to maintain a rigid divide of style is something Linda

Gowans picks up on: "Some readers of my first book wrote to say how much they appreciated my style and occasional humour. Others felt that the whole approach (an approach on my part to make academic work readable and enjoyable) detracted from the book as a work of scholarship. I did find that attitude rather wearying."

An example, perhaps, of the snobbery inherent in the literary world, pervading both fact and fiction. There seems to exist a deeply ingrained notion that a factual book must at all times be formal, serious, and contain as many lengthy words as possible, and that a literary classic must be straight fiction, the author of which should ideally have been dead for a number of years.

#### Saviour

As for Arthur, he remains a literary king indeed. Resplendent in the works of Malory and Monmouth (fact and fiction!) and a host of others through the ages. A continued source of inspiration and fascination. Perhaps the most enduring of all tales.

But will there ever come a day when this mysterious figure will have been forgotten? "Arthur never dies," states Frank Reno. "Even today he lies sleeping in a cave beneath Camelot, waiting until Britain will once more have need of him. Arthur is mortal, but bigger than life, he has become the super-hero of modern day; he is a Universal Hero."

"I think the heart of the myth," says Bernard Cornwell, "is the folk memory of a brief golden age that became brighter and brighter as it receded into the past."

But perhaps Nancy McKenzie best explains Arthur's enduring attraction: "Who wouldn't want to believe in a strong, just leader who will return one day to save us all from our muddled lives?" Who indeed?



## William and Arthur

W M S Russell

I wonder if anyone has noticed Richmal Crompton's entry into Arthurian literature. In *Just William's Luck* (1948, unusually a full-length novel), William inserts the family bread-knife between two bricks, withdraws it, apparently against resistance, and declares it to be the sword *Excelsior*. Henry disputes this name, which he ascribes to the hero of a poem he has learned in school, about a strange device and an avalanche. William dismisses this, and proclaims himself King Arthur. The Outlaws are enlisted as Knights of the Square Table (a packing-case in their headquarters, the Old Barn). By dint of her usual terrifying threat ('I'll thrcream an' I'll thrcream an' I'll thrcream, till I'm thick'), Violet Elizabeth is very reluctantly accepted as a lady knight. The Knights proclaim their intentions on a notice - *Rongs Wrighted, Small Rongs, 6d, Big Rongs, 1s.*, but, as might be expected, the only wrongs righted in the course of the novel are righted by accident.

♦ This contribution arrived independently of Geoffrey Ashe's account, at Pendragon 98, of his earliest encounter with the Matter of Britain through the figure of Crompton's urchin. Other literary thumbnail sketches of favourite or memorable titles will be welcome!

## "A Legend in her own Lunchtime"

An interview with Helen Hollick  
Charles Evans-Günther

In 1997 Helen Hollick's third part of her Pendragon's Banner trilogy was published. The trilogy began in 1994 with *The Kingmaking*, followed by *Pendragon's Banner* and finally *Shadow of the King*. When Helen signed the contract with Heinemann for the three books she was working as a dinner lady, and The London Evening Standard wrote an article with the banner "Dinner lady is a literary legend in her own lunchtime" - hence the title. Helen lives in Walthamstow with her husband and daughter, both of whom are dyslexic and have not been able to read her books.

I came in contact with Helen when she became a member of the Dragon Society and we held a few get-togethers (we called them Dragon-moots) in London, a group of us usually meeting on the steps of the British Museum. However, the first time I met Helen was on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral, and we went for a meal near by. It was in the second half of the 80s and I remember Helen was so enthusiastic about writing an Arthurian novel that her meal went cold while she told me about her ideas. She was at that time deep into the Welsh side of the story, and we discussed names. We met later at a Dragon-moot in London in 1990 and again at the Arthurian Conference in Cardiff in 1994 after *Pendragon's Banner* was published. Just before Christmas 1997, I was in London on business and took the opportunity to have a chat with Helen.



Tell us something about yourself.  
I was born in April 1953 - which is quite relevant because it was on my 40th birthday that I was accepted by Heinemann. So you see, life does begin at forty! It was the best birthday present I'd ever had. I started writing when I was thirteen. I wrote pony stories - I wanted a pony but couldn't afford one so I made one up. In the 70s I started writing science fiction. Then I came across Arthur! My original idea was to write about Guinevere. She was always depicted as a namby-pamby wimp and that's just not how I see her. That was my intention, but Arthur took over.

When you started the story did you expect it to be a trilogy?

Oh, no! In my naiveté I expected it to be one book. It was only when I went to my agent and she said, "You've got a trilogy here!" I sat with my mouth open. I didn't even think I'd be good enough to write one book then!

What about Arthur? What made you become interested in Arthur?

I had actually read Mary Stewart's *Crystal Cave* and *Hollow Hills*, which interested me, but it was when I read her Author's Note at the end. I hadn't realised that Arthur could have been a real character! And then I rediscovered Rosemary Sutcliff. I had read her as a child but when I worked in the library I had access to all her books. So I must have read *Eagle of the Ninth* about the same time I read Mary Stewart. I became interested in Roman Britain as well. I discovered Arthur might have been a real person and so it all started as an interest.

So you were a librarian?

I was a library assistant. Then I read Geoffrey Ashe's *From Caesar to Arthur*.

When did you actually start on the novel?

Probably towards the end of the 70s when I was writing science fiction, then I lost interest and began to write about Guinevere. However, it really started after I read Marion Bradley's *Mists of Avalon*. [The book was published in 1983.] I so intensely disliked her Guinevere - I thought she was so awful! And the rest is history, as they say!

Having decided to write a novel, why did you place the story in the earlier period? [The trilogy starts in 450 and ends in 500.]

Geoffrey Ashe had placed him a little bit earlier and I thought, why not? It was different - not the run of the mill - and the more I went into it the more it seemed to fit. So from a novelist's point of view, again - why not!

Why did you make Gwenhwyfar [Guinevere in Welsh tradition and Helen's books] the daughter of Cunedda?

I wanted her to be somewhere I knew and we had had several holidays in North Wales. I also

loved Sharon Penman's books which were set in North Wales and there was the Roman tie-in with Segontium [just outside Caernarfon in Gwynedd]. Then I discovered that Cunedda had a daughter called Gwen. So it was quite plausible!

*And what about Winifred?*

She is totally my own. I loved writing about her because she was so delightfully wicked!

*But she was a survivor.*

Yes, she goes through all until half way through *Shadow*. Winifred being Arthur's first wife is my own creation, it is not something I researched, apart from the suggestion by Geoffrey Ashe that Arthur may have married a daughter of Vortigern. I suppose that's where the idea came from and it makes a good story, from a dramatic point of view. And I wanted more nasty characters!

*Of course, you already had a nasty character in Morgause.*

Oh, yes - I thought she was lovely!

*So you had a good few powerful women - Morgause and her daughter Morgaine, Gwenhwyfar and Winifred!*

I supposed I wanted to try and balance up the woman's side to get away from the normal male warrior type story.

*Of these women, one is possibly historical, one is your own creation, while Morgause and Morgaine are more traditional.*

I set out to blend the traditional with what might have happened, but with little from the Normans - except Mordred-Medraut.

*You decided to have Medraut and yet changed him from the evil character he became in the classical stories.*

That was my intention from the very beginning - another thing I was determined to do! We have that quote about Arthur and Medraut falling at the battle of Camlan...

*He's a character who comes out far better than one would expect, yet you have other writers who continue to regurgitate the same old stuff!*

I wanted to be different. I hadn't found any novels I totally believed about Arthur. I'm not saying I totally believe my version but I am comfortable with it. I didn't want Lancelot, I didn't want Merlin and I didn't want Mordred to be the treacherous character!

*You didn't follow the traditional pattern with Mordred but you still made him Arthur's illegitimate son.*

There must have been lots of illegitimate children around - so I thought it was plausible. It makes a more interesting story and I had a gut-feeling about it.

*You deliberately stayed away from the magic and mystery.*

Mystery from the point of view of superstition is totally different. There is one bit when Morgaine knows someone is coming because she sees birds rising from the water. That's someone who lives close to nature and this could be considered to be magic. I saw it as a legitimate use of it - I didn't want sorcery!

*Now with Cerdic you possibly followed Geoffrey Ashe?*

Yes, I liked Cerdic as an "opposing" character to Arthur - I find a lot of my material is from Geoffrey Ashe. It is probably because I started off with him.

*The Cerdic character follows on throughout the whole trilogy and he is the only one who does survive.*

I just had this idea that with Cerdic Arthur survived through him.

*About your influences - you have mentioned some already - who were the people who influenced you? You mentioned Sharon Penman.*

I suppose Sharon Penman in one respect. She is genuinely a lovely lady and I do owe her a lot, because it was her who kept me going with my writing. I nearly gave up a number of times. "Why am I doing this?" She made me hang on in there! And I also adore her books. Other influences include Rosemary Sutcliff. I never met her but have a long letter from her, which is a treasure! When you read one of Rosemary Sutcliff's books you are there! I always feel that if I could write half as well as Rosemary Sutcliff I shall be more than happy!

*How about Edith Pargeter / Ellis Peters?*

I've read a couple of her books, but I can't quite get into the stories. I've read some of the Cadfael and one about Llywelyn, but I was a little disappointed compared to Sharon Penman. There are so many people who influenced me - Sharon Penman, Rosemary Sutcliff, and Kathleen Herbert, who is another lovely lady who kept me going.

*What about research?*

I started with Geoffrey Ashe. I looked at his bibliography and got others. It became a hobby. Then I had all this information and I started to write when Kathy was three - she's now fifteen. I started when she was in playschool and I was a little bored, so I said, Let's do it!

*Once you'd started and you went to a publisher's, did they jump at it?*

I had more or less written *The Kingmaking* and half of *Pendragon's Banner* before I approached an agent. I wrote for myself. It had been my ambition to write, but I never thought I was good enough to be actually published.

*And it was published unchanged?*

More or less, we had to juggle a bit at the beginning of *Kingmaking*, changing a few bits and pieces. Sharon Penman had recommended her own agent and she was very helpful. She told me that she would have taken it on even if she had been recommended by Sharon. My agent approached only a few publishers. It seems that Heinemann wanted Sharon but she was contracted to Michael Joseph and my agent said "I haven't got Sharon but I've got a protégé of hers" and they accepted me.

*I noticed that some of your scenes are very real. How much of them were from your own experiences?*

Quite a few are based on places I know. For instance, Epping Forest, when Gwenhwyfar is in the watch tower looking down at the Lee Valley, I see that view almost every day.

*What about the French scenes?*

Yes, we had a wonderful holiday in France! Wasn't sure what scenes from France I was eventually going to use but that scene in Vézelay - up in the hills - was so fantastic. Another scene a lot of people say to me was so vivid was when Amr drowned in the river. That was based on a holiday camping near the River Wye. Kathy was about four. We went to look at the river and the current was so strong that I grabbed her, thinking if she fell in there we'd never see her again. The whole episode was virtually written in my mind at that point - it was a mother's fear!

*How much of your books do you write in your mind?*

Quite a bit I think really. Someone said it reads like a film unwinding. I can picture it and I can hear the conversations - it all just unwinds.

*So basically a good percentage of the scenes are from experience.*

Yes, just to put it into context, I know a lot about horses - all the little details. Little touches like rather than patting the horse's neck, you would scratch its muzzle or run your fingers across its ears - little touches. You have to think yourself back in time. The only place I didn't need to do it was Glastonbury Tor. It has definitely got an air of something.

*Do you think that was the area where the real Arthur lived or did you use it just for convenience?*

I personally do think he was in "Somerset" - I like the area but I am not sure which came first, the "fort" or the imagination!

*I found the way you dealt with battle scenes very interesting. You rarely show the whole battle - you showed aspects - and sometimes not even the battle but the results of it. It must have been difficult.*

One of the problems is that there are so many battles. I loved writing them - a wonderful way of working your aggression out! I don't know where I got the ability to write battles from, though there may be some influences from re-enactments - like the Battle of Hastings or Sealed Knot or Ermine Street Guard. They give you some idea. Then again, it is just imagination. It's a bit like a film, you don't get the whole battle - just aspects of it.

