pendragon

EDITORIAL

"Excellent Arthurian magazine ...
A **must** for the Arthurian"
- Excalibur Books

Vol XXVII No 3

Themes
The last three issues have (by chance rather than conscious design) covered in their separate ways the three *Pendragon* strands of interest - **Relics** explored archaeology and history, while **Avatars** did the same for myth, legend and folklore and **The New Matter of Britain** explored literary themes. This was not a deliberate policy, though as it happens this number, **The Celtic West**, returns to more historical roots with contributions on Tristan and Iseult, Celtic board games and relics. There was also some excitement in the summer over the Tintagel so-called "Arthur Stone", and so an *Old News Special* picks over its possible significance.

Next issue is shaping up as a **Dark Age Saints** number, for all those who pine for a featured theme! **The Wise Fool** has not yet emerged as a fruitful source of inspiration, but **Arthurian Humour** might elicit more response (in deference to my critic a couple of issues ago). This is now, I think, a good point to remind potential contributors about aspects of our publishing policy.

Submissions
Pendragon involves itself with all aspects of Arthurian studies, as outlined above, and all approaches are valued as complementary and mutually informing.

With contributors' agreement, articles are kept on file until they can be used to help illuminate a particular topic area. As a non profit-making society we cannot afford to pay for articles, creative writing or news items, but contributors will be sent a complimentary copy for their pieces.

We prefer contributions not to exceed 4000 words, but all depends on the material; important pieces of research or criticism above this total may find space, possibly in separate parts. (As a rough guide, a typical page of text, without titles or illustrations, comes to approximately 750 words.) We sometimes include poetry and short fictional pieces, but these tend to be 'fillers', in line with our concern with Arthurian *studies* as such.

Fuller notes for contributors to *Pendragon* are available from the Editor on receipt of either an SAE or, from abroad, two IRCs. Deadline for the next issue is mid-February.

Jess Foster Memorial Prize
The first winner of the Jess Foster Memorial Prize, given in honour of the founder of the Pendragon Society by Fred and Marilyn Stedman-Jones for the most promising contributing newcomer, goes to **Ian Brown**. Congratulations to Ian, who has provided the cover illustrations for both the current and the previous issue, as well as several other inside fillers for this issue.

Thanks
Finally, I would like here to acknowledge not only the main literary and artistic contributors listed on the contents page but also snippet-supplying Steve Sneyd and Kevin Byrne, Beryl Mercer and Mary Mayer, Paul Smith, and Ade Dimmick of Dragon's Head Press, without all of whom the regular miscellany features would be so much the poorer. Items for *The Board*, *Old News*, *Reviews* and *Bookworm* are always welcome, and contributors will be acknowledged. Don't assume the Editor will spot that obscure press item tucked away on page 94, or the adverts for Merlin's magnifying glass, Lancelot's leg warmers or Guinevere's galoshes, or that leaflet about the grail hidden in Rutland...

Subscriptions
A cross [X] in the box above means your subscription is now due.

PENDRAGON

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PenDragon

*"**Pendragon** ... a lively correspondence page" - **Ceridwen's Cauldron***

A THOUSAND WORDS

◆ *From Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland:*

Thanks ever so much for the latest edition of *Pendragon*; and how delighted I am to see how you have used my illustration on the cover as well as inside. The choice of accompanying illustrations was very apt (Albrecht Dürer was an artist I admired as a child; the longboat, the besieged castle and the serpent all matched well in style; and the illustration for the story *Echo of Time* had that excellent feeling of poised movement: a moment captured in time. Add to all that the occasional Celtic knots, and it all came together rather well).

Your idea of beginning the issue with the letters pages gives the journal a more intimate feel: it seems to draw the members in, showing that everybody is involved.

◆ *I'm grateful for your comments, Ian, and glad illustrations and layout are to your taste. Ian's artwork graces the present issue's cover, and there is more to come!*

MERLIN KEEPS US GUESSING

◆ *From Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall:*

I have read the two most recent issues of *Pendragon*, and was particularly interested in Fred's report of the Carmarthen discovery of what is believed to be Merlin's grave. If this claim is vindicated, it's going to play hob with my book (now re-titled *Merlin's Quest*, and still seeking a publisher) which features Merlin as a near-immortal in the 20th century! I have bought *The Merlin Mystery*, as advertised on the bacover of the summer issue; have read it once and am still mystified! Obviously it requires more than one perusal ... has anyone else tried it?

Thank you for including an obit for Archie in the spring issue. I have had some very kind letters from Anne Tooke, who wonders if our menfolk are sitting in a quiet corner somewhere, swopping ever more horrible puns - as they did when the Tookes visited us a few years ago!

I enjoyed Pamela Harvey's "Echo of Time" - original and thought-provoking.

◆ *Good news, Beryl, your novel will not need rewriting! The claimed discovery of Merlin's grave is highly unlikely to be vindicated - I notice the newspaper report was dated April the First, 1998! Thank you for your own press clippings, and those those from Mary (Long) Mayer, which have been utilised in* Old News *and elsewhere.*

ARTHUR AVATAR

◆ *From Pamela Harvey, Edmonton, London:*

Thank you very much for including my story *Echo of Time* in the summer issue. I feel it is important that this time in history in which we live can be illumined by the characters and emanation of the Gods and heroes (and heroines). It seems now, according to archaeology, that Arthur is likely to have been a real person, but he seems also to be fused in the minds of many with one or more of the Ancient Gods, a Being shedding the light of the Cosmic Sun on our darkened Earth. Through Arthur, symbolically, we see the apex of human freewill determined to fight wrongs and human perfidy. The actual historical facts, were they all known, might not be that simple - life hardly ever is. But Arthur does not need simply to be a historical figure. Perhaps long before that time he was a Divinity, even of very early folk, the Pendragon or Chief Dragon, signifying wisdom as well as strength and courage. Such Beings don't exist only in history - or geography - but are beyond Time.

In the article *Arthur and the Yew Cult* by Allen Meredith, he refers to the ancient belief that people were related to trees, and that Arthur can be linked directly with the Yew. In spite of DNA and Evolution, I have no great problem with that. Other factors than straightforward progression from the animal kingdom most probably shaped human evolution, and perhaps other Earthly life-forms. Legend can come in to history - there can be 'avatars'. It might not sometimes be possible, however, to correctly interpret them. I do think it important that we all derive help and inspiration from our inheritance as Celtics, or Saxons - and everyone else in the world - of human beings and Cosmic beings, who all share in the Tree of Life.

◆ *Pamela tells us that she has co-authored a book with Anna Franklin (editor of* Silver Wheel *and* Strix*) entitled* **The Wellspring**, *to be published by Capall Bann, to which she has contributed several poems and some articles.*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

◆ *From Andrew Smith, Oxford:*

Under my editorship, *Ceridwen's Cauldron* should appear regularly, one issue a term, which probably means publication in late May, early November and mid-February. Previously, the magazine has tended to be written entirely by members of the Society. I hope to be able to invite contributions from outside, where suitable. The general intention is that the magazine should bear some relation to the Society's activities for the term in which it appears. Apart from that, the magazine's brief is as large as your own: anything Arthurian in any sense of the word falls within our remit (film, comic-book, mediaeval romance, dark-age history, tacky plastic souvenirs...).

It seems to me that one of the basic problems confronting you is that the Pendragon Society is open to anyone, and the views of any of its members, however ill-judged or misinformed, are entitled to an equal airing within its pages. This makes it difficult to raise the level of debate or advance any of the arguments very far. Not that I'm advocating an elevation of the standards of debate to those of the International Arthurian Society [...] I hope this doesn't sound too snotty - it's not meant to be.

I think the new format of the magazine is an improvement and should be kept. It gives a cleaner appearance, and enables you to put more words on the page without loss of legibility.

All in all, I enjoyed this issue [*The New Matter of Britain*] more than its predecessor, though the purpose of John Matthews' booklist eluded me. If it's meant for use, ISBNs at the very least would have been nice: as printed, it has a back-of-an-envelope feel to it.

◆ *This journal's remit includes the reflection of its members' interests, while of necessity excluding libel and obscenity. Funds allow only a limited expression of views, however, which explains why an editor's job is not an easy one! I suspect that true expression is only available via the Internet (if you have the means and the funds) but, in the meantime, a delicate balancing trick is required. I can't always guarantee to get it right! On the matter of John Matthews' booklist, and more on balance, see below. Finally, the excellent* **Ceridwen's Cauldron** *will be reviewed next issue*; *see* Exchange Journals *for details.*

NEW MATTER MATTERS

◆ *From Cherith Baldry, Reigate, Surrey:*

I feel impelled to say that while I appreciate that Arthurian studies are many-sided, I have been disappointed over the years by the lack of attention which *Pendragon* gives to literature, both the original mediaeval texts and the modern reinterpretations. The most recent issue has not really changed my mind, as I felt there was far too much attention given to the works of Hollick and Cornwell - much as I appreciate them - at the expense of a wider range of Arthurian writing.

I was also a bit bewildered by John Matthews' booklist: why no T H White, Mary Stewart, Thomas Berger, Vera Chapman? While I realise that Mr Matthews could not mention every writer, these are major figures of the genre. As I know Mr Matthews to be an eminent Arthurian scholar, I should be interested to know the rationale behind his choice.

I am a professional writer of fiction and so these issues are more important to me than they might be to other members... I hope this all doesn't sound too negative. I enjoy *Pendragon*, but I would enjoy it far more if I felt that it covered effectively the whole range of Arthurian studies.

◆ *The confusion over John Matthews' Arthurian booklist is entirely my fault. At* **Pendragon 98** *John spoke about recent trends in modern Arthurian fiction, and he kindly agreed to the publishing of a hurried handout drawn up solely for the purposes of the talk. Despite tagging it on to the AGM report, I failed to make it clear that only 90s authors were considered. As for lack of publication details, due to reasons of space and time these were not added as these can easily be ascertained from booksellers and librarians worth their salt. Apologies nevertheless for not including these.*

I cannot speak for my predecessors, but would say that **Pendragon** *is a members' magazine, and contributions on the whole reflect proportionately the interests of those members. It is not, and never has been, primarily a literary zine, but during my editorship (and of course before) notices of published fiction, both ancient and modern, have been included (*eg *in* Book News *and* Book Worm*). Over to you, readers - is the right balance yet to be struck?*

A PROBLEM SOLVED

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

As a pendant to Forrester Roberts's lively account of the Albigensian Crusade (1), I can't resist mentioning a memorable remark made during this campaign (2). When the Northern French barons were preparing to storm the (almost entirely Catholic) city of Béziers, they had a worrying problem. Once the city was taken and the massacre began, how were they to distinguish the Catholic citizens from the heretics? They put the problem to the Papal Legate, Arnald-Amalric, the head of the Cistercian order of monks. The good Legate solved the problem in the neatest way. 'Kill them all,' he said. 'God will know his own.' Naturally they took his advice.

This remark is not found in any contemporary chronicles, and first appears in an admittedly not very reliable work written some sixty years after the event. For this reason Régine Pernoud rejected it as apocryphal (3). Like many historians obsessed with written records, she seems to have been unaware that spoken traditions can persist with perfect accuracy for millennia, let alone sixty years (4). The remark is perfectly in keeping with the spirit of that Crusade, but might well have been too embarrassing, or even dangerous, to be mentioned by contemporary chroniclers. I am therefore inclined to accept it as authentic.

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1. 'The Big Sting' *Pendragon XXVII* No 1, 1998, 14-17
2. John J Robinson (1994) *Dungeon, Fire and Sword: the Knights Templar in the Crusades.* Michael O'Mara Books, London 223-4
3. Régine Pernoud (1977) *Pour en Finir avec le Moyen Age* Seuil, Paris 13-14
4. W M S Russell 'Greek and Roman Monsters' *Social Biology and Human Affairs 58* No 2, 1993 13-25 especially 14-15, and *59* No 1 1994 1-9 especially 5-6

◆ *Prof Russell mentions elsewhere that the point about continuity in oral traditions cannot be made too often, especially for Arthurians. It is an issue that often raises its head in correspondence and contributions!*

NOTES AND QUERIES

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

Found [the *Avatars* edition] very interesting, as always (and wonderful Dark Age Green Man cover - would make a marvelous greetings card).