*How do you get into the period? That's the hardest part, I imagine!*

It is very hard. I can't really answer - I don't really know. I just have to imagine it - picture it. It is very difficult to be wholly accurate. Someone said you should have more descriptions of smells - but what smells? We don't really know what they would have been. I have tried to bring in the smell of morning or the smell of the sea. What was it like? It can only be from my perspective - my imagination.

*You are happy with what you did?*

There are things that perhaps in retrospect I might have changed - but then you're always going to say that. More or less I am. I got very fond of Arthur and the other characters. It was awful having to finish it. I actually wrote the final chapter before writing *Shadow*. It was very difficult to write that last book. Arthur had become such a friend. I felt like I was planning an assassination or about to end a relationship of many years. And up to a point I couldn't do it. I took the coward's way out! For me Arthur does live on!

*And what's next?*

I'm writing about Harold and the road of events which led up to Hastings from the English point of view. The more I research, the more intrigued I am. The battle is nothing to what went on in those twenty years that led up to Hastings. Harold is supposed to be buried at Waltham Abbey, which is the next town from us. Again, it's fascinating! One thing I do find rewarding is standing in places where Harold was and knowing that he was actually there - unlike Arthur!

*Later Helen told me that she was hoping to get her books put on tape - talking books - so that her husband and daughter could at least 'read' them.*



## Revolt and Reconciliation: Moorcock's Graal

Steve Sneyd

The abiding fascination of the Grail theme, as offering a mediating device between heaven and earth, and a means of healing human misery and self-alienation as well as overcoming mankind's fall from its true nature, is well-illustrated by two books from the well-known science fiction and fantasy author Michael Moorcock.

### Revolt

In the first, *The War Hound and the World's Pain*, a successful mercenary commander in the Thirty Years War, Ulrich Von Bek, wearied of the endless slaughter, takes refuge in a forest. Here, in a castle otherwise deserted, he meets Sabrina. This beautiful woman proves to be an enslaved servant of Lucifer - the Devil. Von Bek is promised, by Lucifer, that if he can obtain the Grail, which Lucifer requires in order to ease human suffering as a first step to reconciling himself with God, then the girl will be released.

The quest involves entry into a parallel world to ours. Accessible only by limited portals, it proves a curious mixture of similarities and differences from our own. There, to briefly summarise, Von Bek, after a myriad adventures, at last finds the Grailkeeper, a nameless woman in the forest, and learns that the Grail, ostensibly a small clay pot, has meaning, and brings harmony, only to those who are already whole. Given the Grail, Lucifer accepts the task of redeeming the earth and humanity.

### Reconciliation

In the sequel, *The City in the Autumn Stars*, a later Von Bek, again a soldier, this time a volunteer in the service of the French Revolution, but sickened in his turn by the Terror, flees into Switzerland. He is rescued from Revolutionary pursuit by a mysterious, beautiful woman, Libussa, who later proves to be leading a dual existence, using the guise of the so-called Duke of Crete to pursue alchemical experiments.

This Von Bek, Manfred, finding a refuge from the Europe-wide revolutionary war in the

remote city of Mirenburg - a place of reconciliation and also asylum for dissident artists, disregarded scientists and inventors, and leaders of occult societies - is lured into a search for the Grail, sought by the supposed Duke and others. Journeying by hot air balloon, he reaches the parallel world already visited by his ancestor; finds a second, more perfect, Mirenburg; at its hidden core discovers the Grail; and is then induced by Libussa, because of his love for her, to assist in her attempt, employing the Grail, to achieve the mystical Alchemical Marriage which is to reveal "all" and achieve universal Harmony.

The experiment appears to fail, though in the process the two Mirenburgs, 'real' and 'unreal', dramatically merge into one, and Libussa, ostensibly killed in its process, is 'resurrected' as a kind of alter-ego within Von Bek. Lucifer appears and reclaims the Grail to continue his own task, and Von Bek, reconciled within himself, turns his efforts to encouraging the new age of technology to supersede those of mysticism and destructive idealism, and to reconciling the male and female principle, at least at a personal level.

Though in both volumes the "happy endings" seem somewhat forced, the historical period is less fully realised in the first of the books than in the second, together they represent a fascinating attempt to provide a coherent picture of the way such an 'artefact' as the Grail could function, while around this central core there are a host of vivid descriptions, picturesque characters, and dramatic set-pieces which pull the reader along and make it easy to overlook any implausibilities of plot, at least while immersed in the pages.

For Arthurians, they also effectively illuminate the processes by which the ingredients of the Matter, such as the Grail, are reinterpreted to meet the cravings and dilemmas of each new age.



Michael Moorcock (1981) *The War Hound and the World's Pain*. New English Library

Michael Moorcock (1986) *The City in the Autumn Stars*. Grafton

## King Arthur at Oxford University

Matthew Kilburn

The legendary king Lludd, son of Beli, found that the exact centre of his island realm of Britain was at Oxford, and according to *The Mabinogion* it was here that he dug the pit containing the red and white dragons whose combat was later decisively interpreted by the boy Ambrosius in the reign of Vortigern. Oxford thus claims a pivotal place in the legendary history of Britain, and it is unsurprising that successive groups of people connected to the university should have turned their time to the study, exploration and celebration of Arthurian legend.

### The Arthurian Society 1927-1935

If there was a group at Oxford devoted to Arthuriana before 1927, then it has left no records. It takes little imagination for those with a vague awareness of the university's history to think of eighteenth-century Tory-Jacobite undergraduates and fellows convivially discussing the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, or perhaps his Elizabethan successor Spenser, over glasses of college wine, and wishing for the return of a Stuart Arthur to repel the Germanic intruders of the House of Hanover. Perhaps in the nineteenth century admirers of the work of Tennyson or the Pre-Raphaelites, or of Peacock and Bulwer-Lytton, met to discuss mediaeval romance, fortified by the growing interest in folklore and its relation to literature and society. If such groups existed then they seem to be lost to us.

The formation of the first Arthurian Society in Oxford (the term 'Oxford Arthurian Society' was never used in official notices) was largely the doing of the scholar Eugene Vinaver, best known for his discovery and rigorous exploration of the Winchester College manuscript of Malory's works, but by 1927 already recognised as one of the finest minds working on mediaeval European literature. Vinaver intended that the Arthurian Society would meet twice a

term to hear papers on Arthurian subjects, and also keep a bibliography of Arthurian books and articles, additions to which would be made known to members at each meeting. In such a way the Society could act as a focus for the expansion of Arthurian scholarship. Vinaver was the Society's first President, with Rev H J B Gray of the monastic college Blackfriars as Secretary.

Although the minutes of the Society between 1927 and 1933 are not extant, meetings appear to have progressed as Vinaver and his associates intended. In 1929 the Society took another forward step when it published the first number of *Arthuriana: Proceedings of the Arthurian Society*. Vinaver and Gray edited the journal, which contained the texts of papers presented to the Society during its first year. The editorial reported

*The support that has so far been received from both senior and junior members of the University, whose interests, though not in every case centred upon Medieval Literature, are yet wide enough to include Arthurian Legend and Romance, more than confirms its founders in the opinion that the creation of the Arthurian Society was not inopportune.*

Vinaver's ambitions for the Arthurian Society seem always to have extended beyond Oxford. The Society organised the first International Arthurian Congress in Cornwall in August 1930, from which developed the International Arthurian Society. Other activities were designed to diversify the Oxford society beyond literature that fitted the term Arthurian. The second number of *Arthuriana* was subtitled *A Review of Mediaeval Studies* and included some articles on non-Arthurian subjects. In November 1930 Vinaver issued a circular to scholars outside Oxford enquiring whether a more broadly-based Society was feasible. The replies proved encouraging and by May 1931 Vinaver and his colleagues were planning the inaugural meeting of the Society for Medieval Language and Literature. An editorial committee for its publication was formed. Dr C T Onions was appointed editor and under his guidance *Arthuriana* was superseded by the existing journal of the Society for Medieval Language and Literature, *Medium Aevum*.

It is Dr Onions whom we have to thank for some of the material consulted in the preparation of this article. There are ten notices of Arthurian Society meetings dating from 1932 to 1935 in the John Johnson Collection of 'printed ephemera' at the Bodleian Library that were originally posted to his address. A declining proportion of the meetings during this period were Arthurian, as demonstrated by the

programme for Hilary Term (January to March) 1932, consisting of Professor C C J Webb speaking on John of Salisbury, J R R Tolkien on *Beowulf*, and Joan Evans on Naturalism in Romanesque Decoration. However, it is in this period that the minutes of the Arthurian Society begin and we are allowed an insight into the conduct of meetings. These did not always go smoothly. During a lecture by Professor R A Williams on The Primitive Germanic System of Versification, "the unfortunate failure of the electric light in the college forced him to continue by the gleam of the fire, until at length candles were brought in." In this meeting, which must surely have been more mediaeval in ambience than usual, Professor Williams argued that the early Germanic-speaking peoples didn't distinguish between syllables in poetry as we do and could allow two syllables in one lift. We are told that "Professor Tolkein [sic] in proposing a vote of thanks, begged him to allow to the Anglo-Saxons a sense of time!" - a comment that must have been characteristic of him.

Arthurian topics were still covered by the Society. The lecture by Professor Mary Williams on The Holy Grail on 28 October 1934 proposed that the Grail stories could have had both pagan and Christian origins, as both streams of ideas flowed together; the stories, Professor Williams argued, depicted the process by which novitiates were taught to understand the 'light of knowledge'.

The name 'Arthurian Society' was increasingly something that the Society had outgrown and on 28 November 1935 it changed its name to the Medieval Society, reflecting its then status as the Oxford branch of the Society for Medieval Language and Literature, a name it keeps to this day.

The Arthurian Society of Vinaver was primarily an academic rather than a social society, and it proved a bridgehead for the greater co-ordination of mediaeval literary scholarship. The second Arthurian Society in Oxford was aimed principally at undergraduates and had a much broader range of activities not intended especially for those working on medieval literature or history, but for those who had a general interest in Arthur and the middle ages. The new society's guiding force for its first two years was an undergraduate in chemistry from Exeter College, Paul Antrobus.



### The Oxford Arthurian Society 1982-

Paul started the Society in 1982, in the wake of John Boorman's film *Excalibur* and a trail of popular interest in Arthurian legend and history that stretched back to the publication of Geoffrey Ashe's *King Arthur's Avalon* in the 1950s. The new Society drew also from the popularity of the folk revival with Oxford students, then (possibly) waning after the onslaught of punk in the late 1970s, and placed 'alternative' knowledge alongside the conventional. Through activities such as its mediaeval banquets and 'pilgrimages' to locations with Arthurian connections, it sought to combine antiquarianism and escapism.

Paul had successfully judged his moment and the new Oxford Arthurian Society rapidly gained a loyal and appreciative membership. The first two speakers were Geoffrey Ashe himself and then Jeff Saward, described as the "leading expert on British mazes and labyrinths". The scope of the speakers was broadened later in the year by the inclusion of academics Elizabeth Brewer, who spoke on T H White, and mediaevalist Elspeth Kennedy. Summer 1983 saw the first 'pilgrimage', a day trip to Avebury, Glastonbury and Stonehenge, which must have been exhausting for all concerned.

Although in its first year the Society did not hold weekly meetings it was already serving mulled wine at each indoor gathering by this date. Combining a custom of some other literary societies with the Society's interest in enacting scenes from Arthurian legend, active members assumed the names of Arthurian characters. Paul Antrobus, appropriately, became Uther Pendragon. Other people changed gender, second President Judith Bird becoming 'Sir Galahad the Pure' (with overtones of that classic twentieth-century text *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*) and her Secretary, Nicola Marples, ominously assuming the identity of Mordred. In this vein, the Society gradually developed an elaborate constitutional theory in which the officers of the Society were also those of Arthur's court, the President being also Regent, the Secretary Chancellor, the Treasure Seneschal and so on.