There's an intriguing appearance of the Morgan name in Yorkshire, for which I know no explanation, folkloric or other - *ie* at Potterton just north of Barwick-in-Elmet (the suggested capital of Dark Age Celtic statelet of Elmet) there's a moat with, adjacent, a stretch of the Dark Age Becca Banks linear earthwork - the site, as well as being called Manor Garth, has two unexplained bynames, Morgan's Castle and King Morgan's Castle. Any information much appreciated.

Many thanks for new issue [*New Matter of Britain*]. Very taken with the Matthew Kilburn poem - the freshness / unusualness of the imagery, yet integrated so as not to distort the Matter episode. The Yew Cult article was particularly interesting for the cross-link to Gog and Magog - the whole Gog Magog business [is] one of those mysterious areas that may be insoluble but is an intriguing hunt.

Did you hear the radio item *re* Kent council archaeologist's theory that the *Beowulf* setting is the Isle of Hartey, north Kent, and the "dragon" a Romano-British force?

◆ *More details on that Kent item next issue, plus the activities of Mr Stuart Pendragon in Glastonbury, who claims among other things to be the long-lost half brother of Prince Charles. Meanwhile, the third edition of Steve's Arthurian poetry collection* ***What Time Has Use For*** *is available in K T Publications' Kite Poetry Series [ISBN 0 907759 12 2] at £4.95 or £5.50 by post.*

Tristan and Isolde

Tala Bar

Fig: Tristan's Leap (Ian Brown)

The ideological strata

More than any other heroic legend, that of Tristan and his (illicit) love for Isolde has been circulated throughout the European continent and its satellite islands; not even King Arthur can rival Tristan for having been known from France to Scandinavia, from Ireland to Germany and even down to the Mediterranean and modern Israel. It is probably the tragic element in the story which caused its attraction, but perhaps it is the mythological essence on which the story is based, ascribed by C G Jung to the Collective Memory of the human race, which is at the foundation of this attraction.

In the *Encyclopaedia of World Mythology* (1970, 200) it is said: "the native literatures of Wales and Ireland, the oldest in Europe outside the classical world, form a great repository of mythology and pre-Christian practices. Although written down only in Christian times, the persistence and longevity of the oral tradition was such that we can be quite confident that there is a genuine core of true mythology to be found underneath the embellishments of the story-tellers, the censorship of the Church, and the motifs borrowed from classical and Scandinavian sources." Researching into the many and various publications of the story of the love of Tristan and Isolde, I have found it was possible to reveal several sources for its make-up, compiled in various periods into three main ideological strata.

The inner stratum, which forms the core of the story and around which the plot evolves, is the *pagan mythology* recounting the course of the sun through the seasons of the year.

On this mythological essence a typical *Celtic legend* of tragic characteristics is built and developed, giving us the background and the main characters and events of the story.

To that legend were added, during its travelling through *late medieval Europe*, many characteristics of the times and places where it sojourned: court mannerisms, chivalrous customs and humor, and many of the minor characters similar to those of French romance of the period.

That is why it was possible for that story to appear in so many shapes and forms throughout the ages, from Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* to Gottfried von Strassburg, from Joseph Bedier to Richard Wagner, and to be the subject of numerous researches and essays. In this article, I would like to concentrate mainly on the mythological and the Celtic aspects of the story, and on various artistic expressions of the legend of Tristan and his love for Isolde.

◆

The mythological foundation

In its mythological aspect, the story of Tristan parallels many other well known myths which express the general, global human outlook of natural phenomena before there was enough scientific data to explain. Such myths belonged to many ancient peoples like the Cananites, Egyptians, Greeks and northern Europeans - to mention only those with whom the story might have some geographical affinity. All of them were told orally, circling round the areas of their origin and beyond, over and over again, with many changes and variations, before they were written down.

In his book *The White Goddess* Robert Graves mentions Heracles as the most typical mythological hero, who was named, together with the title 'hero', after the great goddess Hera; Heracles had many appearances, but in one of them Graves groups him with what he calls sun-heroes (page 126), in which he includes also the Irish Cuchulain and the Greek Theseus (page 106), and many others, including Gilgamesh, Achilles, Baal, Zigurd, Beowulf, Arthur and Roland.

Such a hero would be a young man (young, because he inevitably dies before he has a chance to reach old age) of a godly extraction *ie* he is the son of a queen or a princess whose father is unknown, born in a period when a woman could have a child without having a husband. Such a hero grows fast out of his childhood, leaves home as a youngster, goes out into the world and does wonderful heroic deeds: he kills monsters, delivers his people from various troubles, dedicates his love to some divine princess, and dies a violent death.

All the elements mentioned her can be found in the story of Tristan; some scholars actually derive Tristan's name from Drost, who accompanied the Irish Cuchulain on one of his exploits. "The (mythological) hero, whether he be king's son, warrior-leader, saint or semi-divine being, blazes a trail for the less adventurous to follow... Such tales should be seen not as an escape into the world of fairy tales but as a source of deep wisdom and inspiration for human kind" (*Encyclopaedia of World Mythology* 27). A short version of the story of Tristan is brought in at this point, as part of the Celtic mythology which was based in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany (*op cit*, 198).

The story of Tristan

The story in essence is this: Tristan, the son of Blancheflor (White Flower, which is the nickname of the Welsh goddess Olwen), sister of Mark, king of Cornwall, and Rivalen, a lord from Brittany, was orphaned at birth and brought up by his father's marshall. Having grown up into a young man skilled in all knightly accomplishments, he reaches his uncle in Cornwall, where he kills a fearsome Irish lord, brother to Isolde, queen of Ireland. Having been poisoned in the process, Tristan goes to Ireland to seek a cure.

There, he kills a menacing dragon, he is again poisoned, this time by the dragon's blood, and brought to the King's palace where he meets the fair princess Isolde. Although he has won her hand by killing the dragon, Tristan takes her to Cornwall to marry King Mark. On the boat Tristan and Princess Isolde drink a magic potion and fall hopelessly in love with each other.

Reaching Cornwall, Isolde marries Mark, but she meets Tristan occasionally, until he goes into exile in order to avoid meeting her. He travels to Brittany where he marries the 'dark' Isolde "of the white hands". Still, he and the Fair Isolde try to meet again, when he dies through his wife's actions.

Tristan's travelling northward and southward through the Celtic world are the ones which show him as a basic sun-hero travelling through the sky according to the seasons: he is born in the far south, Brittany, in mid-winter when the sun shines from the south; at the peak of his youth and strength, realizing his love to the princess representing the Goddess, he shines over Cornwall, the heart of the Celtic world, when the sun is getting stronger in the springtime; but as he travels north, where the sun shines at midsummer and the hero is sacrificed in order to save his people from trouble, Tristan saves the Irish people from the dragon and almost loses his life. For his actual death, however, he goes back to his birthplace in Brittany - there he is reborn in the shape of a tree growing out of his grave.

Tristan's life details are surprisingly similar to those of other mythological heroes. He has an adopted father like Cuchulain and Lleu Llaw Giffes; he travels through a stormy sea like Orion; he arrives at his uncle's court like Jason; he frees his people from the youth tribute like Theseus and like him he fights a monster and wins the hand of the princess. Again, like Theseus, he has to relinquish his beloved to some else of a higher rank; he is poisoned by an arrow like Balder; he is revived like Osiris and Tammuz; and he dies violently like most of the mythological heroes. The final story of the sail which was not changed from black to blue on the ship coming to Brittany and carrying Fair Isolde, which causes Tristan's succumbing to his death, is reminiscent of Theseus's story of having forgotten to change the color of his sail from black to white, thus causing the death of his father.

Isolde

Beside Tristan as a mythological hero, the story is obviously ruled over by the figure of the divine Isolde in her triple aspects: the Mother, the Beloved and the Killer. In *The White Goddess*, Graves describes the great Celtic goddess Brigit who, in her triple appearance, was a great Mother; a young nymph of springs and Nature in general; a patroness of medicine and all crafts, and a goddess of Wisdom and Poetry - the latter qualities commonly belong to the divinity of Death and the Underworld.

Three women called Isolde appear in Tristan's story, who divide all these divine qualities among themselves, although not always in the usual order: Isolde the Queen Mother is skilled in medicine; Princess Isolde the Fair is a wonderful musician, and a spring of water flows in her room; and Isolde of the White Hands (called by the Scandinavians Dark Isolde) causes Tristan's death. Thus we have here the Great Goddess, motivating the life and death of the Sun Hero, according to the best tradition of Nature mythology.

King Mark

Another mythological figure in the story is that of King Mark of Cornwall. The meaning of his name is 'horse' in Celtic, and in some versions he wears horse's ears. This is reminiscent of the figure of King Midas of Macedonia, who wore a pair of ass's ears in honor of the orgiastic god Dionysos; the Egyptian god Set also had ass's ears - both ass and horse, according to Graves's *The Greek Myths* (1955, 284), were sacred to the Moon goddess, but while the ass cult came from southern countries, the horse's originated in the northern areas of the ancient world, and in the Bible (*Kings I 23, 11*) we hear of the horses dedicated by the kings to the sun. Thus, not only Tristan but Mark also is a Sun Hero, and the rivalry between them for the love of the representative of the Goddess is an integral part of the myth.

The myth of Tristan

This is how I see the mythological relationships as they are reflected in the story of Tristan: in early spring, with the strengthening of the sun after the death of winter, a young man is ritually born to the Goddess as the Mother of the tribe; at the peak of the year he marries the Goddess's representative as a Princess Bride, and turns into a Horse king, sacred to the sun, under the title of Mark. At the waning of the year the young man becomes Tristan, which means 'son of sorrow', because he must die as the sun dies in winter; but the next spring he is reborn to live his life all over again, as the sun does every year.

The Celtic legend

In the Hebrew book *Tristan and Isolde* (in which I compiled and translated texts from various sources as well as writing some comments of my own) a 977-995 AD MS called *The History of the Picts and Scots* is mentioned, in which appears the name of King Drost, or Drast, who ruled over the Picts around 780 AD; and in the legends cycle of the Irish hero Cuchulain there is a story where Drost is counted among the heroes who accompanied Cuchulain while he was courting the King's daughter:

When Cuchulain arrived with his friend Drost at the King's court in the Hebrides, he heard a howling sound, and he was told that the Irish warriors are demanding human tribute. He killed the Irish, but the King's daughter did not believe them, and when Cuchulainn sat to wash in the bath, she recognized him. The King offered his daughter as bride to Cuchulain, but he refused to take her (page 32).

The location of the story in the Hebrides, which are a part of Scotland, confirms the assumption that its actual hero is Drost, who is mentioned only here as Cuchulain's companion; when travelling to Ireland, the hero would naturally become the Irish Cuchulain.

Tristan was supposed to have been born in a mythical land called Leones. The assumption is that this was the Lothian area in Scotland, the Picts' habitation, and that the forest in which Tristan and Isolde stayed for a while was the Picts' wilderness there. A fjord in Iceland is called after the name of Drost, or Drostan, which enhances the idea of the northern origin of the legend, and the credibility of the Icelandic ballad (see below).

The part of the legend mostly expressing its Celtic origin is when the lovers escape into the forest, away from civilization, to realize their love in peace and seclusion. Lovers escaping from their homes into exile appear in many stories, both Irish and Continental; the Celtic ones however, unlike their Continental counterparts, usually escape away from civilization, out into the forest or other kinds of wilderness. In one version of the story Tristan says, "We have lost the world and it has lost us;" in contrast, in the French romance Tristan sees nothing wrong in courting his mistress right inside her husband's house.

In the Irish legend of Diarmuid and Grain, the nephew of Finn (the name of the Welsh sun-hero), lord of the Fianna, escapes to the forest with his uncle's wife, daughter of the King of Ireland; here, even the family relationships are similar to those of Tristan. When in exile, like Tristan and Isolde, Diarmuid and Grain live in a cave and feed on what the forest provides them in fruit and hunting. Both Tristan and Diarmuid make conscious efforts not to sleep with the women they love, in honor of their husbands; both tales end with the death of the lovers, after the return of the wife to her husband.