Within a few years some conflict began to develop between different people's visions of the Society. The programmes of events ('termcards' in Oxford parlance) continued to list a wide variety of meetings but with different people being attracted to the Society for different reasons it was becoming difficult to satisfy them. The 1985/86 academic year had begun with a demonstration of mediaeval battle techniques by the Barony of the Far Isles re-enactment group and, perhaps inspired by this, some Oxford

Arthurians formed the Wychwood Warriors in 1987, devoted to practising Dark Age warfare. The Wychwood Warriors seem also to have gradually drawn off some of the neo-pagan enthusiasts who made up a significant proportion of the Society's membership. The Society still held together through the 1980s despite conflicts between different factions. Committee elections each summer were often fiercely fought, usually on neo-pagan/Christian, re-enactment and social/literary and historical, Dark Age-'Celtic'/mediaeval lines. One member, Rhiannon Davies, departed for Cardiff to write a PhD on Welsh mediaeval romance; there, in 1990, she founded the Cardiff Arthurian Society, which still flourishes.

The Society started publishing its own magazine in 1985. For most of its history *Ceridwen's Cauldron* (the first issue, through ignorance of this esteemed publication, was actually entitled *Pendragon!*) has been distributed free to members. Under its early editors, the first of whom was Sarah Tucker, the magazine rarely expanded beyond twelve A5 photocopied pages, but from 1989 its size expanded until twenty-four pages became more usual. Early issues were sponsored by banks such as Williams and Glyns and later Barclays; in the 1990s a renewed drive for advertising won support from *Past Times* and from Pendragon member Debbie White's Celtic gift shop, *Otherworld*. The magazine's most enduring and illuminating contributors have been Andrew Smith, editor from 1986-7 and again from 1998, and Chris Gidlow.

From 1983 to 1995 the summer term concluded with a 'pilgrimage' of several days to a location closely associated with Arthur. The first and last were to Cornwall, but other destinations included both North and South Wales, Northern England, Scotland and, in 1986, Brittany. Unfortunately the diminishing number of Society members and the increasing number of restrictions on the availability of minibuses has meant that the week-long and indeed weekend excursions earlier in the year have become things of the past, though it is still hoped that they could be revived.

The list of speakers that the Society has attracted is an impressive one. Geoffrey Ashe was a regular for several years until he became embroiled in an argument over the authenticity of the Glastonbury Maze with member Andrew Smith and the Society lost his favour. Elspeth Kennedy has visited several times over the years. Geomancer Nigel Pennick also spoke to the Society on frequent occasions in its early years. Former Richmond Herald of Arms Michael MacLagan and historical novelist Kathleen

Herbert were also regular lecturers a little later in the Society's history. The most reliable speaker has certainly been John Matthews, who spoke during the Society's first year and visited almost annually since; Nikolai Tolstoy has also given the Society the benefit of his erudition over the years. More unusual visitors have been the controversial 'Gwent Arthur' theorists, Baram Blackett and Alan Wilson; actor and stunt performer Mark Ryan, best known as Nasir in *Robin of Sherwood* but who also appeared in *First Knight*; and King Arthur's self-styled latter-day reincarnation, Arthur Uther Pendragon, who lectured a larger crowd than was usual for summer 1996 with his story of his fight for Truth, Honour and Justice as an eco-warrior.

A document in Sarah Tucker's hand-writing exists among the Society's files, presumably from the period 1986-7 when she was President. It sketches a possible scenario for an Oxford Arthurian conference, with a range of possible speakers from the Society's list. Although a good idea, it seems it was never taken forward.

The highlight of the Oxford Arthurian Society's social calendar has been its annual Mediaeval Banquet held during November each year. Members are strongly encouraged to attend in mediaeval costume, usually made by the members themselves, and ranging from laboriously reproduced chainmail to sheets with emblems hurriedly attached to them. In the 1980s banquets were generally held in college rooms and cooked by outside caterers. In recent years, however, colleges have either devoted the spaces that the Society used to hire to other purposes or banned mediaeval events from their premises following the destructive behaviour of another society. The Arthurians have thus turned to church halls in North Oxford and self-catering, which has been directed first by Victoria Clare and latterly by Stephie Coane. One year the Banquet was handed over to an Oxford pub with a courtyard; although it attracted a larger number of people than usual the event only just broke even and some members felt that the 'Arthurian' personality of the event had been compromised.

With most students leaving Oxford after three years, it does not take very long for a student society to become an 'institution', taken for granted while members start new projects. The Wychwood Warriors have been mentioned before as successfully capturing the Dark Age re-enactment enthusiasts who had earlier been attracted to the Arthurians. Taruithorn, the Oxford Tolkien Society, founded in 1990, rapidly became more successful than the Arthurians in winning people interested in creatively exploring the Dark

Ages and its associated literature. Meanwhile, with a long-established society, it can become difficult to do new things and the Society's events can end up reflecting the attitudes of an earlier generation of students.

This might have become the case with the Arthurians, who by the 1990s had a higher than average proportion of postgraduate members. 1993 saw a slight revival and younger members attracted, who were brought in to run the Society for the next year, but a generation gap opened up, the younger members wanting to make the Society more 'serious', a junior members' counterpart to the Medieval Society, an idea opposed by older members.

Whatever the rights or wrongs of the case it is clear, looking at minute books and membership lists, that from about 1988 onwards it became more and more difficult to 'sell' such a broad-based society to new students. The growing number of American in Oxford, with whom Arthur seems to have more resonance than with latter-day young Britons, have helped keep the coffers from emptying, but as most of them are only in Oxford for a year or less continuity has been affected. There are still several people in Oxford interested in Arthurian issues and ideas but most assume that the Society is not for them and holds contrasting assumptions from their own. Other confuse us with the Wychwood Warriors or assume that we are a neo-pagan clique; the real neo-pagans can see that we are not and so don't join either.

The truth may be that contemporary student culture is too narrowly focused on the present and future to devote much time to "the myths and legends of Britain's forgotten past". The employment market becomes more and more competitive year by year and many students feel that it will be bad for them if they are associated with anything in the least bit esoteric. The Arthurians also acted as a magnet for folksong enthusiasts and the folk and student scenes are not as closely allied as they were twenty or even ten years ago. Nevertheless, Oxford student life has always been pressured and competitive and perhaps all the Society need are the right combination of personalities and imaginations to help it prosper again. Its strength was that it pursued social and intellectual aims with a sense of fun, symbolised by the mulled wine almost always available at meetings.

Nonetheless, the Oxford Arthurian Society perseveres into 1998/9. Speakers should include at least one major Arthurian novelist. The Society can be contacted through the present President, Hannah Means, at Regent's Park College, Oxford OX1 2LB.



#### References

Papers of the Arthurian Society in the John Johnson Collection and the Western Manuscripts Division, Bodleian Library, Oxford.  
*Arthuriana* i, 1929; ii, 1930  
 Minute books of the Oxford Arthurian Society, 1982-  
*Ceridwen's Cauldron* 1985- (ongoing)

## Echo of Time

### Pamela Harvey



The hill seemed so steep this morning. Igraine wished she had not bought so much at the supermarket. And why had she and her friend taken a flat near the top of a hill? She put both shopping bags down for a moment. It was so hot. She pushed her auburn hair off her perspiring brow, and was not prepared for the voice that said: "Can I carry one for you?"

She looked up. A man, of early middle-age, smiled at her. She was wary. Was this a pick-up in more ways than one? She mumbled yes very uncertainly, forgetting to say thank you. She looked around to see that other people were in sight. This was a well populated suburb of London; several people were around and it was broad daylight. If it had been dark, that would have been quite different. She did not wish to encourage such an encounter ... he was several years older, and a stranger.

At one point the hill grew very steep indeed. No houses crawled up it at this point. The green meadow grass waved in the slight breeze as it had since time immemorial. Since the days of the Romans and even the Celts... She noted the man's long blonde pigtail ... strange how fashions came round again... As if life were a circle. As if we were part of the circle, the convolutions of history. Acting out our lives as if they really mattered...

Igraine wiped her eyes again. When she looked, the man had vanished. She blinked. Oh, so that was it. He had made off with her shopping. She had been a complete fool. Mentally she counted what had been lost. It would cost her several pounds to refund herself. She swore. She leaned against a nearby hedge and looked around. Then, near a grassy knoll, she noticed the hole. It looked like a cave, but she had never seen such here before. As her eyes took in the unexpected sight the aperture seemed to be getting wider. It glowed, shimmered in the increasing sunlight. Then she felt the pull. Like a forcefield... She fought against it, as one would the tidal current of a powerful river, or the ocean. But it pulled inexorably. Until, like a feather in the breeze, she was sucked in. The short passage quickly opened out into a large cavern.

At first Igraine was not aware of the low chanting. Then she saw the flickering torches, and saw the faces, one by one. Observed their long robes, saw the glint of a gold torque.

Someone called out: "Igraine - Uther Pendragon has claimed you as his right, his Bride - he will honour your vision..."

Her new acquaintance stood before her, but dressed now as a Chieftain of old, in a long flowing scarlet cloak fastened with an elaborate brooch. She noted the spirals chasing each other over the jewelled design - noted the Dragon motif.

She found her voice at last. It sounded distant, as if drifting over Time itself.

"Is this some kind of joke? Whoever are you?" This addressed to everyone present.

The man stepped forward. She looked deep into his dark blue eyes. It was not an arrogant, or lustful, expression. Rather, kindness. A stupid thought flashed through her brain. Perhaps the legend had got it wrong. Why had her mother called her after Igraine, the mother of Arthur? But why had her whole life been haunted by thoughts, dreams of a tall warrior-like figure, who seemed somehow to come out of the past?

The man spoke for the first time in this place. "Igraine - perhaps you do not remember me. Or the boy Arthur ... though you should."

A young lad of about fourteen stood before Igraine. He smiled, a welcoming smile. She looked into dark, golden flecked eyes, saw the wavy hair over his wide brow. A consciousness came to her, almost like another's memory. Of a birth, a babe, a tower above a stormashed cliff, but she herself was a zephyr, an elemental, tossed by the winds, giving birth not to this child but to starlike wraiths, the burden of planetary Space.

She tried to compose herself. Was this a dream? If so, Arthur was its quintessence. The young man answered her thought: "All life is a dream compared to Reality. I am not in bondage to Time. The Sun shines beyond the Earth..."

Suddenly the whole cavern was filled with blazing light. It lit up the swords of the warrior figures; the gleaming emblems of the Druids. Their faces, hair, shone with the sweeping glare of a sunny day.

Igraine looked cautiously at the focal point of the light. It was coming from two sources, nearly joined together. Two round glowing objects, like two small suns...

In her head a voice murmured: Uther and Arthur Pendragon, Lords of Light.

A whirlwind filled the space with a roaring sound. Leaves were flung in through the passageway. Igraine looked toward the entrance. Out there was daylight. She could not stay here... In her mind Arthur's voice spoke of the Spiral Path to Avalon.

The rush of wind tore at her clothes - she felt herself pulled by it. Helpless, she drifted out into the passage, then she was deposited on the grass outside.

After a moment she got up, shaken. She blinked. To her intense surprise, she saw her shopping bag, together with its companion, as they had been left. No - one of them had been left. The other had been ... given back? There was no sign of the man with the light hair. Then an arm reached down and picked up one of the bags. A voice said: "Do you live far from here?"

Igraine looked at the boy. She mumbled: "Just over there."

The street was still there. She half-expected it would have vanished. Down the road the Green Dragon inn was ready for customers; chairs and umbrellas stood on the forecourt. She looked again at the steep incline. Most of Green Dragon Hill was a series of undulations and curved folds. Most of it was built on, especially lower slopes with houses and shops. The past had vanished, along with the crumbling remains of the fortress of Cunobelinus on a nearby hill. The trees in the groves which were now streets whispered of long-lost ancestors; the Oak and the Ash Grove sang a leafy song to the past.

Arthur spoke again: "Perhaps when we last met you were of the Sidhe ... The time before you were born; we have always shared life together ... perhaps you will discover why now you seem human..."

His tone held meaning - "You have always belonged to the One you met in the hill. You knew that, although you did not feel you could trust a stranger."

She did not deny it. "I am of the Faery People, and I belong to this hill, this valley," she said, as if her true nature could speak freely for the first time. Then she looked at Arthur. Suddenly he seemed much older. As if age of transient to him; his actual being transcended it. The midday sun formed a bright aura about him; as he melted into it, his substance trembling into its ambience, his hard hand sought Igraine's hand. She felt their bond. She knew Eternity streak into her life in that moment. She heard the words: "I will return".

As she entered her gate, she heard her name called by her friend, Vivien: "Where have you been? You know we're going out this afternoon."

Igraine hesitated, then spoke in a low tone, not expecting to be believed: "I was taken by the Sidhe; I walked among the Gods..."

Vivien laughed: "You haven't been drinking?"

Igraine answered: "No, it was a place of two Suns - if you like, another world ... The Dragon Path from yesteryear to tomorrow. The spiral Path into dimensions of wonder and wider Life." She paused. "Which the next century may begin to understand, so that death and sorrow need be no longer a burden or a fear." Her memory dwelt on their entwined thoughts and awareness of each other as she said: "Arthur told me."

Vivien seemed puzzled. "Who is Arthur?" she asked.

Igraine looked at her. "I thought you would know."

# Arthur and the Yew Cult

Allen Meredith

*In Part One the author argued that 'King Arthur' was a name derived from an ancient cult or order connected with the long-living yew*

## Symbols of the legend

Two themes essential to the Arthurian Cycle are also central to the Norse Volsung-saga. The symbolic themes are clearly in evidence - Excalibur and the Holy Grail..

## Excalibur

The god Odin, protector and forefather of Sigmund's line, embedded the sword up to the hilt in the tree of the 'great hall'; the tree 'branstock' or *barnstokkr* (*apaldr*) suggests a tree with fruit. Many warriors came forward to draw the sword and failed. At the last, young Sigmund comes forward and pulls the sword from the great tree. Sigurd the son of Simund can be seen etched on a rock in Uppland, Sweden. The rock engraving is considered ancient - runic inscriptions can clearly be seen. In the centre of the engraving is a tree.

The sword Excalibur, known also as *Caledfwlch* and *Caliburn*, is the symbol of the cross and sacred tree. *Ibur* is the yew, *ebor* is the yew bow. In *Études Celtiques*, we learn of Arthur's Mantle 'unseen was he who went under it'. The mantle could relate to the immense shelter of a giant yew.

## The holy grail, the cauldron and the Wyrd

The famous Perceval beholds a tree with lighted candles and is told it concerns the mystery of the holy grail. As he approaches the tree the lights get dimmer, and on his arrival at the tree they have gone. These stories remind me of the lighted tips of the ancient yew - seen from a distance in the gloom they appear as lighted candles, like little lights on a Christmas tree; on approaching they get dimmer, and on arrival they have gone. Alfred Lord Tennyson describes an old yew in *In Memoriam*:

*Thy gloom is kindled at the tips  
And passes into gloom again*

Now the grail is connected with the ancient cauldron of Cerridwen and Dagda, and

we learn that Cerridwen is Ked the ancient tree, and that Dagda is another name for Eochaидh Ollathair, and Urd is Wyrd and Urd, and is linked with the World Tree Igdrasil, and Igdrasil and Urd is the Tree of Fate. Most scholars now agree Igdrasil refers to the needle ash, *barr-askr*, the evergreen yew. At Wraysbury or Wyrdisbury is an ancient yew, long known by Britons and Saxons; its isolated position on a small island off the Thames has enabled it to survive. The Fate, the Wyrd, is a link with the 'spindle', the axis tree at the centre.

## Where is Avalon?

Avalon, Avallach, the mysterious isle of immortal fruit. Avalon, the elusive Avalon, Arthur's last resting place. Should we be saying, "Who was Arthur?" or "What is Arthur?" If we stumble across Arthur how could we know? They still search for the bones of Arthur that are as elusive as the grail and Excalibur.

If you should ever go to the Western Isles and find yourself on an uninhabited island, you may find it a place of great sadness and turmoil. This otherworld should be approached with great reverence and humbleness. Here lives the most sacred of all trees. Columcille, or St Columba, knew the sacredness of this tree and prophesied that man would destroy it. And now it has come back to life and is growing once more out of the cliff rocks.

*This is the Yew of the Saints  
Where they used to come with me together  
Ten hundred angels were there  
above our heads, side close to side.  
Dear to me is that yew tree*

Columcille departed 597. A chief of Morven wrote of the yew on *ioua insula*, 'yew island':

*A yew spreads its dark branches nigh,  
a mournful sound breaks from the ivy rock above  
and bathes the foot of the mournful tree.  
I invited her to I-una's plain*

John Smith (1780) *Gallic Antiquities*

## Otherworld

Could this living being with its immortal fruits hold the secret of Avallach? The ancient yew lives between two worlds, it is always in contact with otherworlds, it is mysterious, it is immortal. We are only given to see some things, and so if we saw King Arthur with our own eyes we may not recognise him. The ancient yew is similar to Arthur in many ways. The yew-like Arthur sleeps waiting for a 'new age'.

For those who delve deeply into the mysteries the journey can be perilous, it is an adventure. You may lose sight of worldly things

that some would call reality. It could be called living between two worlds. Many years ago the world was different, the 'dream world' or living in between two worlds would not have seemed so strange. The hermits were part of that world, caves and hollow trees were their sanctuary. Sometimes certain individuals have been alluded to as 'living out of their time'. Examples of such otherworld people can be found with Merlin and the Irish *Suibne* and in the Scottish story of Thomas the Rhymer.

For them the world of the supernatural, magic and prophecy seems to have led to 'a kind of madness'. At times they appeared to be hallucinating, but they possessed a kind of magick that we only read about in fairy tales. What happened to the wildman of the woods, the Merlin-type figures? Where we have just begun to walk, perhaps they were learning to fly. For where they discovered the yew we are only at the point of rediscovering.

Of Merlin it is said that, after the battle of Arfderwydd, he went into the woods to live wild. 'For fifty seasons I have seen this yew smoke' - he refers to the male yew in spring when the sudden winds catch the rope pollen. (Arfderwydd is said to be the modern Arthuret in Cumbria, old Rheged. The area of Borrowdale may be a link.)

I have no time here to go into the yew in the guise of the White Goddess Guinevere, Gwenhyfar-Blodeuwedd-Olwen-Hecate-Athena, which to some might seem far removed from Arthur until we look into the etymology and symbolism of these things.

#### Personal names of trees

It is easy to see how in ancient times certain trees were given personal names. Indeed in ancient times whole tribes of people believed they were descended from a common ancestor. Although I can only go into this briefly, I hope to show further how the name and the idea of Arthur may have originated from the sacred tree of our ancestors.

It was once a widespread belief amongst our ancestors that we were created from plants or animals, and many tribes took on the name of a particular species of plant or creature. This is clear to see in tribal names such as the Eburones, Iverni, Iberno, Eoganachta, Iberia, Efwr and so on, all names taken from the yew (3). Eoghan or Eogan is one example of a personal name. Perhaps these personal names should also be titled 'descent'. The Scots, Welsh, Irish and English anciently claimed descent from Ebur or Eber. This claim was also made by the Gauls and other nations. The name indicates 'yew-born' and can be traced through askr of the

Northern tribes and Esus of the Gauls, and also through personal names like Eoghan, Owen, Owain etc.

It is difficult to simplify something that remains so mysterious, but I believe Arthur has deeper 'roots' than we can imagine. If I were to translate the personal name Eochaith Ollathair as 'yew tree of Arthur' and say that Arthur is a direct link with 'father', the Irish *athair*, would I be so wrong?

In 1769 Thomas Pennant, who had visited a number of ancient yews, including the ancient yew at Fortingall, visited also a special tree in the churchyard at Llandeiniolen. Commenting on the tree he says, "F is the 'chief' and is twenty seven feet in girth." He is referring here to the female yew in the churchyard which is now 28 feet in girth. Pennant also mentions ancient verse in connection with this yew: "Chief of all yews in Welsh sacred acres..."

Many trees were given names in medieval and Saxon times. The legendary trees of Ireland were Eo Rossa, Eo Mugna, Bile Tortan and Bile Daithi. The eighteenth century traveller Thomas Fenton recorded many trees on his travels, including an ancient yew called Meurig in the churchyard of Llanwrda. How many of us still remember the tales of Herne in Windsor Forest? Many an old oak has been given this name. And how many of us would think the Saxon Herne, the Cerne Abbas Giant or Cernunnos, Dagda, lerne or 'Cerne' alias Herne the Hunter could even be remotely linked to Arthur?

How can we imagine our remote ancestors adopting trees as if they were their brother or sister, or even believe for one moment that tree and human were related, and could in some way communicate? Well, that perhaps is our problem!

Gog and Magog were names given to old trees and remnants of these old Gogs and Magogs can still be found in the shape of two old oaks at Glastonbury. Other ancient trees still exist at Allestree (Aethelheard's tree), an old yew in Derbyshire. Fredville Park has Majesty, a giant oak at Nonington in Kent. Wilmington (Waendel's tree) is an ancient yew near the Long Man of Wilmington in Sussex. Bicknoller, Bicca's alder, is in the form of an ancient churchyard yew, Somerset. The legendary Cluain's Eo is the yew of St Ciaran of Clonmacnoise in Ireland.

#### Further Arthurian links

Graham Phillips observes a link with Arthur. "At the village of Llandrillo is 'Dinarth the Fort of the Bear' on Bryn Euryr". Arth being the link with Arthur, if Graham had gone into the churchyard he would have seen an enormous split yew,

which would date back to the 5th century Arthur. If there is a link with the word *arth* and Arthur it would be interesting to date the ancient yews at Llan-arth in Gwent, Llanfihangel-Ar-Arth in Powys, and Llan-wen-arth-Citra in Gwent.

In 1773 Thomas Pennant wrote, concerning the Vale of Crucis, "Near the Pillar of Elseg and the rock known as Craig-Arthur are vast yew trees, growing out of the limestone." Perhaps we have a link here with Creag lubhair in the area of Fortingall and with Craignure, "rock of the yew" situated on the edge of Mull, and looking towards the ancient yew of Bernera.

Jan Fry tells me that Merlin makes prophecies about "the Owain that is to come". Could this be the 'natural descent' from Owain Ddantgwyn to Owain Glyndower, or does he prophesise of the 'yew to come' through Eoghan-Owen-Owain, who is 'born from the yew'?

#### Summary

So, those heroic figures of King Arthur and Robin Hood, were they part of some ancient order that we see mixed up with ritual, symbolism and prophecy, mysteries that have endured for many centuries? So the wheel turns! We begin to rediscover, and the ancient words - *mugna*, *ebor*, *ollathair*, *wyrd*, *efwr* - return to challenge us again!

#### Notes

[Notes 1 and 2 are from Part One of this article]

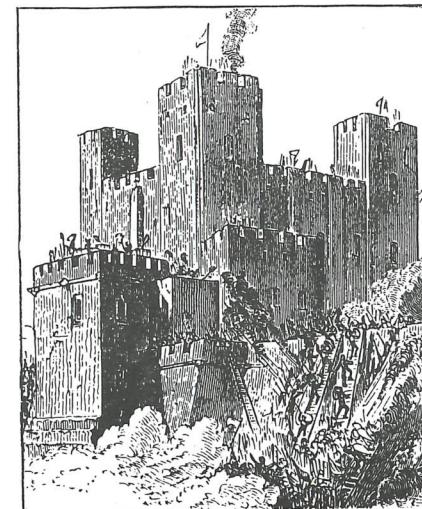
1. In the Welsh language *celli* is a grove or copse. Fortingall was anciently the Clachan of Fothergill, from the 16th century MS *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*. Interestingly the Dean of Lismore was also the vicar of Fortingall, and departed in 1551. He would have been familiar with Bernara, *I-una* and the ancient yew on the island. The present Iona is not the original Iona, *Ioua insula* or 'yew island'.
2. Duneaves, according to W J Watson (1927) *The Celtic Place Names of Scotland*, means 'house of the *nemed*'. *Nemed* or *nemeton* refers to a sacred grove or tree. Duneaves, the *nemed* at Fortingall, is from *neimheadh*, mentioned in the Brehon Laws, and further indicates a sanctuary and most sacred place. *Fionemead* or *sylva sacra* is a sacred tree or sanctuary of the sacred tree (see Charles Vallency *Collectanea Vol 3* p107 and other Irish MSS). It doesn't take much imagination to realise that the Fortingall yew dates back beyond the written Brehon Laws, and that the word *nemed* or *neimheadh* referred to a specific sacred tree or grove. And if we use our imagination a little and see this ancient tree overlooking Runnymede, might we not think of

the 'yew runes' and *fionemead*, the tree of the sanctuary?