Another motif from Tristan appears in another Irish legend, where trees grow from the separate graves of the dead lovers, to unite them after death; the graves in these cases become sacred sites.

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Part Two, on literary and artistic versions, will conclude this study

Pendragon 99

The Pendragon Society was founded at Winchester in 1959. We are planning to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Society with a weekend of events. You should have received a questionnaire with the last issue asking for your ideas on possible events, venue, timing and costs. It's not yet too late to send this in, though we would appreciate a reply before the end of January 1999 - or sooner, if possible! If you didn't get one, or are a new member, contact John Ford (by post or e-mail) with your ideas or send an SAE or IRC for a copy from the page three address. Remember, subscription to the magazine gives you membership of the Society, and we would like to reflect the interests of as much of the membership as possible - that's you!

Illustration: Ian Brown

Searching for Tristan and Isolde

Forrester Roberts

The ancient tale of Tristan and Isolde has become one of the greatest love stories of the western world. It was so popular in the 12th and 13th centuries that poets and writers from all over Europe vied with each other to elaborate their own versions of the legend.

It is a tale of young and tragic love in the Romeo and Juliet tradition. Young Tristan arrives, unrecognised, at his uncle King Mark's court in Cornwall after kidnap and being cast adrift at sea only to rise, via innate nobility and physical prowess, to be the king's champion. He sails to Ireland to win the Fair Isolde as his uncle's bride, but the two fall hopelessly in love in the process. Condemned to death for their illicit dalliance, the pair escape into the Cornish woodlands for an idyllic period until Isolde is reconciled with her husband once again and Tristan is banished into exile. He settles fitfully in Brittany where he serves the Duke Hoel and marries his daughter.

However, the old love burns undiminished and he visits the Fair Isolde several times in disguise. At length, fatally wounded in battle, he lies at death's door, only clinging to life in the hope that Isolde will come to his side. Delayed by contrary winds Isolde arrives too late and lies down beside him to be united with her lover in death.

Such is the bare outline of a plot which allows for unending variation and the freedom for each new tale-teller to express deep emotions to the full.

Of course, the early medieval writers clothed the story in the trappings of their own day, but its origins lie much further back in time. Traces of it can be found scattered all over the Celtic world: in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany; a diversity which indicates that the story was firmly established before invasion tore the fabric of Celtic society into isolated fragments in the west.

Historical background

In fact, there is good reason to believe that genuinely historical figures lies behind the legend. Various place names: Chapelizod in Ireland, Tredruston and Kilmarth in Cornwall, Tristan's Isle, and Penmarc'h and Plomarc'h in Brittany all show an ancient awareness of the story's principal characters.

Surprisingly, the ancient hill fort of Castle Dore near Fowey seems to have little to do with King Mark, but the Tristan Stone close by does commemorate a Drustan, son of Cunomorus; and Conomorus, according to a 9th century Brittany monk, is none other than the King Mark of legend. There is also an Anglo-Saxon charter of 1096 which names a small stream crossing near Porthallow, on the Lizard, as *Hyrt Eselt*, 'Iseult's Ford', indicating more local familiarity with the tale.

Tristan himself is variously claimed as Welsh, Pictish and Breton, any of which he could well have been. Even more confusingly, King Mark of Cornwall is also remembered as a king in Brittany. He may have ruled in both countries, for the ancient kingdom of Dumnonia lay on both sides of the Channel, and there is a tradition that certain Celtic rulers held sway in both territories. Marcus Cunomorus may well have been one of these. He was a well-known tyrant in Armorica. In the church at Carhaix-Plouguer, in Finisterre, he is remembered for decapitating his own son St Tremeur, who then rose up and carried his head to his grave. This would seem to make young Tremeur either Tristan's brother or his cousin. Nevertheless, despite these Brittany connections, all versions of the Tristan legend

agree that King Mark held sway in Cornwall, with a chief residence at Tintagel.

Duke Hoel of Brittany, father of Tristan's Breton spouse, is another Arthurian figure with one foot in Cornwall, for the *Suite de Merlin* also makes him Duke of Tintagel, and Malory refers to him as Arthur's cousin. It was Duke Hoel's niece Helaine who was abducted and ravished by a fearsome giant inhabiting Mont St Michel. King Arthur slew this primitive, but failed to save Helaine. She was laid to rest on the island just north of the Mount now called Tombelaine.

The confusion of so many Celtic figures between Britain and Brittany is due to the astonishingly fluid nature of cultural and religious interchange between Britain and Armorica in early Christian times. Even in 56 BC Celtic Britons helped the Armorican Gauls fight the Romans, and the Armoricans returned the favour in the long drawn-out fight against the Saxons during the Arthurian era.

In the 6th century this rapport culminated in wholesale emigration from south west Britain into Armorican Brittany. The migrants were early 'boat people', fleeing from the slaughter, famine and disease that inevitably follows in the wake of invasions. It was a dreadful period, remembered thereafter as the Wasting of Britain.

Apart from Saxon incursions, Cornwall suffered from Irish raiders, possibly Viking settlers, who indulged in slaving expeditions. A once prosperous Britain was reduced to the Waste Land of symbolic fable, and wave upon wave of refugees sought comparative safety in Armorica - in such numbers, in fact, that it became known as Little Britain.

Like all immigrants, they brought their own legends: a colourful inheritance of stories which assimilated easily into local Breton mythology. In consequence the repertoire of the Breton bards was so enriched that their renown as storytellers spread throughout medieval France and Europe. The Tristan saga was one of these stories.

Their early versions would have been pretty faithful to the original legend, for accuracy of oral rendition was always the hallmark of the Celtic bard. Nevertheless, it was the poets of 12th and 13th century Europe that moulded the original tale into the powerful love story we know today. Perhaps there was an original, archetypal text, but if there was it was lost to us long age.

Development

The first written versions were in verse and were performed dramatically, before largely illiterate audiences. Later, monasteries began to produce beautifully illuminated manuscripts in prose, to embellish the libraries of powerful patrons, who would admire them for their brilliant illuminations and, perhaps, even read them occasionally. Later still, lay studios took over and manuscript production proliferated.

There are several established, early tellers of the Tristan tale, notably Thomas of Britain (*c* 1160), Eilhart von Oberge (*c* 1170), Béroul (*c* 1200), Gottfried von Strasbourg (1210) plus the *Prose Tristan*, produced in variations by different authors.

The *Prose Tristan* proved so popular that hundreds of illuminated version were produced, more than eighty of which still survive. In these, faithfulness to some original text hardly mattered, and the combinations of incidents they relate are unique and various.

Most well-versed audiences knew the bones of the story anyway, and new variations refreshed it. So each narrator added his own inflections, breathing new life into the old tale. Malory, for example, who drew many of his stories from the *Prose Tristan*, introduced much chivalry. He made Tristan a Knight of the Round Table, passing his time at Lancelot's castle of Joyeuse Garde, in dalliance with Iseult. In his version, Tristan is murdered by King Mark and the well-known drama of the ship with the black and white sails is omitted entirely.

This process of variation and development continued through the centuries, In later years, Matthew Arnold cast Iseult of Brittany, who was a third party in the love triangle, as the real heroine.

Tennyson condemned the sinful lovers out of hand. Swinburne ignored their immorality but exalted their passion. Then Wagner brought a new dimension to the story with his stunningly emotional music. His *Tristan und Isolde* is an evocation of a love so powerful, so unbearable, that its only real fulfilment could be found in death.

Opposite: Ian Brown

It is artists such as these who are the true myth makers, for they exalt the human condition. Like Wagner's music, their principal character soar above our lives, and limited mortals take on a heroic stature under their touch.

Topography

The geography of the plot ranges from Brittany and lost Lyonesse to Cornwall and Ireland and back to Brittany, but most of the action takes place in Cornwall. The Anglo-Norman poet Béroul seems to be the only one with any grasp of Cornish topography, and only a fragment of his work survives. However, what there is has a fine swing to it and it is fascinating to follow his narrative over the Cornish terrain today.

Gottfried and Thomas are fragmented too, but they have the virtue that Thomas begins where the Gottfried ends, neatly completing Gottfried's narrative. Gottfried and Thomas may be short on geographical knowledge, but their narrative is more thrilling and touching than most present-day best-sellers and, frankly, they make a far better read.

Béroul locates the greater part of his action in the Cornish countryside between the Fal and the Fowey rivers. He was obviously familiar with this landscape, and he may have deliberately shifted a traditional Cornish legend into the Fowey area simply to heighten the drama for his patrons. He was probably writing to entertain members of the powerful Cardinham family. Their estates lay beside the Fowey river, where Robert de Cardinham built the first castle at Restormel. He lived with his family there and his grand-daughter was christened Isolda, a rare name in those days. It could well have been Béroul's masterly story-telling that influenced their choice of her name.

It is possible to piece together most of the lovers' movements, from the birthplace of the beautiful Isolde on the banks of the River Liffey, upstream of Dublin, to her marriage to King Mark at Tintagel; their life together beside the banks of the Fowey river, and her trysts with Tristan near present-day Truro and in the woods of southern Cornwall. Then one can follow Tristan into exile and take up his life again at the courts of Brittany.

Envoi

However, the beautiful places encountered en route have only nebulous claims to genuine historical association. The roots of the story lie too far back in time for any dogmatic assertions to be made about locale. As the story unfolds, the places encountered along the way should be regarded rather as stations on a pleasurable journey into the fantasy world of medieval poetry.

Those who would pursue the legend in more detail can refer to the books and papers listed at the end of this article, but those who embark on the Tristan journey on foot, simply to savour the high drama of a wonderful story set in lovely surroundings and in unexpected places, will reap the richer reward.

Further reading

Tristan and Iseult a twelfth century poem by Béroul. Librairie H Champion, Paris.
A T Hatto *trans* (1960) Gottfried von Strasbourg, *Tristan* and Thomas of Britain, *Tristan.* Penguin Classics
The *Roman de Tristan* Liber, National Library of Austria
E M R Ditmas *Tristan & Iseult in Cornwall.* Forrester Roberts
Joseph Bédier *Roman de Tristan*
Gertrude Schoepperle *Tristan and Isolt: sources of the romance.* David Nutt
Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes. Dent Dutton
Sir Thomas Malory *Le Morte d'Arthur.* J M Dent
R A Johnson *The Psychology of Romantic Love.* Arkana
Charles Thomas *Tintagel.* English Heritage
Rachel Bromwich 'The Celtic sources of *Tristan.*'
Joy Wilson *Cornwall, land of legend.* Bossiney Books
Cornish Archaeology Vol 24 1985
A C Canner 'The Parish of Tintagel'
John Keast 'The Story of Fowey'
O J Padel 'The Cornish background to the Tristan stories.'

Forrester Roberts' **The Legend of Tristan and Iseult** colour booklet, normally £4.95, is available at the reduced price of £4.50 from the Editor, cheques payable to "Pendragon"

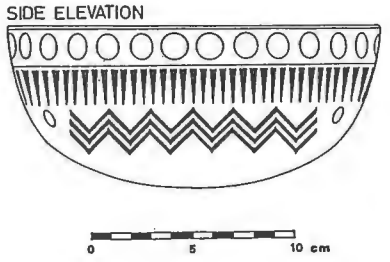
Illustrated by Forrester Roberts

Gwyddbwyll and Fox and Geese

Neil L Thomas

Evidences are presented which lead towards the conclusion that the battle and territorial board game *Gwyddbwyll* probably originated in Wales or Ireland during the first half of the first millennium AD. It spread to England and Europe in the second millennium AD with a name change to *Fox and Geese* in keeping with the fox hunting sport of kings.

The unique cruciform shape of the board and the numbers of playing pieces probably remained the same.



CAERGWRLE BOWL

Fig 1

Board games have been popular in all societies since time immemorial. In north-west Europe, the long winter evenings afforded ample opportunity to devise games requiring skill and sophistication.

The Welsh board game *Gwyddbwyll*, according to folktale and legend, was popular in Wales as the game of kings and nobles in the early centuries AD. Several *Mabinogion* tales associate the game with regal persons, the board and playing pieces fashioned from silver and gold. Contemporary references in ancient Irish tales can be interpreted as descriptions of the same game.

The symbolic importance attributed to the number thirty-three has been traced from prehistoric times. Used both numerically and adjectivally on ancient monuments and in folktale and myth, it is notable that the board used in the game *Fox and Geese* is of unique design.

Thirty-three positions for the playing pieces are arranged in a cruciform pattern, a central zone and four zones to the north, east, south and west. The central zone of nine positions overlays the edges of the nine positions in the other four zones.

No earlier English references to the game have been found before the fifteenth century AD.

In appreciation

Attempting to solve the what-where-and-when riddle of *gwyddbwyll* has been a problem which has exercised my curiosity for a number of years.

With the help and encouragement of many correspondents, I consider the following paper should go some way towards a solution of the problem.

Grateful appreciation must be recorded for the time given and information provided, directly or indirectly by: Mark Redknap, Graham Thomas, Aedeen Cremin, Alwyn Rees, Claude Sterckx, P V Addyman, Daniel-Patrick Bourgy, Isabelle Guillame, Leonard H Frey, Raghnall O Floinn, David Austin, Glyn Evans, George Eogan and Sion A Owen.

Wales

The Caergwrle Bowl

Discovered in 1823 near Caergwrle castle close to Wrexham, Gwynedd, North Wales, the Caergwrle Bowl is on public exhibition at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, South Wales (*fig 1*).

The oval vessel is about eighteen by eleven centimetres and eight centimetres deep. Made of black oil shale, its date of manufacture is put at about 1000 BC (Redknap, M, National Museum of Wales, private correspondence 1993-5). The Bowl is embossed with gold bands and inlays, chief of which are three rows of eleven zigzags on both opposing sides. The obvious worth of the Bowl is shown by the very high standard of metal working craftsmanship, implying it was the property of a high chief or regal person.

The dual count of thirty-three on the opposite sides of the Bowl is taken as an affirmation of the Bowl's regal nature. Perhaps it was used for ceremonial purposes by the bride and groom at a royal wedding, or perhaps as a drinking vessel at a coronation.

The symbolism of thirty-three, used to adjectivally describe a place or person in holy or regal terms, has been traced back as far as 3500 BC. The K15 kerb stone at the Knowth passage

mound in County Meath, central Ireland, is inscribed with a wavy line of thirty-three bends, assumed to be an affirmation of the sacred nature of the mound.

The Mabinogion

The Mabinogion is the earliest surviving written record of British Celtic events and persons in the first millennium AD (Jones & Jones 1976). Described as 'the finest flowering of Celtic genius, a masterpiece of Medieval European literature', it is a very significant assembly of Celtic tales.

The Mabinogion comprises the White Book of Rhydderch, *Llyfr Gwyn Rydderch*, which was written between AD 1300-1325 and is preserved in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. The Red Book of Hergest, *Llyfr Coch Hergest*, written a short while later, is in the Jesus College Library at Oxford University.

The tales' era is generally between AD 300 and AD 600, although there is a probability some could have an earlier provenance. It should also be understood that the fourteenth century scribe may have flavoured the writings with the then contemporary views of the past.

The tales are imaginative and entertaining, describing heroes, their adventures and damsels in distress. None the less, the basic story elements chosen for discussion in this paper are regarded as reasonably factual.

Of the many threads running through the selected tales, several have particular interest. There are a number of references to the board game *gwyddbwyll* and the playing pieces, also the symbolic use of the number thirty-three.

In each instance the setting for the board game is rich in its appointments; the hall, the furniture, the persons and their apparel. Thirty-three is applied, not as a number but adjectivally to signify and describe holy places and regal personages.

The Dream of Macsen Wledig

The *Mabinogion* story 'The Dream of Prince Macsen', *Breuddwyd Macsen Wledig*, concerns Magnus Maximus, AD 340?-388, Emperor of the Western Roman Empire. Roman records tell of Magnus Maximus, born in Spain about AD 340 and who enlisted in the Roman Imperial Army, rising in rank to command his own force in Britain. *The Mabinogion* recounts his dream story which preceded the time when he declared himself Emperor of the Western Roman Empire about AD 385.

Magnus dreamt he went hunting in the country near Rome with thirty-two other kings who were his vassals; the party numbered thirty-three regal persons of which he was pre-eminent. Later he dreamt he visited North Wales and the country near Caer Arfon (Carnarfon). There he saw a castle "the fairest that mortal has ever seen ... the roof he thought to be of glittering stones ... the hall doors he thought to be of gold. On a golden couch he could see two auburn haired youths playing *gwyddbwyll*. A silver board he saw for the *gwyddbwyll*, and golden pieces thereon. At the foot of the hall pillar he saw a hoary headed old man seated in a chair of ivory, with images of two eagles in red gold (copper) thereon. A board of gold was before him for *gwyddbwyll* and in his hand a rod of gold, and hard files. He was carving playing pieces for *gwyddbwyll*."

The clearly portrayed regal circumstances, the persons, the furniture, the game board and the playing pieces, shows the very considerable importance attributed to the game, supposedly about AD 385. Listeners to the story would thus be persuaded of his suitability to be Emperor and of his knowledge of the regal game of *gwyddbwyll*.

The Dream of Rhonabwy

The *Mabinogion* tale 'The Dream of Rhonabwy' concerns King Arthur of Britain and Owein, his alter ego. The tale is a symbolic discussion of Arthur's mental debate about the pros and cons and the tactics to be adopted in the Battle of Mount *Baddon* (Bath) in AD 493, fought against the Saxons led by Osla Big-knife.

Arthur and Owein play four *Gwyddbwyll* games, each one linked with a battle situation. The first game is associated with a reconnaissance report by a messenger who talks in the present tense. The second, third and fourth games are conducted whilst the battle is being fought, the reports made by messengers speaking in the past tense. The place of the four games is a richly appointed pavilion, the game board and the pieces are of silver and gold.

Peredur Son of Efrawg

In another *Mabinogion* tale, the hero Peredur is involved in a series of adventures, each concerned with achieving victory by defeating difficult foes in perilous situations.

King Arthur went hunting with Peredur near Caer Llion on Usk (Caerleon), and upon entering a hall he saw 'three bald-headed swarthy youths playing *gwyddbwyll*.'

The story includes damsels in distress and further dangerous missions to be performed by Peredur.

Gwalchmai was also at King Arthur's court. He became acquainted with a maiden in a castle and they retreated to a room in a tower. Fearing an aggressor, Gwalchmai "made a defence with a *gwyddbwyll* board, lest any should come up."

Peredur's adventures continued with the defeat in combat of an earl: "And Peredur came towards the [earl's] castle, and the gate of the castle was open. And as he came inside he could see *gwyddbwyll* in the hall, and each of the two sets playing against each other."

Britain

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles

The Parker Chronicle manuscript 173, held in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, section C 916 from page 99, records that 'In this year [AD 916] before midsummer, on 16 June, the day of the festival of St Quiricus the Martyr, Abbot Ecgbriht, who had done nothing to deserve it, was slain together with his companions. Three days later Aethelflaed sent an army into Wales and stormed Brecenanmere [at Llangorse Lake near Brecon], and there captured the wife of the king and thirty-four other persons.'

It is interesting to observe the thirty-five Welsh captives may have included a couple of handmaidens or servants, in which case the more important captives would have numbered thirty-three. If this was the case, the use of the symbolic number thirty-three applied to the Welsh captives by the Saxon scribe would indicate the importance and regal worth of the Welsh captives.

The Land and the Law

Ireland

In historic times, Ireland was divided territorially into the High King's realm of Meath and the four provinces of Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connaught (north, east, south and west), which were ruled by lesser kings. The king of the central province resided at Tara and had responsibility for ruling Meath. He also had sovereignty over the four outlying provinces, of setting kingly standards of behaviour in peace and war.

A poem by the ninth century poet Mael Mura tells of a revolt by the kings of the four provinces and the killing of the high king at Tara. Later, his son re-asserted law and order by defeating the vassal tribes in the four provinces.

The Irish folk tale *The Cattle Raid of Cooley* describes the circumstances when Queen Maeve of Meath sought to defend the central kingdom and her people of Meath against the northern men of Ulster who invaded her realm.

A Middle Irish text called *The Settling of the Manor of Tara* relates how, at the beginning of the Christian era, Fintan was seated in the judge's seat at the Manor of Tara in Meath. He told of the appearance of a supernatural being named Trefuilgnid who asked how Ireland had been partitioned in olden times. Fintan told how Ireland had consisted of four quarters and a centre. Treuilgnid indicated the attributes of each: Connaught, the west, signified learning; Ulster, the north, meant battle; Leinster, the east, prosperity; Munster, the south, music; Meath, the centre, kingship and dignity. The concept of a central authority and the four outlying provinces is perpetuated in myth and folk tales, and the law of the land.

Wales

The native traditions of Wales and the concepts of land and the law were eroded by Roman influences on the country in the early centuries AD. Later, Saxon and Viking pressures, also the subjugation by the Normans, and unification of the principality with England under the Tudor monarchs in AD 1543 caused further attrition of the Celtic traditions, knowledge and way of life.

For these reasons there is difficulty in tracing the early native Welsh customs and law. Nonetheless, certain evidences can be found. In the eleventh century, there were 'five royal tribes'. and in Medieval times there were the four bishoprics of Bangor, north-west; St Asaph, north-east; Llandaf, south-east; St Davids, south-west. In the centre was the 'five peaks' mountain of Pumlumon, the seat of the fifth bishopric. The ancient church of Llandabarn Fawr has historic claims to be the centre of the fifth bishopric.

Printed in AD 1801, *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* includes an undated poem which describes the characteristics of the parts of Wales. To Mon (the Island of Anglesea) is attributed wisdom; to Gwynedd, learning and heroism; Powys, war and warriors; Glamorgan, prosperity; Dyfed, a sense of the Otherworld. As the reader will appreciate, these regions are respectively the north-west, the five parts of Wales.

These instances indicate the several similarities between Welsh and Irish traditions; a pre-eminent centre and four outlying provinces. According to early Welsh law books, a homestead was surrounded by four acres of land, and for every township there were four surrounding holdings. The legal principle of a

central feature and four outlying provinces was enshrined in early Welsh law.

Board Games

Wales: *Gwyddbwyll*

Originating early in the first millennium AD, several *Mabinogion* tales which mention *gwyddbwyll* offer the best available description of the board game. Unfortunately a specific knowledge of the rules and the manner of playing the game, the numbers of individual pieces, the design of the board, has not been handed down to us. By association, *gwyddbwyll* appears to have been the game chosen by kings and chiefs, from which it would be fair to assume it represented symbolic, territorial and strategic Celtic values.

The two principal concomitant matters offered earlier for consideration by the reader concerned the Celtic territorial laws and customs, the central political authority and the four outlying provinces, also the regal symbolism ascribed to the number thirty-three in myth and legend.

England: Fox & Geese

No mention has been found of *fox and geese* or similar games in Saxon, Viking or Norman records of the first millennium AD.

The medieval English *fox and geese* had thirty-three positions arranged in a unique cruciform design. One player had a single piece, the fox, initially located at the centre of the board. The other player had thirteen geese, arranged along one side (*fig 3*). The fox's objective was to remove the geese off the board, else the fox would be cornered so that he could not move and would thus lose the game. It is a game of war and conquest, a strategic battle game.

Curiously, the first specific reference to *fox and geese* is found in the household accounts of England's King Edward IV, AD 1461-83. Two sets of *marelles* (game pieces) were purchased, 'two foxis and twenty-six hounds of silver'. Note how the 'geese' are supposedly replaced by 'hounds', an instance of the sport of fox hunting, so popular with the king and nobility in those days, even until the present times. Other writers refer to *fox and geese* as a hunt game, perhaps for this reason.

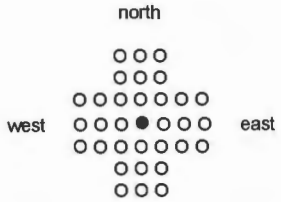
The stone seats in Gloucester Cathedral were incised with a fox and geese board, also dated to the fifteenth century.