3. Was there a yew cult across Britain? *Efwr* in Celtic times was a province which stretched from Cornwall to Hampshire, included the Isle of Wight and many parts of Wales eg *Dinefwr* in Wales (Kingdom of Yews) and *Moel Efwr*, a Druid temple on the Isle of Wight, not a temple as we know it but simply 'hill of the yew', now known as Carisbrooke or *Caer-broc*, 'fort of the yew'.

#### Bibliography of works consulted

Cormac mac Cullenan *Cormac's Glossaries*  
 Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman *King Arthur*  
 Graham Phillips *The Search for the Grail*  
 Thomas Fenton (1804-13) *Tours in Wales*  
 Thomas Pennant (1790) *Tours of Wales Vol 2*  
 Charles Vallency (1802) *Collectanea Vol 3*  
 Herbert Spencer *Manners and Customs Vol 2 and 3*



# Reviews

◆ Copy sent for review

Patrick McCormack

**Albion: the last companion**

Raven Books (Robinson Publishing imprint) 1997 £7.99

ISBN 1 85487 412 8 479pp

With five pages of *Dramatis Personae*, an eleven-page appendix of historical background and sources, a map based on Claudius Ptolemy, and a three-page glossary of places and tribes, this book arrives well-framed in evidence of the author's respect for his subject. Many lay readers may find this panoply of data a little daunting. Pendragon members, I suspect, will instead be tempted to the fascinating sidetracks offered by exploring this apparatus, and delay starting to read the book itself.

I would suggest, instead, postponing them till afterward, once you've discovered the use McCormack has made of them. Certainly, also (with the exception of a few characters who never come into focus because, although often mentioned, they stubbornly refuse to actually appear) the figures in the story, even where not familiar names, appear in vivid enough individuality to be remembered without use of the DP.

Indeed, this story, despite changes of viewpoint and especially timepoint - flashback within flashback, and so on - which if schemed out on paper would have the interlacing complexity of a Celtic pattern, in the actual reading remains clear and with a constant, if multilayered, narrative thrust.

We begin with the hermit Budoc, living near an isolated Cornish fishing village, some years after Camlann. Through the witness of his memory, and those of others, we learn of the events of that battle and its aftermath, and of Budoc's own uncomfortably unsettled attempts to come to terms with monastic life in Brittany before finding the hermit way. We also are taken back to the years after Badon when Arthur and his force, the Saxons penned, find peace unsettling in the absence of a role. It becomes clear that Budoc had been one of the key figures among the Round Table knights (or Companions in McCormack's terminology - this is the "real world" rather than a chivalrous Maloryesque Dark Age). An embassy complaining of pirate attacks (and itself undergoing attack near the Arthurian

headquarters at South Cadbury) draws the attention of Arthur to the idea of eliminating the pirates' Hebridean base. Behind this lies a bigger plan - to obtain an anointing by the "original people" of Prydain which will change his status from that of warlord to legitimate overking.

As this background becomes clear, in the story's advancing "present" two groups of attackers are, coincidentally, approaching the village - an opportunist shiploads of Saxons seeking a place to settle, and an Irish pirate, sent by Vortepor of Dyfed to obtain various relics of Arthur believed to be in Budoc's possession. In the savage violence that follows, Budoc is forced to resurrect his old skills of violence for an epic conflict which comes to embroil the inherent forces of the landscape themselves in defence of the sacred matter of the newer faith.

To describe the plot in further detail would be unfair to those who plan to read this book, something I would strongly recommend, as I found it genuinely gripping - there is certainly no air of "a first novel" about it, although that is what it is. The SF writer Robert Heinlein said a book should be analysed in terms of the acronym *ACLIMP* - Action, Character, Location, Integration, Motivation and Plot. In hose term, this book scores highly on almost every heading.

Action I will return to with Plot. Some of the characters remain shadowy - Arthur and Gwenhwyvar in particular - but others are vividly realised. A couple who appear only briefly but are unforgettable - the gross, cynical Vortepor, and the Friesian steersman aboard the Saxon ship with his convincing professionalism (a headland can be recognised by night because of the snuffling dog sound the waters make is a telling instance) - must stand as exemplars here.

Location is so strong a component as to almost add an additional cast of characters. Again, a handful of instances - the derelict Roman town of Lindinis (Ilchester) on a winter's night, split by the occasional crash of a collapsing roof; the heather-set labyrinth which provides the setting for the anointment ceremony, which goes horribly wrong (and gives a fascinating three-dimensional reality to the speculation of Robert Graves' from *The White Goddess*); and above all the estuary landscape of wood and cliff and water where the story ends, all solid enough to traverse alongside the characters - must stand for all, here.

Integration of all the book's elements is firm, despite the complex interweaving timeframe already mentioned - if the people are to an extent dominated by landscape and event, that is in a sense to be expected of such a time and place, when human existence was far more marginal

than today's. Motivation both of minor and major characters is convincing. Even the Irish pirate, Eremon, near-demonic as his behaviour is, is believably driven by the need for some established status - a foreigner to his Irish cousins, who revel in cattle-raiding but regard piracy as below contempt and sneer at this birth in Britain, as likewise to the Britons - he has in response forged himself to a deadly essence of assertive need. Whether it be ethnic and personal jealousies between mercenary guards on Ilchester's gates, the jealous resentment of a bishop at the more attentive audience for a pagan storyteller, or on a grander scale the build-up in Vortepor of spite at trivial slights to become the mastering envy that drives him to Machiavellian treason, all here have believable reasons for what they do.

Plot and action drive each other - action is convincing, and gives realistic deference to the workings of chance as well as the competing plans of men - it seems to grow naturally out of people and place rather than feeling authorially imposed.

A book to read and enjoy, although I do have a few minor caveats. These do not relate to the author's use of his sources. Although it is endlessly possible to argue about dates, I did not feel that McCormack exceeds the bounds of legitimate possibility in his cast of contemporaries. The Hebridean expedition is clearly speculation, but not such as to suspend belief, and, given an era which known history shows to have been one of extraordinary mobility of peoples, the interaction of members of far-flung "nationalities" does not seem to exceed the possible. (The idea that a proto-Pictish anointing would carry weight among the post-Roman kinglets of Albion seems dubious, but then the author does not claim that it did, only that Arthur was led to believe it could confer legitimacy.)

My few caveats, other than the shadowiness of some characters, boil down effectively to two. First, an oddity of conversational tone on occasion - the military characters, the warriors of various sides, seem to talk with excessive formality even on occasions when formality would be unnecessary, speak of their weaponry as if lecturing at a military academy, and so on (and there's an associated occasional air of spoken anachronism - the Saxons penned in "reservation", a young fishergirl giving an antiwar speech which could have been uttered at a modern demo, and so on). And, finally, while the "old religion" echoes elsewhere in the book, culminating in the labyrinth ceremony, seemed legitimate and

plausible survivals, the eruption into the final confrontation of unleashed magical forces, from shapechanging to a storm that reincarnates dead warriors, appeared an unnecessary *deus ex machina* arriving without warning in an otherwise realistically-toned story.

Nevertheless, very much a book to read - and re-read.

Steve Sneyd

Annabel Thomas

◆ **Beaker: a narrative poem**

Arbor Vitae Press 1997 £4.00 [£6.00]

ISBN 0 9525679 11 illus 20pp

An archaeologist goes into a reverie on unearthing a beaker containing "bones and soft ash / And wheat grains..." And other objects including a mirror which, speculum-like, induces a vision of a life perhaps three millennia ago. This meditation on a cremation receptacle of the Bronze Age is told simply but effectively in short phrase-length lines, each stanza a sentence. No holy grail this but a means to evoke times past. Illustrated by Althea Wood, copies are available, signed by author or illustrator, for £6.00 (£4.00 unsigned) from the Editor, BM Spellbound, London WC1N 3XX (cheques to "J M Wood").

Chris Lovegrove

Anne Lister

**Root, Seed, Thorn & Flower**

Hearthfire 1997 HF004CD

Anne sang some of her songs at Pendragon 98 in Glastonbury, and this, her latest album, includes pieces written to accompany two of her plays, one on Morgan le Fay and the other about Sir Gawain. *Ragnell* explores the aftermath of the Loathly Lady's riddle, *Four Queens* treats of Morgan, Elaine, Morgause and Igraine: "And four queens will take the king to the islands of the deep", while the unaccompanied *Sword and Scabbard* subtly contrasts the inherent and symbolic properties of these two objects offered to Arthur. *Taliesin* is a piece in the tradition of the *Song of Amergin*, one line providing the title of the album, and *Gawain's Leavetaking* is based on a modernised version by Tolkien of a text from a Middle English poem.

Anne has a fine, confident voice in the style mainly associated with the English folksong revival, often accompanying herself on the guitar. For me the best tracks were the ones that counterpointed her sensitive lyrics with instrumental lines by pipes, fiddle, saxophone and a variety of more exotic sound sources including Turkish clarinet and assorted percussion. A worthy addition to the modern Matter of Britain.

Chris Lovegrove

Alan Garner

**The voice that thunders: essays and lectures**

The Harvill Press 1997 £8.99

ISBN 1 86046 332 0 pbk 144pp

Alderley Edge, the prominent feature in the Cheshire landscape, weaves a spell as potent as any other Arthurian site even though its sleeping king is not identified by name. Alan Garner leapt to fame in 1960 as the author of *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, a powerful novel which (as its sub-title "A Tale of Alderley" hinted) was infused through and through with a native intimacy of the Edge. Local lore and British legend also combined with examinations of the human psyche in subsequent novels, laying bare the powerful and at times disturbing adolescent emotions of the characters.

This collection of essays and lectures exhibits the maelstrom of learning and experiences that gave rise to Garner's creativity, and includes a moving exposition on the recognition of the onset of manic-depression that followed the filming of *The Owl Service*; I still remember the vivid impact from first reading this in Peter Nicholl's *Explorations of the Marvellous* (originally *Science Fiction at Large*).

What for me encapsulates Garner's passionate pre-occupation with the Matter of Britain in its broadest sense is the cover photo of the rock carving of the Wizard of Alderley Edge, which we learn was done by Robert Garner, his great-great-grandfather. With credentials like this he can hardly but be deeply involved in the subject matter of his life's work.

Chris Lovegrove

**The Chronicles of the Round Table**

edited by Mike Ashley

Raven Books (Robinson Publishing) 1997 £5.99

ISBN 1 85487 953 7 pbk 452pp

With twenty-four stories, seventeen of them published for the first time, plus a lengthy, informative and balanced Introduction discussing the Table's background in Arthurian story, and an Afterword in which Parke Godwin and Marion Zimmer Bradley discuss the way they, and indeed each generation, reinterpret the elements of this, the first thing that must be said is that this volume is clearly value for money in terms of sheer size alone.

But what of the story content? As a generalisation, it can be said that it's possible to get a bit weary of yet another single combat by lance and sword - only a handful of the tales manage not to include one - and that some of the authors find balancing the magic and the real, the Dark Age and the chivalro-medieval, an uneasy process. Only once does this teeter over into

sheer silliness though - Pelleas and Nimue achieve a final apotheosis during the staging of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta in a John T Aquino story - and in general a very considerable variety of tone, character, mood and event is achieved. I would still recommend, though, dipping in to read one or two stories at a time rather than trying to read straight through and running the risk of a certain feeling of *déjà-vu* at times. Clearly it would be impossible to comment on every story. Instead, I will focus on those that stand out for me.

Peter T Garrett commingles seriousness and dry wit in his *Sir Bedivere: A Tribute of Ferns*. Peace-keeping *cum* tribute-gathering in the Welsh hinterland, chivalry is flummoxed in its encounter with a cult-like community which combines old magic with Pelagian sensual Christianity (proto "flirty-fishers"!) - at the same time the story says serious things about the ambiguous relations of central power with sincere dissidents.

In *Sir Blamor: Dieu et mon droit*, Eliot Fintushel makes a bleakly strong examination of the dilemma of a knight who, faced with combating a far stronger champion to avenge his brother, succumbs to the temptation of a magic protective rune inscribed on his belly. Too late, he discovers he has been tricked - and is not the only one cheating on the knightly code.

A knight who obeys the code to the extent of succouring an outcast leper girl, and achieves an unintended miracle, is the theme of Paul Finch's *Sir Yder: My lady of the ashes*. Though I suspect some of the geography (six weeks to traverse Yorkshire on the derelict Roman road seems dubious) the visual set pieces - the girl's ritualised expulsion from her village, the hermit's craggy outpost transformed by a demonic being into a killing-ground for pilgrims - are stunning.

Visual power - magically bridged voids and the like - plus the pleasure of waiting for the protagonist to get a richly deserved come-uppance - are the twin strengths of Michael Coney's *Sir Balin: The hand of fair Lysette*, while a subtler picture of a knightly villain, one which convincingly portrays his miskilling, comes with Liz Holliday's *Sir Breunis: the knight of good heart*. A younger son, tempered in his teens as a tool for future use by Morgan, in a dark later time turns on and imprisons her; will he choose to exercise his power and revenge what she has made of him?

The matter-of-fact strangeness of those marchlands of the Arthurian story where the realms of the living and dead interface is vividly and elegantly portrayed in Phyllis Ann Karr's *Sir*

**Gawain: Clissant.** Women torment and lament, perilous fords are passed on unsightly steeds or with hooded ferrymen, a beautiful court unleashes deadly traps, incest and immortality hang heavily in the air, and action has the impeccable logic of dream.

Arthur commits himself to an unjust fight: Morgan is prepared to destroy her husband and possibly her son in *Sir Uwain: Just cause*. Author Fay Sampson uses effective images of the sacred hunt - in which Morgan embroils her offspring as the sought stag - and the contradictory killing power of Excalibur and healing role of its scabbard to explore the ambiguities of family relationships.

A remote Devonshire valley, a penniless would-be Round Table knight, far away from the glamour of Camelot - Patrick McCormack with *Sir Villairs: Earthworks* pits naive determination against a woman who offers the temptation of quietude, in the shadow of a prehistoric fort where greedy miners have unleashed an immortal bringer of the wasteland. Restrained, solid in its physical setting, this is a very filmic story, in the best sense, with the special horror for the protagonist of a true vision of the end of all his hopes. Forevision, too, in Brian Stableford's *Sir Fergus: My mother the hag*. A near-immortal fairy woman knows her doom, forbids her unloved son from interfering with her fate. But will his small remnant of magic power be enough to let him affect, vengefully, the fate of the Round Table as a whole?

Parke Godwin's story deserves mention for the freshness of its slant on *Sir Modred: Uallanach*, making of him an avenger of his mother, leader of the despised pre-Celtic people, who has been murdered on a visit to Camelot to try to reclaim Arthur's love. Interestingly plausible, clearly based on deep knowledge, though the reconstructed telegraphic thought-mode of Modred takes a little getting used to.

In Godwin's story, Camlann becomes a small-scale ambush north of the Wall. In the last story I intend to mention, Darrell Schweitzer's *Sir Artagall: The dragon of Camlann*, the final battle becomes the gateway, for one knight and his young brother *cum* squire, into the "world under the hill", Morgan's realm. The battle dead participate in a horrendous vision of the fiery edge of hell; Artagall and young Valentinus face the monster which focuses the real meaning of the Round Table's downfall, and thereby permit a kind of reconciliation.

For these stories alone (and the fact that I have not mentioned the others does not mean they are without interest) this anthology is

certainly value for money, in quality as well as quantity.

Steve Sneyd

Elaine Gill &amp; David Everett

◆Celtic Pilgrimages: Sites, Seasons and Saints. An inspiration for spiritual journeys  
Illustrated by Courtney Davis  
Blandford 1997 £18.99

ISBN 0 7137 2643 1 hbk 128pp

Another fascinating publication from Blandford, this book looks at the turning of the Celtic Christian year and discusses various feasts, saints and pilgrimage sites. However, though there is a lot of interesting material in it opportunities have been lost.

The text tends towards a romantic New Age view of Celtic Christianity often using terms and aspects unlikely to have been known to our more ancient ancestors. One particular example is the three rays of light representing the druidic trinity Duw, Beli and Taran - this is, without a doubt, a late neo-druidic concept owing more to the 18th century than the distant past. There is also talk of ley lines, thirteen months in a year and considerable emphasis given to Glastonbury - in my opinion an over-rated town!

There is an overall impression of a lost golden age: the introduction talks of loss of balance, life becoming distorted and out of kilter, the light is dim and disorder takes over. The writers seem to forget that the origins of Celtic Christianity were founded in an age of considerable violence, poor health and short life spans. Tales of saints are often merely fairy tales with scenes of retribution and exaggerated claims. People were taught by these tales and were led into a dark age that took generations to grow out of! Often the saints were fundamentalists who refused to believe anything that wasn't in the Bible or put out by the accepted hierarchy. When men and women disagreed with them they were called heretics and in the stories of saints often died most horribly or forced to change their ways under threat of a supernatural death. This is not to say that Christianity did not contribute to society.

Another impression often given is that there was considerable difference between the Church of Rome and the so-called Celtic Christians. It is interesting that when it came to differences the only two they could find was the positioning of Easter and the kind of haircut used. These were hardly fundamental problems!

When talking of lost opportunities I would suggest that it would have been better to have given specific details of the several interesting

sites mentioned - for example, exact positions, maps, direction and places to stay. Whether you are religious or not, visiting some of these places would make excellent holidays. I also feel that photographs would have been more appropriate rather than the artwork of Courtney Davis. Some of Courtney's Celtic work is fantastic and his stippled illustration are generally good, but where the two are combined (plus being marred by the colour) they don't work.

Though there has been a lot of work put into this publication it is lacking something!

Charles W Evans-Günther

Alastair McBeath

◆**Sky Dragons and Celestial Serpents**

Dragon's Head Press 1998 £4.99

ISBN 0 9524387 3 9 pbk illus 72pp

Bob Trubshaw

◆**Dragon-slaying myths, ancient and modern**

Dragon's Head Press 1998 £1.99

ISBN 0 9524387 4 7 pbk illus 25pp

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth a dragon appeared in the sky at Winchester, causing Merlin to prophesy the birth of Arthur. It is entirely appropriate then that these two publications are reviewed here.

Townies find it hard to appreciate the night sky due to modern-day light pollution, and may be lucky to even make out the constellations of the Plough, Orion or Cassiopeia. Pendragon member Alastair McBeath reminds us in *Sky Dragons and Celestial Serpents* how powerful an impression was made by the patterns in the sky for our predecessors, and discusses Draco, Cetus, Hydra, Serpens, meteors and the *aurora borealis* in terms of their dragon-like associations. Descriptions of their shapes, related myths, how they may be found and detailed bibliographies all make the subject matter accessible to the lay-person.

The Plough, part of Ursa Major, is referred to throughout as Arthur's Chariot, though without any critical justification. However, if, like me, you ploughed through *Hamlet's Mill* but felt unable to evaluate it, and suspected too that the Zodiac is part of a divine inkblot test, this essay may well help to win you over.

Originally issued by Heart of Albion Press in 1993 at £1.95, the reprinted *Dragon-slaying Myths* represents good value at only 4p inflation over five years! Bob Trubshaw, editor of the now sadly defunct *At the Edge* magazine, surveys the universal appeal of the combat with the monster, arguing for more diverse approaches to "this most persistent of mythical archetypes".

My only complaint with this re-issue is that the opportunity to correct consistent spelling mistakes (three on the first page alone - *impaled*, *interchangably* and *conqour*) and to revise the occasional bit of woolly thinking was not taken; nevertheless, stimulating and gently critical ideas abound, and there are plentiful black and white illustrations and a select bibliography.

Chris Lovegrove

Lyn Webster Wilde

◆**Celtic Women in Legend, Myth and History**

Illustrated by Courtney Davis & Craig Chapman

Blandford 1997 £17.99

ISBN 0 7137 2552 4 hbk 176pp

With references and index plus numerous black & white and colour illustrations and photographs, this book is about woman's part in ancient society, particularly the way of life both secular and religious. Later chapters look at what part women have played in recent Celtic society and includes such women as Duchesse Anne of Brittany, Grace O'Malley, Flora MacDonald, Charlotte Guest and Augusta Gregory. The final chapter looks at the position of Celtic women today making mention of politicians like Mary Robinson, folk/pop singers such as Karen Matheson and writers including Caitlin Matthews.

There are chapters on everyday life; sex, love and motherhood; priestesses, poets and prophets; the Queen of Two Worlds; and warriors, witches and wise women. One particularly interesting chapter (The Golden Age of the Mother Goddess - Did It Ever Exist?) sadly does not live up to its title. No real discussion takes place and it is quickly accepted that there was such an age. This problem continues throughout the book and a lot is taken for granted without serious investigation. Having had my gripe I would say that the insertion of legends and folk tales is neatly done and in general is quite well illustrated, though Courtney Davis is not at his best! In few other societies were women more highly regarded than by the Celts, and that still goes today. There are many strong female characters in Celtic tales and many strong Celtic women play a part in modern society.

Charles W Evans-Günther

Laurence Main

◆**Walks in Mysterious Wiltshire**

Sigma Leisure 1998 £6.95

ISBN 1 85058 617 9 pbk illus 111pp

◆**A guide to the Dyfi Valley Way**

Western Mail & Echo 1998 £7.95

ISBN 1 900477 00 9 pbk illus 82pp

◆**In the Footsteps of King Arthur**

Western Mail & Echo 1998 £7.95

ISBN 0 950 4042 4 1 pbk illus 181pp

Here is a clutch of titles from a prolific author, based on a combination of his twin interests, local lore and walking. The title of the first publication virtually says it all - twenty-seven walks in the county where the author was once a teacher, most of them around five miles long and graded easy, moderate or strenuous. Avebury and Stonehenge are here of course, as well as Salisbury, Warminster, Lacock and a host of other even more peaceful routes, many associated with white horse hill figures with which the county abounds.

Pendragon interest centres on possible Arthurian associations - Wansdyke, a walk to Cherhill White Horse from a Black Horse pub, and Membury hillfort near Baydon (which Laurence identifies with Mount Badon). I personally would quibble with some of his assertions, but that does not in the least detract from an excellent choice of up-to-date routes in the beautiful rolling chalklands of Wiltshire.

Nine walks chop up the Dyfi Valley Way in mid-Wales into manageable chunks, detailed in the text and illustrated by colour maps, Laurence's own photos, gradient profiles and annotations. This is an attractive and practical guide, made more interesting by references to Arthurian sites both ancient and modern including Carn March Arthur, King Arthur's Labyrinth, Camlan and the reputed grave of Taliessin. The colour photos in particular are a delight and a real temptation to take the routes suggested.

In his *Footsteps* book Laurence nails his colours firmly to the mast by declaring his belief that "Arthur was from South Wales and lived from the late fifth century to well into the sixth century". However, "long before the flesh-and-blood Arthur he was the solar hero of the Celts." If you accept these premises, you will find much to confirm them in the introductory notes to each walk. Even if you don't, the walks themselves give you an opportunity of visiting the twenty named sites themselves and making up your own mind.

Obviously well-researched, on the ground and in books, all these publications would have profited from bibliographies to search out the basis of some of Laurence's more contentious assertions (usually prefaced by the ubiquitous "probably"). That niggle aside, *In the Footsteps of Arthur* is particularly good value and profusely illustrated with atmospheric photos by Phil Martin.

Chris Lovegrove

◆ Another Main book to be reviewed next issue!

# Book Worm



## FICTION

September 7th sees the worldwide publication of *The Merlin Mystery* under HarperCollins' Voyager imprint. The hardback [ISBN 0 00 224675 9] is priced at £12.99 and is claimed to be part of "the biggest marketing campaign in publishing history", with unique co-operative brand sponsorship promoting the logo and concept on "a host of top consumer brands".

The publishers say *The Merlin Mystery* is "the most intricate puzzle book ever created, containing over one thousand clues" in words and pictures, with a gold artefact (Merlin's Wand) and an accumulating cash amount (starting at £100,000) as the prize. Estimating that the puzzle will take at least two years to solve, HarperCollins say that the solution is based on symbols rather than language, requiring a mixture of intuition, logic and tenacity. Merlin's Wand is instilled with "powerful magic, called the Pendragon alchemy. However, dark sorcerers sent a spy to steal the wand - Nimue..."