The earliest form of the game required thirteen geese and one fox. Later European versions increased the geese numbers to fifteen and even to seventeen.

Unique amongst board games, the cruciform arrangement of the thirty-three peg holes in the board's design warrants careful consideration. This design compares with the Welsh and Irish concepts of the division of the land into four outer provinces, north, east, south and west, and with the pre-eminent centre whose ruler has jurisdiction over the four vassal kings to the north, east, south and west.

This arrangement of thirty-three positions on the *fox and geese* board has the curious optical property whereby one perceives five sets of nine peg holes. Concentrating one's vision on the middle group of nine holes with the centre peg hole indicated for the fox, its eight surrounding holes overlap the four sets of nine holes to each of the north, east, south and west directions. In a sense, those nine central holes can be equated to the pre-eminent role of the high king who has authority over the four provincial kings (*fig 4*)

On the left side, or the west, the human eye perceives nine more holes, three by three. At the north position, nine more. And so on, similarly to the south and the east, four provinces governed by lesser kings. A clear parallel can be drawn between the cruciform layout of the peg holes and the ancient Welsh and Irish Celtic concepts of law and the land.



The significance of the symbolic number thirty-three should also be remembered, associated as it has been with regal beings and holy circumstances. From which it may be deduced that the design arrangement of the board, the five groups of nine holes totalling thirty-three altogether, the numbers of fox and geese, have particularly important symbolic meanings.

The set of four games were played between Arthur and Owein in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*. The AD 950 Ballinderry board (unearthed near

Dublin in 1932; *fig 2*) has the four corner places set apart and identified by semicircular lines, evidently indicating these positions were excluded from the game as playing positions. Four games in succession would appear to have been the usual contest.

The philology of *gwyddbwyll*

North-West European Board Games

Many writers have offered their readers lengthy descriptions of battle and hunt board games: *hnefatafl*, *tawlbwrdd*, *fidchell*, *brandubh*, *tablut*, *asalto*, chess. None has successfully determined the specific design of the board or how the game *gwyddbwyll* was played. Convincing translations of its name and true meaning have also been wanting.

Gwyddbwyll

The Royal Irish Academy's *Dictionary of the Irish Language* cites *fidchell*, the Irish board game, translated from the Gaelic as 'wood-intelligence', the first syllable *fid* meaning 'wood' and the second syllable *chell* translated as 'understanding' or 'intelligence'.

Expert comparative philologists have used these Goidelic (Irish) Q-Celtic word examples as a basis for translating the Brythonic (Welsh) P-Celtic word *Gwyddbwyll*. It has been erroneously supposed the first syllable *gwydd* means 'wood, trees' and *pwyll* (the mutation of *bwyll*) meaning 'reason, sense, understanding'. Their supposed combined meaning thus became 'wood-reason', 'wood-intelligence'.

I accept the Irish translation of the Gaelic *fidchell* as 'wood-intelligence', but resist drawing the conclusion that the Welsh game should be described in the same terms.

I offer a separate and independently reason Cymraeg translation of *gwyddbwyll*, as explained in the following paragraphs.

The two syllable name *gwydd bwyll* affords the clue to its origin. Reference to *Y Geiriadur Mawr*, the Welsh-English dictionary, shows the first syllable *gwydd* has a number of meanings: 'goose', 'presence', 'wild'; alternatively *gwydd* with a circumflex over the *y* is translated as 'wood', 'trees' and 'plough'. The second syllable *bwyll* and its variants *bwyeill* and *bwyall* are translated as 'axe'.

The most logical translation of the two syllables *gwydd* and *bwyll* (with reference to a board game and the English *fox and geese*) are 'goose' and 'axe'. On that basis, the name of the game is presumed to mean 'goose-axe' or 'kill the goose', which is the manner of play for *fox and geese* where the fox manoeuvres to remove the geese from the board *ie* kills the attacking geese in order to win before they immobilise him and he loses the game.

Conclusion

No English or European manuscripts which specifically refer to *fox and geese* have been found before the fifteenth century AD.

The Welsh *Mabinogion* stories, if they are thought of as pertinent to the first millennium historical periods, make several mentions of *gwyddbwyll* from the time of Macsen Wledig AD 380 and King Arthur about *c* AD 495. Irish tales, also of the same era, describe games which would appear to be identical with *gwyddbwyll*.

The manner of telling the stories always presumes the listeners' familiarity with the game at that time, also the symbolism adjectivally attributed to the number thirty-three.

The unique cruciform design of the *fox and geese* board with its thirty-three positions arranged in a cross of seven rows and columns sets it aside from any other square or rectangular game boards.

The great antiquity of the symbolic adjectival and numerical use of the number thirty-three in Welsh and Irish tales and ancient monuments, when related to the thirty-three positions on the *fox and geese* board, also the traditional Celtic concept of a pre-eminent province surrounded by four outer provinces, leads to the conclusion that the *gwyddbwyll* game board could be identical with the cruciform *fox and geese* board and its thirty-three playing positions.

Portrayed as a game for kings, *gwyddbwyll* is considered synonymous with the political and strategic lessons which must be understood by a ruler. The game and its symbolism both indicate *gwyddbwyll* was a recreational battle game played by those governing the land and their subjects.

The central piece, the king, was probably opposed by thirteen rebel pieces whose identity is shrouded in the mists.

It may be concluded the game originated in Wales and Ireland very early in the first millennium AD, and was adopted by the English, French and Germans in the middle of the second millennium AD.

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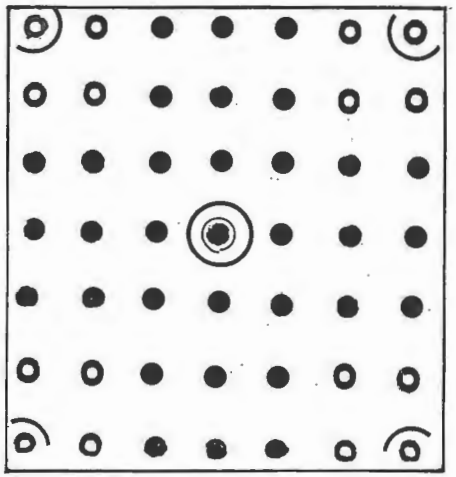
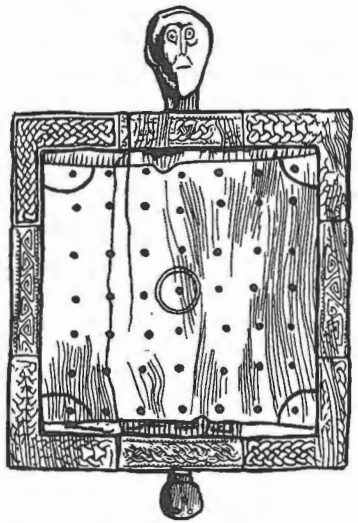


Fig 2a Ballinderry board, Dublin
Fig 2b Ballinderry board (diagrammatic)



Rhiannon's Prayer

Let the song be of Boudicca,
Of her life
And of her spirit,
which is fled, with skeins of wild geese,
To the back of the North Wind.

Though she dwells in the Glass Castle,
Beyond the sight of mortals,
She remains in burnished memory,
One with earth and sky and water,
With the Maiden,
daughter's daughter:
One with Thee,
Threefold Goddess.

Mary Mackie

Stolen Past

Gwilym ap Iorwerth

Fifteen hundred years ago Anglo-Saxon tribes occupied most of the east coast of Britain and the fears of the British were considerable. The English were a resourceful enemy - relentless and growing stronger day by day. But the British were fragmented, unable to make a united front against the enemy. Many were retrogressive, looking backwards to a lost unity of Roman Britannia, while others saw only the opportunity to expand their own territories. Not all of the Anglo-Saxons were enemies - trade and intermarriage had taken place for some generations - but the English had powerful leaders. While the English tribes moved ever westward the British would not, maybe even could not, unite.

Then a British leader came on the scene and struck deep into English territory. First one successful battle, then another and another. For a short period the advance of the Anglo-Saxons was halted, and maybe two or three generations would pass before they felt strong enough to move against the British once more. The English turned on themselves and fought each other. Slowly stronger and larger nations were built and even then they never actually conquered the Celtic west. Even after England fell to the Normans, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and regions of England, like Cumbria, were still Celtic. But now there was one nation, not many tribes, under one powerful leader; and eventually the Celtic nations fell to the English. Scotland held out longer than the rest but England were the eventual victors.

An imported tradition?

Fifteen hundred years ago a strong leader defeated the English and was ingrained into the Celtic psyche in the form of Arthur. Who he was and where he came from is still a mystery, and despite numerous books and countless articles Arthur continues to be little more than a name. And even the name is disputed! Whether it is Celtic or Roman is of little use. I am willing to admit I am a nationalist and a patriot, but I am not willing to twist history to make Arthur into a Welshman! When the Welsh called on their neighbours (including the Vikings) to raise and push the English back into the sea, they didn't call on Arthur for help. In the *Armes Prydein* Arthur is nowhere to be found. However, the earliest references are not *from* Wales but brought *into* Wales.

In the early 9th century the dynasty of Gwynedd came under Northern influence when the late came to an abrupt end. Despite claims from Powys a power gap was filled by an old branch of the dynasty from Scotland via the Isle of Man. With them came cultural relics, including *The Gododdin* and, I surmise, Arthur. I am not going to suggest that Arthur is Scottish, as some have done, but I will say that specific information was brought south. By the time *The History of the Britons* was composed Arthur had already filtered into local folklore. And so tales then began to be told of Arthur in South Wales and Cornwall. And though there is *no* evidence before this of such a connection, it was Cornwall that was to play a big part in the stolen past!

Appropriation

In the first half of the 12th century a cleric of Norman blood, possibly born in south east Wales, gathered together various bits and pieces including family trees, legends, Triads and poetry to bundle together into a medieval bestseller. Geoffrey of Monmouth did most of his work in or near Oxford, and though he was given the position of bishop of St Asaph (in the present Denbighshire) he was unable to take the post due to the Welsh reconquering the area. Nevertheless, his *History of the Kings of Britain* laid the foundation of all that was to follow. What came after Geoffrey was the wholesale appropriation of Celtic tradition and its glorification as a Norman one. England under Norman rule took Arthur, lock, stock and barrel and made him their own King Arthur.

There followed an Arthur boom! Soon French writers caught the bug and new, or borrowed stories as new, came onto the scene. Within a couple of generations we have the Round Table, Camelot and the famous love triangle of Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot (probably based on an Irish tale). The icing on the cake became thicker and thicker and soon any history that may have been known became so embroidered as to be non-existent.

Arthur was part of a stolen past - taken and revamped to suit the time and the place. One can compare this rewriting to that of Shakespeare's plays - both historical and fantasy. A good example is the inversion of Macbeth into an evil villain. Today people quote from Shakespeare as if he is history, and if he had written a play on King Arthur (did he?) then even more icing would have been piled up.

(I use the word *icing* as against such words as *dross* because despite the damage done the layers are interesting and enjoyable!)

Motives

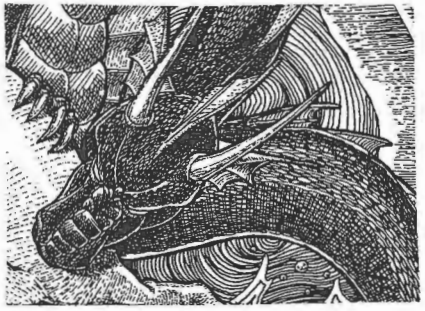
The influence of English literature is so strong that even Wales accepted the stories of Malory. Now Arthur is saviour both of Wales and of England! Wales has absorbed the Round Table, knights in shining armour, Lancelot and the "once and future king". One wonders what went through Geoffrey of Monmouth's mind in the candle-lit scriptorium in Oxfordshire. Did he feel he was writing history and/or was there some other motive for his work? The impression is that he didn't like the Welsh too much but elevated the Breton and gave Cornwall considerable prestige. His Normanised hero was born in Cornwall, lorded over the Welsh at Caerleon and returned to the area of his birthplace to die!