Merlin also features in two recent novels (I suppose recent - no dates given) offered by Excalibur Books. Anne Eliot Crompton's *Merlin's Harp* is a 298 page Roc paperback; T A Barron's 254 page *The Merlin Effect* is a Tor paperback. Here's the spooky bit: both cost £5.99. Minerva Press publish Gabriele Horvath's *The Knights of the Magical Grail* (paperback 213pp £7.99) which Ronan Coghlan describes as "an Arthurian novel which includes fairies, spirits, time anomaly and Excalibur".

Background info on Marion Zimmer Bradley's most recent novel, *Lady of Avalon*, has been e-mailed to us by Karen Lytle Sumpter, and includes a "special celebrity e-mail" by MZB herself on the kinds of books that have influenced her. These include the Prince Valiant comics, Gibbons' *Decline and Fall* (read when she was nine!), Bellini's opera *Norma*, Dion Fortune's spiritual works, Geoffrey Ashe, John Morris and John Michell - strange bed-fellows! The trilogy of *The Mists of Avalon*, *The Forest House* (republished as *The Forest of Avalon*) and *Lady*

of *Avalon* is now available in Penguin. A special feature on Bradley and the first chapter of her new book might still be available at <http://www.amazon.com/bradley>.

**Dorling Kindersley** is known as an innovative publisher of attractive non-fiction guides. A recent addition to their *Eyewitness Classics* series for younger readers, and with a more fictional slant, is Rosalind Kerven's *King Arthur*, illustrated by Tudor Humphries, price £9.99 in hardback [ISBN 0 7513 7145 9]. A recent re-issue by OUP is the similarly-titled *King Arthur*, retold by James Riordan and illustrated by Victor Ambrus (who has achieved new fame as part of Channel 4's *Time Team*). The paperback, ISBN 0 19 274177 2, is priced at £7.99, and a hardback version is also available [ISBN 0 19 274176 4].

Member Jan Fry's "green" Arthurian novel (or should that be Arthurian "green" novel?) *Warriors at the Edge of Time* is due to be published in September by, I understand, **Capall Bann** (the ISBN is 1 86163 04676). Review, hopefully, next issue.

#### NON-FICTION

Novelist Andrew Sinclair's previous foray into grail detecting has been reviewed here before; his latest is *The Discovery of the Grail*, published by **Century** in hardback at £16.99 [ISBN 0 7126 7729 1] and looks to be more of the same ilk.

Another researcher well known in these pages is Ian Wilson, who was probably the first to postulate a link between the Grail stories and the Turin Shroud. His latest, *The Blood and the Shroud* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson £20.00, ISBN 0 297 84149 1) is likely to be his definitive account to date, with several mentions of the Grail cited in the index.

Editor Richard White's *King Arthur in legend and history*, published by **Dent**, is now available in paperback, ISBN 0 460 87915 4. At £16.99, 570 pages of key Arthurian texts in translation (many of them from E K Chambers' 1927 classic *Arthur of Britain*) is very good value.

Caitlin and John Matthews' *The Arthurian Book of Days*, profusely decorated with medieval illustrations over 192 pages, was re-issued by Brockhampton Press in 1997 at £17.99 for the hardback (ISBN 1 86019 421 4). It is already remaindered, and I paid just £4.00 recently for it. Try *Hallowquest News* (details in *Exchange Journals*) for possible offers on this and other Matthews publications.

**World's Classics** has relaunched as **Oxford World's Classics**, with titles now published with new covers and a standard B format. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* will be

published in November at £5.99: edited by Helen Cooper, this will be "the first publication in paperback of this much-acclaimed translation" by Keith Harrison. Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, also edited by Helen Cooper and based on the authoritative Winchester manuscript, was issued in March, price £7.99 ISBN 0 19 282420 1. Other critically edited titles include Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (£5.99) as well as Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, both in translation (obviously!) and both costing £8.99. Website <http://www.worldsclassics.co.uk/>

Available from **English Heritage** is its "biggest-ever" publications catalogue - just phone 01604 781163 or write to English Heritage Postal Sales, PO Box 229, Northampton NN6 9RY. Titles of interest include a colour handbook of *Wroxeter Roman City, Shropshire* [ISBN 1 85074 698 2 £2.25] which has just been published, and the souvenir guide of *Tintagel, Cornwall* [ISBN 1 85074 701 6 £2.95] due out in November.

It's not clear from the descriptions whether the following are fiction or non-fiction!

Gilbert, Wilson and Blackett's long-feared *The Holy Kingdom* (Bantam Press hardback, 379pp £17.99) recaps their controversial Arthurian theories, while Nigel Appleby's *Hall of the Gods* (Heinemann hardback, 420pp £16.99) links Arthur and the Grail with pyramids, Sirius and the Ark of the Covenant. Alexander and William McCall rather more modestly look at Arthur in a northern context in *Artur, Gwenwhyvar and Myrddin* (Pentland hardback, 210pp £15.00).

Recent titles from **Llanerch Publishers** include reprints of Part 6 of Canon Dobie's classic *The Saints of Cornwall* (ISBN 1 86143 047 7 £7.95, previously available only as separate pamphlets); W M Metcalfe's *Ancient Lives of Scottish Saints* (two volumes ISBN 1 86143 0 53 1 and 054 X, each £8.95) which include the Dark Age saints Ninian, Columba and Kentigern; and J Romilly Allen's 1889 *The Monumental History of the Early British Church* (ISBN 0 86143 048 5 £8.95) examining art, archaeology and ancient alphabets. In case of difficulty write to Felinfach, Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales SA48 8PJ, or phone 01570 470567. They have an excellent back catalogue of reprints and original works of interest to Pendragons.

Finally, the Gwyn Jones translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, with an introduction by Priscilla Martin, is available from Wordsworth Editions for £2.99 [ISBN 1 85326 789 9 paperback 107pp]. This edition is cheap, accessible and environmentally friendly - three reasons for buying it and no reason not to.

# The Board

#### SIGHT AND SOUND

BBC Radio 4's *Book at Bedtime* for a fortnight from the late spring bank holiday (25th May onwards, at 10.45) featured *The Quest of the Holy Grail*. Read by Sir Derek Jacobi, this tale "set the tone for later versions of the Arthurian legends," said the *Radio Times*. "Only the purest of the knights can aspire even to glimpse the holy relic containing Christ's blood that Joseph of Arimathea brought to England." Based on the well-known Penguin translation by Pauline M Matarasso, the series was abridged in ten parts by John Hartley.

The terrestrial premiere of *First Knight* was on BBC One at 9.30, Thursday 2nd July. *Radio Times* gave it 4 stars - Gere was "suitably dashing", Ormond "ravishing" and Connery "scene-stealing".

#### BOOKWORM'S FEAST

A specialist catalogue of interest to Pendragons is available, already in its second edition. Louise Boer publishes *Arthurian Books and Prints* and makes salivating reading for all you questing beasts! From classic scholarly studies to recent fiction, secondhand copies or new volumes at publishers' prices, the range is astonishing. Curiosities include a first edition Enid Blyton *The Knights of the Round Table*, Marion Bradley's *Mists of Avalon* in French, German, Portuguese and Dutch, and *The Pendragon Anthology*, the American version of a special *Pendragon* produced for the 1971 Glastonbury Fayre. (Advert elsewhere in this issue.)

The 1998 catalogue of *Gothic Image Publications* is also available from 7 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9DP (tel 01458 831453 fax 01458 831666 or e-mail [idea@isleofavalon.co.uk](mailto:idea@isleofavalon.co.uk)). As well as Geoffrey Ashe's *The Traveller's Guide to Arthurian Britain* (£12.95) they also publish James P Carley's study *Glastonbury Abbey* (£9.95), Moyra Caldecott's *The Green Lady and the King of Shadows: a Glastonbury legend* (£2.95), re-issues of classic New Age titles by John Michell and others, as well as new titles on dowsing, ley and fairies.

New and second-hand books are also available from **Courtyard Books** in Glastonbury. As well as Celtic and Arthurian matter they also specialise in eastern philosophy, earth mysteries psychology and esoteric wisdom, and promise to pay you half of their intended selling price when

buying from you. Contact them at *The Glastonbury Experience*, 2-4 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9DU (tel 01458 831800).

The 21st catalogue of the **Castle Bookshop** of Holt, Clwyd features book bargains in archaeology and history. Goodies include Koch's translation of *The Gododdin of Aneirin* (1997), Pleiner's *The Celtic Sword* (1993) and a reprint of the 1949 *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 AD*. Castle Bookshop, Castle Street, Holt, Clwyd LL13 9YW (tel 01829 270382, fax 01829 271087, e-mail [castlebooks@dial.pipex.com](mailto:castlebooks@dial.pipex.com) and <http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/square/fe63>).

Member Gordon McLellan, who tells us it's a "pleasure" to re-subscribe to *Pendragon* (thank you!) also suggests that the journal is "well-deserving of a stout binder to keep it safe and pristine for posterity." He recommends **Modern Bookbinders Ltd** as being cost-effective - they also supply *Celtic Connections* and *Meyn Mamvro*. A5 binders [8.3/8" x 6"] are available in cordex, bound in a navy blue waterproof material, with magazines held in place by 13 spring-loaded cords (extra cords 4p each). The spine width is 1.3/4" and the price £4.40 each. Postage and packing is extra: one binder is £2.75, two are £3.50, and three or more are £4.25. Further details from Modern Bookbinders Ltd, Pringle Street, Blackburn, Lancs BB1 1SA.

Mental indigestion? Try a "fine fayre" feast at *Camelot*, Fleet Walk, Torquay, Devon. Dishes served at this restaurant include Lancelot Special (a 3 lb chicken) and other "Olde English" cuisine served by "rosy-cheeked wenches". Bookings taken: tel or fax 01803 215399.

Monitor: Tony Morton

#### JOURNALS

Academic and scholarly periodicals are usually termed "learned journals", so I suppose they might regard *Pendragon* as an "unlearned" journal! The journal for the North American branch of the International Arthurian Society is called *Arthuriana*. Published quarterly, it is dedicated to the study of the Matter of Britain from the Middle Ages to the present day. Recent themes have included William Morris, and Caxton and Malory, and reviews have ranged from critiques of Latin texts through social commentaries to reviews of Anne McCaffrey's *Black Horses for the King*. Annual subscription to *Arthuriana* is \$35 (Canada and US) or \$50 elsewhere from Bonnie Wheeler, Southern Methodist University, PO Box 223927, Dallas TX 75222-9972 (cheques payable to "Southern Methodist University"). Further information on the

NAB-IAS can be had from Prof Joan Grimbret, Dept of Modern Languages, Catholic University of America, Washington DC 20064.

The Oxford-based Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature publishes *Medium Aevum* twice-yearly. Most numbers include something of Arthurian interest in either the main articles or reviews, and there are often shorter Notes (with their own "notes"!) and a main review. Membership is open to individuals at an annual subscription of £12.50 (reduced to £12.00 for those able to pay by standing order on a UK bank), and includes receipt of *Medium Aevum*, published twice-yearly. (This is a good deal as the cost of *Medium Aevum* to non-members is £21 in the UK and £26 in other countries.) If interested, send a cheque for £12.50 payable to **SSMILL** to the Hon Treasurer, Dr D G Pattison, Magdalen College, Oxford OX1 4AU. Monographs are available to members at a 20% discount, and include studies on the origins of the Tannhauser legend and on the digressions in *Beowulf*. [See Matthew Kilburn's article in this issue for the background to the SSMILL.]

**At the Edge** has now joined forces with **3rd Stone** and has ceased publication as such. As both journals shared a similar philosophy this may seem commercially sound but it is a loss nevertheless: during its run *At the Edge* combined research and production values of high quality. Formerly edited by Pendragon members Sid Birchby and (under the title *News Locum*) Beryl Mercer, **The Newsletter** is an informal postal discussion group sharing news and views on the paranormal. See *Exchange Journals* for details of this and new titles including *Wiðowinde* and *Ceridwen's Cauldron*.