Now it is so difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff that even the most sane of researchers will fall back on Geoffrey's works. We have become so conditioned by the whole Arthurian scene that one line from a French tale gave rise to Camelot and now even a great Celtic hillfort like Cadbury is known as Cadbury-Camelot.

Created past

Will we ever be able to shed this created past? Or will we forever have to put up with the crazed theories of predominantly Anglo-Saxon writers, on both sides of the Atlantic? Can we strip away the layers to discover, or rather re-discover, our stolen past, a past that is Celtic, not Norman or Plantagenet or later? If Arthur is ever to be found (and there are those who doubt it is possible) it will be necessary to recover that lost past.

But it continues to be so difficult, especially when you get archaeologists, or managers of heritage sites, linking finds with the mythological King Arthur. (I am thinking here of the find at Tintagel with the name Artognou!) We must forget Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chrétien de Troyes and Thomas Malory, and put aside the literature with its layers of icing, with its Camelot, Lancelot and Round Table, or we will continue to have a stolen past!



Myrddin's Song

Sunbeams dispel
The hoarfrost in my bones
As gods of Summer
Once more walk the land
My blood awakens
Gently in my breast
And warmly snakes
Its labyrinthine course
Thro' brittling veins
Long dead with Wynter's chill

I spread my limbs
In worship
And in joy
And cast my flowers
On the Summer breeze --
A thousand years ago
My evil love
Condemned me to this Ent-like
Life-in-Death

A thousand seasons pass
The purblind world
Unfurls its verdant banners
Round my tomb
The giddy Westwind
Gambols thro' the grass
Unmindful of the Prophet's
Oaken doom

And so I stand and mark
The rolling years
An ancient sentinel
Rooted to the earth
A home to corbie,
Tree rat, squirrel and owl
Or shade to strolling player,
Wandering bard

But Vivienne, my lover
Long doth lie
In dreamless sleep
Beneath the restless sand
While I live on
Beneath the Summer sky
Dreaming of her
And all that once was mine

Michael Pendragon

Ian Brown

More Relics of the Grail

Tristan Gray Hulse

Fig 3. Reliquary of the "face" of St John, Amiens, France

In *Pendragon XXVI 2* Alby Stone makes a brief reference to the head of St John Baptist as a Grail analogue. St John was one of the most popular saints of the entire medieval period (thus, for instance, he was the sixth most popular dedicatee of English churches: outdistanced only by the Virgin [2,335], All Saints [1,255], St Peter [1,140], St Michael [687], and St Andrew [637] - Bond 1914 17). His unique status, as one sanctified in his mother's womb, as St Luke's Gospel relates (Luke 1,41: or, at least, as the exegesis of the Lucan text by the early Fathers held) is reflected in his singular status in the liturgy, St John having a feast in honour of his birth (24 June) as well as one on the date of his death (29 August), as is the almost invariable festal pattern of the Church - a distinction shared only with Jesus and Mary.

This veneration early extended to his corporeal relics, which unfortunately have the most confused and confusing history. The relics were found, and re-found, on several occasions; and the Western Church has memorialised the finding of his head at Jerusalem (24 February - the "First Finding") and at Comana (25 May - the "Third") from an early period. The Orthodox still memorialise three head-findings, the Byzantine Calendar commemorating the "First and Second Finding of the Venerable Head of St John, the Precursor" together on 24 February, and the third finding on 25 May. Fig 2.

Celtic connections

One of these feasts was known to Celtic Christians at least by the early ninth century, when the Felire or metrical martyrology of Oengus Celi De records for 27 February (for some as yet unexplained reason, the Felire entries often "slip" by one or two days) "the finding of John's head". A slightly later gloss to the text records:

Here, the first finding of the head of John the Baptist 240 years after his beheading by Herod is commemorated [Stokes 1905, 63, 78].

On 25 May the Felire notes "the feast of Johannes, a loveable pillar of virginity"; which Stokes plausibly suggests is a commemoration of the "third finding" of the Baptist's head [ib 126, 467].

In fact, there is a considerable early literature concerning the Baptist from Ireland. A Passion of St John was widely known, differing in a number of narrative details from the Gospel accounts; and the version in the Leabhar Breac details the "first finding" of the head relic [McNamara 1984 65-6]:

After the crucifixion of Christ the greatest horror in human history, to the medieval Irish mind, was the decapitation of John the Baptist. The Irish in fact believed that they carried a special national guilt in connection with John's death for the reason that in Irish tradition it was an Irish druid - MogRuith - who actually executed the death sentence on the Baptist;

and numbers of texts detail the career of MogRuith (ib 64, 66).

Because of the druid's crime, the people believed that, one day, a "doom" would fall upon Ireland, on the feast of St John's decollation (29 August). At least once this belief generated a

national panic. Under the year 1096, the Annals of the Four Masters record:
The festival of John fell on Friday this year; the men of Ireland were seized with great fear, and the counsel taken by the clergy of Ireland, with the comarba of St Patrick at their head, in order to spare them from the mortality which had been predicted to them from a remote period, was to command all in general to observe a three days' fast ... And so the men of Ireland were saved for that time from the fire of vengeance.
A similar entry is found in the Annals of Ulster (ib 66-7).

Celtic concern with head relics can be further deduced from the fact that the Felire, under 25 February, notes that
the head of apostle Paul, the splendid pious champion, has been found;
the gloss to this entry noting that
Petronilla the daughter of Peter the apostle found the head of the apostle Paul 40 years after his decollation under Nero [Stokes 1905 62, 78).

The importance of the motif is shown not only by the existence of numbers of copies of the apocryphal Acts of Peter and Paul which detail the finding, but more especially by numbers of texts abridging the acta to simply "the account of the decapitation of St Paul and the miraculous recovery of his head" [McNamara 1984 99-101].

Hic et ubique

This repeated (re)finding of the relics has led to enormous confusion as to which surviving or once-extant portions came from where, and how. Their complicated story can be indicated - no more - by the account of the relics given by "Sir John Mandeville", writing c 1357. According to Mandeville, St John
was beheded in the castelle of Macharyme [Machaerus] *besyde the Dede See, and after ... buryed at Samarie* [Samaria, subsequently Sebaste]. *And there let Iulianus Apostata dyggen him vp and let brennen* [burn] *his bones ...*
But the fynger that schewed oure lord seyenge ... Lo the lomb [lamb] *of God, that nolde neuere brenne but is alle hol* [whole: saved, according to tradition by St Thecla, what is claimed to be this finger is now preserved at St-Jean-du-Doigt, in Brittany, still the focus of a popular local cult - for an account of which, *cf* Le Braz 1907 131-97] ...
In that place was wont to ben a fair chirche... there was wont to ben the heed of Seynt Iohn Baptist enclosed in the walle, but the emperour Theodosie let drawe it out and ... be born to Costantynoble. And yit at Costantynoble is the hynder partye of the heed.
And the forpartie of the heed til vnder the chyn is at Rome in the chirche of Seynt Siluestre... and it is yit alle broylly as though it were half brent...
And the iowes [jaws] *benethe that holden to the chyn and a partie of the assches and the platere* [platter] *that the hed was leyd in whan it was smythen of is at Gene* [Genoa]...
And sum men seyn that the heed of Seynt Iohn is at Amyas [Amiens] *in Picardye*
but for once Sir John keeps his own counsel with regard to the genuineness or otherwise of the Amiens relic, adding only "but God knoweth" [Seymour 1967 78].

Early accounts

Sightings of the relics are noted from comparatively early times. Writing c 570, the anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza went to Emesa, in Syria,
where they have the head of Saint John Baptist, which has been put in a glass vase. We looked at it through the glass with our own eyes, and venerated it [Wilkinson 1977 89].

That the reputed heads of saints were similarly displayed for veneration at this period is shown by a further passage in the account of the Piacenza pilgrim. In a Jerusalem convent he was shown
a human head enclosed in a reliquary of gold adorned with gems, which they say is that of Saint Theodota the martyr. Many drink out of it to gain a blessing, and so did I [ib 84].

The anonymous author of the Itinerary of St Willibald, describing c 780 a pilgrimage made by the saint some fifth years earlier, mentions his visit in Edessa to a church of St John Baptist
whose head was long concealed in that city, but has since been translated thence to Jerusalem [Brownlow 1981 42].

However, the Hodoeporicon, written by the nun Hugeberc to the dictation of St Willibald himself, while mentioning his visit to the Edessene church, records that the relic of the head "is now in Syria" [ib 12] - presumably at Emesa; or perhaps at Damascus where a mosque, formerly a Christian church, claims to be the site of John's burial. (The church, though with no mention of its relics, was visited by Arculf: MacPherson 1889 47).

It was Jerome (c 341-420) who recorded that St John had been buried in Samaria/Sebaste by his disciples, where miracles were worked at the tomb. Jerome's erstwhile friend Rufinus (c 345-410), in his adaptation of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, reported that Julian the Apostate, angered at this manifestation of supernatural power, had the relics exhumed and burned; but that the relics were saved and ultimately sent to Alexandria [cf Bentley 1985 52]. Rufinus also recorded that the head had been buried separately at Machaerus, but was subsequently discovered wrapped in John's camel-hair robe, following an apparition of the

saint to two priests [cf eg Brewer 1884 29]. The head was translated to Constantinople by Theodosius (emperor 379-95), where it remained until the sack of the city in 1204.

St John in the West

Bentley notes the discovery in 1010 of another "head", at St-Jean-D'Angely, when "the king of France offered those who found it the reward was a gold plate"; and also mentions a further "head" once venerated at Poitiers [Bentley 1985 99, 106].

The Genoese head relic, which is still preserved in the cathedral treasury along with the Sacro Catino and some of the saint's "ashes" [Begg 1995 141], was looted from Constantinople by crusaders in 1204. Since the same period a portion of John's skull has been preserved in San Silvestro in Capite, in Rome.

But the cathedral of Amiens glories in having also a large portion (with the upper lip, nose, eyes, and forehead). Baldwin ... in 1247 gave ... the upper part of the head ... [which] was deposited in Ste Chapelle, Paris. The abbot of Tyron has the nape of the neck [elsewhere, Brewer defines the Tyron relic as "the brains", noting that "in 1515 they were placed in a skull borne by two angels"]. A part of the jaws is preserved in ... St-Chaumont, in Lyonnais. Other parts of this wonderful head are in Turin, Aosta, and Venice; other parts in Lyons and Nemours, in France. St Paulinus deposited a part in his church at Nola, and St Gaudentius in his church at Bresse. The finger with which the Baptist pointed out the Messiah [claimed also to the present by St-Jean-du-Doigt, in Brittany] is in Malta, and some of his ashes are in Genoa [Brewer 1884 274-5].

The reformer Calvin, in his *Treatise on Relics*, also poured scorn on the many fragments of the Baptist venerated in Europe:
his face at Amiens, the top of his head at Rhodes, the back of his head at Nemours, his brains at Nogent-le-Retrou, part of his jaw at Besancon, the other part at St John in the Lateran [Bentley 1985 170].

Nor was it simply a matter of bone relics. Caesarius of Heisterbach, in his vastly entertaining Dialogus Miraculorum compiled c 1225, describes two: one, an arm "still clothed with flesh and skin" which "I myself two years ago saw" at Groningen, and which bled; the other, at Caesarius' own monastery of Heisterbach, was "a large molar tooth with three fangs", which was all the more powerful to cure sickness "as it had been the less used to masticate delicate food" by its austere first owner [Caesarius 1929 54-7]. A silver shrine at Aachen, besides the swaddling-clothes and loincloth of Jesus, and the wedding-dress of Our Lady, houses "the cloth laid out by those who decapitated John the Baptist in order to catch his head and his blood"; St Gregory the Great is reported to have given some of John's hair to a Visigothic king; and Calvin mentioned "a bit of his ear at Saint-Fleur-en-Auvergne" [Bentley 1985 56 92 170].

Even these fail to exhaust the total. Relics of the Prodromos (the "Forerunner", as the Baptist is more usually referred to by the Orthodox) are also to be found in the East. Thus, in the monastery of Xenophontas on Mount Athos, in Greece, is to be found "a drop of John the Baptist's blood"; while at Dionysiou, also on Athos,
a reliquary contains the Forerunner's right hand, procured after the monastery had lost that saint's head to pirates [Loch 1957 101 234]
- relics which were presumably obtained originally from Constantinople.

And as recently as 1978 the monks of Dair Abu Maqar monastery in Egypt claimed they had discovered relics of St John Baptist and the prophet Elisha in a crypt below the church of St Macarius, where they are now enshrined [Meinardus 1980].

Still others could be noted, both in the East and the West; but these example will suffice. (For a scholarly account of the Western head relics, cf Papebroch 1867 639-58: "De Reliquiis Capitis S Joannis Baptistae in Occidentem allatis".)

The severed head

Despite this profligacy of Johannine relics, it is clear from the records that only three of the European relics had any significant cultus in the medieval period: the "heads" of St John Baptist in San Silvestro, in Rome; in San Lorenzo, in Genoa; and in Amiens cathedral. All three ultimately claim to derive from the 1204 sack of Constantinople. All three have been examined in modern times, and - though apparently no attempt has been made to correlate the results of such examinations - none of them represent more than a fragment of a complete skull.

With the disarticulation of saintly skeletons in the medieval period came the custom of enshrining parts of the bodies in reliquaries of the same shape. The custom spread widely and quickly. The arm-shaped reliquary of St Lachtin, now in the National Museum of Ireland, was made c 1120 [O Floinn 1995 26 illus]. The earliest-known head-shaped reliquary is that of St Candidus, which dates from the ninth or tenth century [Wall 1905 6].

As the pilgrimage cult and the concomitant demand for relics increased, the pieces available became ever smaller; but these were frequently enclosed in self-shaped reliquaries, as if the relic

was complete. Thus, it is not impossible that the relics of Rome, Genoa and Amiens do in fact come from the same skull, perhaps shared out in Constantinople in 1204 (which is not, of course, to say that the skull had ever been attached to St John Baptist).

Of the three head relics, that preserved at Amiens appears to have been by far the best known. The relic, the "face" of St John, consists of the upper frontal part of the skull; and in the middle ages it was placed in a reliquary which was designed to resemble a head lying face-up on a large circular plate. Fig 3. Pilgrims to Amiens wore home signacula or tokens crudely representing this reliquary. Some of them depict it in the hands of a priest, with candle-carrying acolytes on either side; undoubtedly, the manner in which the relic would have been displayed to contemporary pilgrims. Fig 4. This reliquary gave rise to a new iconographic type, and the representation of the head on its "charger" became enormously popular. As Mrs Jameson observed, in her notes on the iconography of the decollation [Jameson 1892 299-302]:

The severed head became an object of great veneration, and seems, in itself, to have represented, not unfrequently, the personalite of the saint.

Nowhere was this devotion to St John's head more prominent than in England, where the head on its platter became one of the most popular subjects illustrated on the devotional alabaster panels carved in Nottingham [Anderson 1971 134: illus pl 86]. That these images have specific reference to the Amiens relic is shown by the wound regularly depicted on the forehead. And in fact, there is a hole in the Amiens relic at exactly this spot. To account for this, a legend grew up, telling that when Salome carried the severed head to her mother Herodias, the vengeful queen "pierced its tongue with a pin and stabbed at its brow with a knife". This incident was incorporated into narrative cycles of the saint's life, such as the one shown in the windows of Gresford church, in Denbighshire [ib: illus pl 69].

The medieval English mind in some sort assimilated the Baptist's severed head to the Last Supper (and thus, potentially, to the Grail), as is indicated by the fact that

in some York service books the fourth lesson for the feast of the Decollation of St John states that the saint's head symbolises the body of Christ [ib].

(For a fuller account of the Amiens relic, cf Papebroch 1867 639-42: "Translatio Faciei Ambianos in Galliam"; 642-5: "De veneratione hujus sacrae Reliquiae Ambiani".)

An interesting aside on a possible connection of St John's head with the Grail is given by Mandeville's statement that "the platere that the hed was leyd in" was preserved with his head in Genoa. This is surely the emerald Sacro Catino which was later venerated as a vessel associated with the Last Supper, and plausibly it was brought to Genoa from Constantinople with the head.

The Grail legend

I am rather more familiar with the history of relics than I am with the long and complicated development of the Grail legend. However, I think that the evidence would support a theory of some influence of the cult of the Baptist's relics on the developing legend. The evolving iconography, the marked Celtic interest (and in particular, the stress of that interest), and the development of the legendary associations of the Sacro Catino relic, would all seem to point that way. It remains for Grail specialists to analyse such evidence vis-à-vis the available chronographic textual evidence.

◆ *The concluding part follows*

Fig 4. Signacula from Amiens

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Fig 2. Third finding of the Baptist's Head, from an illustrated calendar (Moscow 1679): Acta Sanctorum, Maii, tomus primus (Parisiis et Romae 1866)

Old **News** *Special*

Changing History?

Chris Lovegrove

Slap-bang in the middle of the silly season Tintagel became a focus of interest with news of its "Arthur" Stone. As the dust settles it's time to see what the fuss was about, examine its significance and assess the reaction.

A team from the Archaeology Department of Glasgow University, led by Professor Christopher Morris, has been re-evaluating Ralegh Radford's pre-war excavations at Tintagel Island, Cornwall; the project was commissioned by English Heritage who are guardians of the site, itself owned by the Duchy of Cornwall.

Radford's Site C is a terrace situated between the sea and the main plateau, on the north-eastern side of the promontory. On a nearby terrace Morris' team had already discovered occupation from the late Roman to the 7th century, with evidence of cremation and sherds of imported East Mediterranean ware. Undisturbed, under Radford's Site C, were further deposits, including drains running around the southwest corner. Re-used as a cover to the later of two drains was a piece of slate.

The drain cover

On this piece of broken slate the earliest fragmentary inscription consists of deeply incised letters. The first is an *A*, though it appears to be ligatured to a preceding letter, perhaps a *V*. Next is a large *X*, then a Greek-type *E* or *epsilon*, though this could be a *C* with an scratch. Taken in isolation, the whole is reminiscent of the traditional Christian *alpha-omega* ("the beginning and the end") with a St Andrew's-type cross between them and the *omega* on its side.

The second and more lightly scratched inscription has attracted most attention. This Latin text reads (with an apparent repetition)

PATER
COLIAVIFICIT
ARTOgNOV

COL
FICIT

Pater is 'father', *ficit* is a common variant of classical *fecit*, 'made'. Professor Charles Thomas suggests that *COLI* may be a Primitive Irish name, perhaps Coll or Collas, and that *AVI* is also Irish, meaning 'of a grandson of' or 'of a descendent of'. Finally, *ARTOgNOV*, or Artognou, is a British name which reappears in late 9th century Brittany as Arthnou.

The principal suggestion for the meaning of the inscription is "Arthnou, father of a descendent of Coll made (or had made)" *something* (a structure?) to which the notice had been attached. (A Site C ten by three metre stone building is the likely candidate.) No-one yet seems to be uncomfortable with the contorted genealogy implied. Would you refer to someone, say, as father of the grandson of someone else? Or is this to imply that a descent from Coll through the maternal side mattered more than that through Arthnou? [*Avi* is presumably cognate with Early Irish *Ui* (as in *Ui Néill*, modern O'Neill, "descendant of Niall").]

Alternatively, some have detected a possible letter *N* after *PATER* which could be the Latin name Paternus, in the nominative (Pollington 1998). This certainly resolves the "father of a descendant" problem interpretation, making the phrase *Paternus, descendant of Coll, made* ... and distancing Artognou from an alleged fatherhood! The repeated *COL ... FICIT* may moreover point to a trial piece with practice inscriptions; this raises the possibility that the finished noticeboard may still be lurking around!

Be that as it may, the lettering is distinctively 6th century: the *A*s have 'handlebar' crosspieces, the *P*s and *F*s have long 'descenders' and the *R*s have not only descenders but also horizontal

tails. The *G* is of half-uncial form, similar to a 3 or the gs in many modern computer fonts.

The final date-clincher, from the layer above the drain, were twelve pieces of a glass flagon the closest parallels for which (unique for Britain from this period) are from Cadiz and Malaga in southern Spain.

So, we have a piece of slate with at least three uses: a fragmentary primary inscription, a secondary inscription exhibiting the name *Artognou* and possible Irish influences, and a drain cover, all of which seem to be datable to the 6th century (the last perhaps 7th century). And then, to judge from the rest of the site, nothing until the building of the castle in the 13th century, a century after Geoffrey of Monmouth's connection between Arthur and Tintagel. What does all this mean?

Significance

It means that we have further evidence of a high-status secular site on the Tintagel headland, and not the monastic site that Radford believed he had found when digging earlier in this century. It underscores the fact that a bleak clifftop promontory maintained Dark Age trading links with the Eastern Mediterranean via southern Spain, importing goods such as wine jars and, as we have seen, a glass flagon. It suggests that a strong local authority was maintained for over a century in the post-Roman period.

What it certainly does *not* mean is that the 12th century link between the site and Arthur has been corroborated. (In fact the first literary connection here is with King Mark, making mythical Tintagel "not Arthurian but Marks-ist" as *Current Archaeology* puts it.) Arthnou-Artognou is not Arthur-Arturius (or any other form of the name) despite sharing the initial element. (The distinction is similar to, say, that between Christian and Christopher.) As Charles Evans-Günther writes, "Artognou [is] just one of a large number of names in the Celtic languages that have the element *arto*, 'bear'. The first element may actually be *artog*!" English Heritage favours the interpretation Arto-gnou, "known-as-a-bear" or "known-to-be-a-bear". Other Dark Age *arth-* names include Arthmail, Arthan, Arthen and Arthbeu.

Responses

The reaction to the stone has been hyperbolic on occasions. "Despite the obvious temptation to link the Arthnou of this stone to either the historical or the legendary figure of Arthur, it must be stressed that there is no evidence to make this connection," the Chief Archaeologist at English Heritage, Geoffrey Wainwright, is soberly quoted in a press release. But the release also claims that the find "changes history" (really?) and Dr Wainwright is even later reported as saying "I hope [the stone] will put some meat on the historic figure. He is one of the great British heroes, a tough, rough, leader of men" (*Western Morning News*).

In the USA *The Weekly Telegraph* had a tongue-in-cheek editorial headlined "Arthur was Here" (11.8.98): "These boffins! When will they desist from their caveats, their academic caution and appreciate the romantic splendour of their discoveries?" Of Geoffrey Wainwright it avers that "the archaeologist has clearly spent too long carbon-dating potsherds and practising dendrochronology on roof-trees. Blinded by his own science, the man is missing what is obvious to the rest of us." It confidently predicts that his trowel will turn up "one stone with a curious sword-shaped aperture; one Round Table; assorted chastity belts (picked)" and advises him to "dig, dig, dig, Dr Wainwright."

The Times editorial thundered that the quest for Arthur "is a matter of romance and literature ... rather than a subject for DNA fingerprinting or radiocarbon dating." The "most powerful British legend ... weaves together many of the strands in the diverse culture of this big offshore island." The editorial leaves us with the insight that "the story of the fall of the Round Table suits the national taste for underdogs and heroic defeats."

Locals are less circumspect. The vice-chairman of Tintagel Parish Council gleefully declared the find was "an absolute godsend for the economy" but was on less sure ground when he insisted that "it blows away the claims of other places that they are the birthplace and home of Arthur". And the chief executive of the West Country Tourist Board showed no sense of irony when stating that "it is the closest proof that we have ever had that King Arthur was a true king and based in Cornwall. It will sort out these false claims by the Welsh, and as for Scotland - they should stick to the Loch Ness monster."

References

"Tintagel" *Current Archaeology 159* (1998) 84-88
Pollington, S in *Widowinde 115* (autumn 1998) 5
Other press items via John Ford, Mary Mayer and Beryl Mercer

Gordon Mechan, in a letter in *Current Archaeology 160*, suggests this restoration:

+ PATERN[*OSTER*]
ARTOGNOV [*MEMORIAM*]
COLIAVI
FICIT

'(In the name of) Our Father: Artognou erected (this memorial) of Colus, his grandfather... ', translating AVI in its Latin sense.