## Old News

### SLEEPERS WAKE!

Alderley Edge is famously the site of a sleeping king legend, but the dozer is now having to defer to bulldozers. "At present, it's very hard to find what's going on," writes *Sid Birchby* concerning the rescue dig on the site of Manchester's second runway. This is not in Manchester but Cheshire, with "much bad blood between the two regions. The upshot is that there was a big Iron Age settlement under the site and say two miles from Alderley Edge. Come out of there, Merlin!"

### STOP PRESS: MERLIN'S MART

From Franklin Mint comes details of *Queen Guinevere of Camelot*, a "romantic treasure for your home" in Art Deco style authorised by The International Arthurian Society. This porcelain sculpture painted in gold, bronze and platinum and set on a base showing Arthurian scenes, is issued in a limited edition of 9500, price £145.

Monitor: Ade Dimmock

**A GRAVE STORY**  
Under the banner *Historic find on bypass site* *The Carmarthen Journal* broke a story that has immense repercussions for Dark Age enthusiasts.

The shock discovery, says the report, of what experts say is Merlin's remains has thrown the future of Carmarthen's £26 million bypass into doubt. Contractors preparing to erect bridge foundations discovered the deep grave close to the banks of the Towy and immediately called in archeologists.

Spellbound tourism chiefs are predicting a flood of visitors from all parts of the globe making Carmarthen their number one destination in Wales. Experts say all works must stop on the site until the area has been fully excavated and researched, and if the area is declared a site of special scientific interest, a modified route will have to be designed...

Experts have carbon-dated the bones, writes Peter Jones, and confirmed that the remains date back to the sixth century, widely accepted as the period Merlin is thought to have lived in Carmarthen. Top European archeologist and renowned authority on the Merlin legends Pia Rollof, who has examined the site and some of the remains, said she was 'extremely confident' that her identification of the skeleton would be confirmed.

Alongside Dr Rollof's photograph of the skeletal remains *in situ*, she is quoted as saying that "the positioning of the body, directly on a ley-line running through Merlin's Hill at Abergwili, and some of the artefacts found in the grave, indicate that this body was indeed Merlin." Though she would not reveal what artefacts were found, apparently they include the fabled golden torque Merlin was said to have worn at the battle of Arfderedd in 573 AD.

The Ancient Order of British Druids is reported to have demanded that the remains are neither removed or disturbed by the by-pass, and are planning a series of dawn pickets with members in full regalia (see *The Carmarthen Journal* April 1st 1998 for full details).

Monitor: Fred Stedman-Jones

Experts have carbon-dated the bones, writes Peter Jones, and confirmed that the remains date back to the sixth century, widely accepted as the period Merlin is thought to have lived in Carmarthen. Top European archeologist and renowned authority on the Merlin legends Pia Rollof, who has examined the site and some of the remains, said she was 'extremely confident' that her identification of the skeleton would be confirmed.

Alongside Dr Rollof's photograph of the skeletal remains *in situ*, she is quoted as saying that "the positioning of the body, directly on a ley-line running through Merlin's Hill at Abergwili, and some of the artefacts found in the grave, indicate that this body was indeed Merlin." Though she would not reveal what artefacts were found, apparently they include the fabled golden torque Merlin was said to have worn at the battle of Arfderedd in 573 AD.

The Ancient Order of British Druids is reported to have demanded that the remains are neither removed or disturbed by the by-pass, and are planning a series of dawn pickets with members in full regalia (see *The Carmarthen Journal* April 1st 1998 for full details).

Monitor: Fred Stedman-Jones

## 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 *Annual sub* (6 issues) £11.00 A4

**CAERDROIA** Mazes and labyrinths *Editors* Jeff and Deb Saward, 53 Thundersley Grove, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB *Annual sub* £6.00 Write for details with SAE or tel 0126 751915

**THE CAULDRON** Intelligent journal of the old religion, wicca, folklore and earth mysteries *Sample* £2.00 *Four issues* £8.00 *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  
**CERIDWEN'S CAULDRON** The magazine of the Oxford Arthurian Society *Editor* Andrew H W Smith, 41 Essex Street, Oxford OX4 3AW *Free to Oxford Arthurians only* *Sample* £1.50 to non-members A5

**DALRIADA** All aspects of Insular Celtic culture, traditions and beliefs, ancient and modern, also Celtic Heritage Society and extensive database archive *Sample* £2.25 *Four issues* £10.00 from Clan Dalriada, Dun-na-Beatha, 2 Brathwic Place, Brodick, Isle of Arran, Scotland KA27 8BN A5

**THE DRAGON CHRONICLE** Dragon-related and dragon-inspired myth, magick, paganism, astronomy, 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** Newsletter published by Caitlin and John Matthews giving news of their publishing and teaching programmes and related events, often contains special offers *Four 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

**NEWSLETTER** News and views of the paranormal, published four times a year on the equinoxes and solstices - informal postal discussion group. No formal subscription although small donation helps defray postal and production costs. Write with stamp to E F Davies, 19 Victoria Square, Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan CF64 3EJ A4

**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 Saunière - meetings, visits *Editor* 'Cilhaul', Tylwch, Llandiloes, Powys SY18 6QX *Sample* £2.00 *Three issues* £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

**SOURCE** The Holy Wells Journal, forum for discussion of these fascinating, often enigmatic survivals from our past *Editor* Heather Hughes, Swn-y-Mor, 96 Terrace Road, Mount Pleasant, Swansea SA1 6HU A5

**THIRD STONE** (Earth = third stone from the Sun) No nonsense approach to ancient sacred sites and symbolic landscapes *Sample* £2.75 *Four issues* £10.00 from PO Box 961, Devizes, Wilts SN10 2TS A5

**WIÐOWINDE** The periodical of The English Companions - Anglo-Saxon literature, history and culture *Editor* Steve Pollington *Sample* £3.50 incl postage *Enquiries* BM Box 4336, London WC1 3XX A4

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

*IS CONVINCED HAS SEEN THE GRAIL*

a cup a mouth  
is there in rock  
in wall ex in flesh is  
all needs of life place-way puts dead  
to use

*steve sneyd*

*GIFTING THOSE YOU NEED*

Bogus figure, late comer to myth, that hesitant, deceiving  
Excalibur-bearer, unwilling hurler-away of wonder to deep. Yet,  
Dumbly loyal to the end on downthrust doom's day, *someone*, some  
Individual, household-guard-dog close-sticking, there must in  
Verity have been, giver or taker of sword from feebled hand to hurl:  
Ended king's strength, and divine water calling. At last, clenchnip lusting,  
Rejected still somehow retention of treasure; self-sensed unworthy, threw  
Evidence to join so many lives sacredly gone deep before, past waterspider.

*steve sneyd*

*LANCELOT AT ASTOLAT*

Bone maiden whose blood  
Roses and river water claim -  
Now cool over your sapphire veins,  
Now cold in the rag you clench -  
Surprised to find me whole,  
Here in my armour, in your streaming sight:  
Pray not, when with those winter eyes  
You see the lamb upon the road,  
This guest should be forever in you bower.  
Pray not that this singed summer flesh  
Will raise its warmth of thirty springs  
Shrouded too long in windings white,  
And having done, draw from sanctuary  
A holy hermit to be the sire of future saints.  
Think not to gain with guile my arms,  
That was once only and never more; the age  
Has passed for getting knights on shadowed maidens.  
Rose maiden whose breath  
Summer petals in river water drown,  
Take back your favour; it overlaid  
Sin upon sin before the setting sun,  
On a worn heart that felt the shrinking light.  
I leave a maid behind me here; would I took one,  
But still my mouth and veins are stuffed,  
My purpose choked by gold and silver strands  
As will it ever be; so bids my lady.  
Honest and true maid, I leave you with my kiss,  
More felt at Astolat than ever at Carbonek,  
To wish you favour of a simpler son,  
Not so held in thrall by this land's fate.  
Talk not of cold flesh at Camelot,  
Deny my dreams and leave the boat ashore;  
The cross, the land, the crown, the sword dictate  
There will be fire and steel enough presently.

*A Leave-Taking and Prophecy*



*Matthew Kilburn*

*TALIESIN'S LAST PROPHETCY*

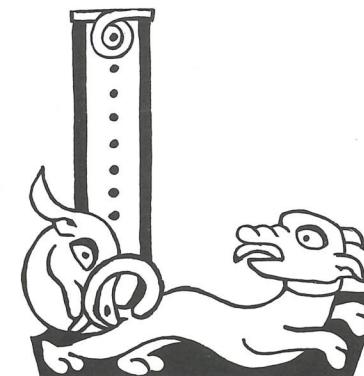
I sing of a wonder whose meaning is dark:  
I have drunk inspiration from the cauldron of Cerridwen.  
Cradled on the waters, the divine child comes yet again  
To the strand of the island, beneath the apple boughs.  
The Owl of Cwm Cowlwyd knows not the answer,  
Ask then the Eagle, the Eagle of Gwernabwy:  
Likewise he cannot the riddle unlock.  
Who is it fashions the blade on the anvil?  
Who is it strings the bow of the mighty?  
Who is it shall hurl the javelin of the god?  
Charged is the day of thy coming, big with the future,  
Joy, yea, and Woe enmeshed in the pattern,  
Warp and weft of the loom of Fate  
Till she of the shears puts an end to the weaving!

Sad news has come to me all this day -  
Surely the goddess is angered, not once but many times?  
Hidden among leaves, in a horror of night and birds' pinions,  
I sleep not, I tremble, I fear for Artos my lord.

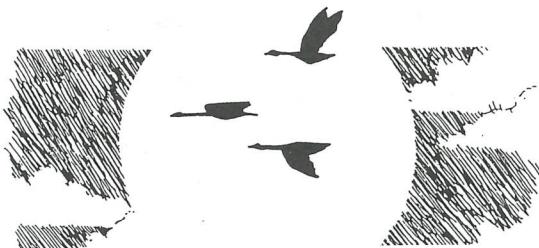
Is not Artos ever-famous, renowned in song and lay?  
In Caer Pedryvan, spiralling down to the roots of Annwlyn,  
Was not he the first to gaze into the cauldron,  
Braving the hounds of Annwlyn, the dogs of Arawn?  
She crouched by the streamside, the old grey crone,  
Reddening the swift water, the Washer at the Ford;  
Sombre in the moonlight the cairn of grey stones.

Son of a virgin, he was born at midwinter,  
His birthplace was the region of the summer stars:  
Hail to the Rider in the Chariot of Stars,  
He has brought peace to his people and joy to the land:  
Not the peace of a wilderness, not the quiet of corpses,  
Yet the fighting is not over, the eagles shall scream,  
The ravens shall gather again to the blood-feast.  
The face in the cauldron shall haunt its maker,  
Cradled on the waters, the goddess-born child  
Shall fashion the fatal blade on the anvil,  
The blade that shall drink the blood of a father.  
The harpers shall sing for a thousand years, nay, for ever,  
Of how the Sword has ended what the Sword began,  
And the ages shall speak of the beauty and terror.

*Geoff Roberts*



## Three Geese in Flight Books



*Antique Books Catalog 15th Edition \$4.00*

*Celtic Mythology - Arthurian Legend*

*Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Breton & Cornish Studies*

*Medieval Literature - J R R Tolkien Literature*

*Three Geese in Flight*

*The first mail order book store dedicated to lovers of Tir-na-nOg*  
Box 454 - Bearsville, NY 12409, USA - 914-679-6940

**Camlan**  
The True Story?  
by Laurence Main  
£2.50

## LOUISE BOER ARTHURIAN BOOKS

2B Rainbow Street, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 8DQ  
Telephone/fax 01568 616084 e-mail: logres@compuserve.com



## We sell Arthurian Books and Prints

Our recent catalogue includes the following Arthurian categories:

Antiquarian  
Second hand  
Out of print  
New

Children's  
Novels  
Old text editions  
Plays and Poetry

Literature  
History  
The Holy Grail

Mabinogion

## We also sell mounted prints and posters

If you would like to receive our catalogue  
please write, phone, fax or e-mail

A UNIQUE PUZZLE  
A SPECTACULAR PRIZE  
A GLOBAL CRAZE

THE  
MERLIN  
MYSTERY

The Merlin Mystery Hotline  
UK - 0891 771 211  
Eire - 1550 122 237

[www.merlinmystery.com](http://www.merlinmystery.com)

 Voyager

AVAILABLE 7 SEPTEMBER