ARTHUR WAS ELSEWHERE

The Cornish discovery has elicited the expected backlash: for example, Bryn Edwards, in a letter to *The Sunday Times* (16.8.98), berates "the unashamed hijacking of the story of the Celtic chieftain" and declares that "Arthur would be spinning in his grave at the thought of being referred to as 'English'. If, of course, he was dead."

The Western Morning News headlined ***New book says King Arthur was Scottish*** (19.5.98), with David Carroll, 55, a Hull chiropodist, banging a drum for Arthur of Dalriada in *Arturius - a Quest for Camelot*. He offered £10,000 to anyone who could prove him wrong. By October this had risen to £20,000 in the wake of the Cornish news. (Oddly, Frank - no longer David - Carroll had by now, Merlin-like, lost a year to be 54 years old.) English Heritage declined to take up his challenge, while Council Bob Flower of North Cornwall District Council brooked no argument: "It's complete rubbish," he declared, according to *The Western Morning News* for October 20th (item from Beryl Mercer).

BADON LOCATED (AGAIN)

Neil McDougall, a town planner from Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire, believes he has found a fort on the site of Mons Badonicus (reports *The Guardian* for Monday August 17th, as noted by Steve Sneyd).

A 100 metre long rectangular earthwork, supported by a steep high bank, has been missed by previous map and archaeological surveys, and is being investigated by English Heritage and county archaeologists. It overlooks all the valleys and river crossings around Bath, which as a placename is one of the contenders for the siege of Mount Badon and traditional site of Arthur's victory.

As Prof Hodges of the University of East Anglia writes, "only more careful excavations, like those at South Cadbury, will help turn this claim into a genuine hypothesis. Dated sherds like those found at Cadbury and Tintagel will be needed to confirm it."

◆ Richard Hodges "The Elusive Arthur" in *Archaeology* (USA) November/December 1998, from Mary Mayer via Beryl Mercer

DARK AGE LONDON

The history of London from Roman *Londinium* (between the Fleet and the Tower) to Saxon *Lundenwic* (sited to the west of Londinium) appears to be one of abandonment and decay. Recent finds, however, at Lloyd's Registry of Shipping included a few sherds of East Mediterranean (possibly Palestine) amphorae of the fifth century from a rubbish pit.

Only a few other such finds have been made in London (*eg* from Billingsgate) which seems to reinforce the impression that despite this evidence of some long distance trading connections London in the Dark Ages ceased to have any significance in the life of the former Roman province.

◆ Dick Bluer and Robin Nielson 'Lloyd's Register: the end of Roman London' *Current Archaeology 158* (1998) 74

HOARDING COINS

With the exodus of the Roman army at the beginning of the fifth century the British monetary economy is supposed to have disappeared overnight. However a coin hoard from Patching in Sussex was probably buried in the late 460s, making it the latest Roman hoard to have been discovered in Britain.

Of the 23 gold *solidi* found ten were Visigothic, the latest being of the Visigothic emperor Libius Severus, 465 AD. The majority of the 25 silver coins range from Constans (337-50) to the British usurper Constantine III (407-11). The cache also included two gold rings and some silver bullion. It would be fascinating to know more of the circumstances of its burial.

◆ *Current Archaeology 157* (1998) 16

PRE-ARTHURIAN CADBURY

Cadbury Castle in Somerset has, since at least the 16th century (and probably before that, on the evidence of the Hereford Mappa Mundi), been associated with the medieval concept of Camelot. But its history goes back even further in time than the Dark Ages. A late Bronze Age shield was uncovered in 1997 as part of the South Cadbury Environment Project, run by the universities of Birmingham and Glasgow, which is researching a ten kilometre square area around the hillfort.

A second Cadbury Day was run in mid-October, 1998 to look at the site and surrounding area, with the shield as prime exhibit. The first Cadbury Day, which dealt with the history of the hillfort, was apparently oversubscribed.

◆ *Western Morning News* 14th October 1998, clipped by Beryl Mercer

PENDRAGON DIG (1)

Under the headline "Treasure island keeps its secret" *The Guardian* [November 18th 1998] outlined an Avalonian farce which even made it onto the airwaves of BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. "The embarassing saga began" (wrote Geoffrey Gibbs) "when Stuart Pendragon walked into a council information office in [Glastonbury] in what staff say was an agitated state. He told them he needed to dig a hole to unearth a box of money buried for him in 1990 by the late Harrods heir Dodi Fayed. He wanted permission to excavate an area close to a pillar box near his home."

The next thing the council knew was that, after hiring a mechanical digger, he started excavating a hole five feet deep in a traffic island at a busy Glastonbury junction. Authorisation had been given under the impression that a spade would be used. Stuart Pendragon then disappeared (though at some staged he was snapped holding a metal detector in the hole by a press photographer) and the hole had to be filled in by contractors. There was no news about any money box however.

Mr Pendragon apparently claims to be the long lost half brother of Prince Charles. Hmm, that surname is a little familiar - could he just also be ...? *The* Guardian notes that he is well known to social services. Thanks to Steve Sneyd for the cutting.

"PENDRAGON" DIG (2)

Pendragon members and ex-members are still involved in the long-running investigation at Llanelen in the Gower, S Wales. Excavation (from time to time reported in *Pendragon*) has revealed Dark Age occupation at this early medieval site. Digging resumed in 1997, directed by Dr Jon Kissock, University of Wales College Newport, with assistance from the Llanelen Research Group. This followed a gradiometer survey which suggested significant remains beyond the area excavated between 1973 and 1985.

In one trench evidence for two timber structures was found - a beam-slot and a run of postholes set into a trench, the two features separated by a low bank of stone and clay. This may date to phase I, the early medieval period, or phase II (pre-1214); finds were few and inconclusive. A platform excavated elsewhere which suggested an iron bloomery appears to have been abandoned before use - radiocarbon dating should establish whether this is either early medieval or phase III (*c*1240-*c*1350). It is only with detailed investigations such as these that any real light, however weak, can be shed on the Dark Ages, though these often leave us with more questions than answers.

◆ Kissock, J and Wright, N "Llanelen, Llanrhidian, Gower" *Archaeology in Wales 37* (1997) 110

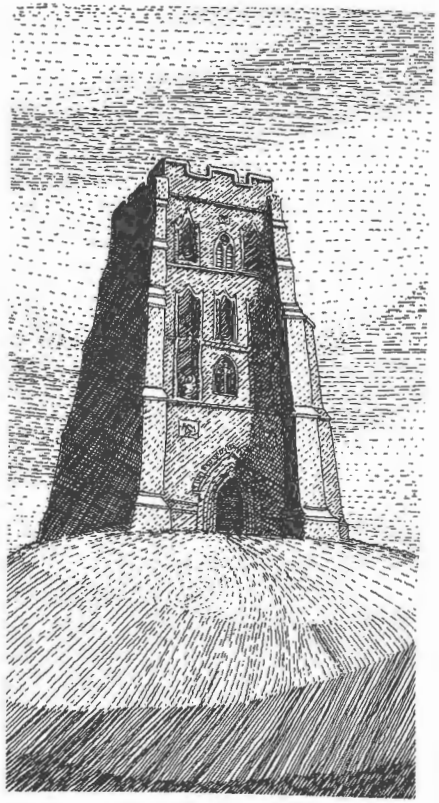


Illustration: Ian Brown

POSTSCRIPT

***Caerleon** ("Gateway to Wales") near Newport has a wealth of Arthurian associations and is a possible venue for **Pendragon**'s fortieth birthday celebrations*

Reviews

The Mammoth Book of Arthurian Legends
Edited by Mike Ashley
Robinson Publishing Ltd 1998 £6.99
ISBN 1 85487 533 7 pbk 566pp

This latest in the series of Ashley-edited Mammoth Arthurian anthologies consists of, in the main, straightforward accounts of key episodes from successive stages of the story, although lesser-known and neglected incidents and people also find a place. The twenty-seven stories are divided into sections covering *The Start, Deeds of the Round Table* (into which is gathered the *Grail Search*) and *The Final Days*.

Earliest text included is Geoffrey of Monmouth's own account of *The Winning of The Kingdom* (the editor's free adaptation of Sebastian Evans' 1912 translation); while other authors represented are more recent, there is a useful emphasis on out-of-print material from the 19th and early 20th centuries. In general, the versions of familiar events tend to stick closely to earlier originals - indeed, some authors seem unexpectedly overawed by their material, and reluctant to intrude their own personality. John Steinbeck's fame as author of *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example, does not seem to have given him the confidence to do more than the most minimal reminting of the story of *The Knight With Two Swords*, and perhaps even more surprising is the absence of an individual feel from Rosemary Sutcliff's version of *Sir Gawaine and The Green Knight*.

It is valuable to have Arthur Machen's vivid treatment of *Guinevere and Lancelot*, Hilaire Belloc disciplined in his approach to *The Romance of Tristan and Yseult*, and Lady Charlotte Guest's own 1849 translation of *The Winning of Olwen*. Though familiar, Tennyson's *The Passing of Arthur* is still probably unmatched for evocativeness, and means the final few stories left to follow this inevitably have to struggle to compete, although Fay Sampson's *Raven's Meat*, giving full rein to the surreal possibilities of the battle of Owen's ravens and Arthur's soldiers in *The Dream of Rhonabwy* (in her reading Arthur himself becomes a giant bird) is a memorable *tour de force*.

Among other lesser-known matter, the dry wit of Theodore Goodridge Roberts' 30s account of *The Quest of the Saracen Beast* (man opportunist unwillingly inherits the quest from a madman), Ron Tiner's effectively deadpan development of near-realistic fiction from the magic-strewn ballad of *The Carle of Carlisle*, and the extensive version of *John, The Knight Of The Lion* (otherworldly adventure entangled with marital discord, from a 1303 Swedish text discovered by Professor H Shuck and given here in a 1902 W F Harvey translation) are indicative of the unusual editorial discoveries to be found, ensuring the anthology is not merely a compilation of the familiar.

Finally, for those who seek authorially-unintended humour, Peter Valentine Timlett's *The Temptation of Launcelot* is a gem, the four wicked pagan queens coming across as more like affronted aunts out of P G Wodehouse! A book well worth having for the access to out-of-print material alone.

Steve Sneyd

Forrester Roberts
The Legend of Tristan & Iseult: the Tale and the Trail in Ireland, Cornwall and Brittany
Forrester Roberts 1998
ISBN 1 902329 00 7 illus pbk 36pp

No stranger to these pages (as an article in this issue testifies) the author has written, illustrated and published an attractive and readable version of the tragedy of the ill-fated lovers. The text is complemented by Ian's own line drawings (some of which reappear in this *Pendragon*) and a selection of stunning colour photos, all in a professionally-designed format. An introduction puts the story into its historical and literary context, and there is a booklist for further reading.

The re-telling has no great literary pretensions, but is recounted in simple semi-archaic language which echoes an oral rendition and combines elements from several versions of the legend though concentrating on Béroul's account.

The captions to the photographs anchor this retelling in Ireland and Brittany as well as Cornwall, and there are maps showing the principal sites, which should greatly appeal to visitors to these locales (though despite a passing mention Scotland is prominent by its absence). I would recommend this colour brochure then as a good general introduction to those new to the legends and needing an enthusiastic guide to lead them.

Chris Lovegrove

The Sacred Mushroom Seekers: tributes to R Gordon Wasson
Edited by Thomas J Riedlinger
Park Street Press, Vermont 1997 £19.99
ISBN 0 89281 338 5 pbk 283pp

A truly wonderful collection of praise from botanists, anthropologists, psychologists and librarians to the late R Gordon Wasson, whose name will go down in history as the introducer to the modern western world of the connection between drugs and religion, and creator of the science of ethnomycology: the study of attitudes of different races to mushrooms.

In 1952, Robert Graves spotted an article mentioning the discovery in 1938 of a sacred mushroom cult among the Indians of Mesoamerica, previously recorded by 17th-century Spaniards and found on earlier archaeological artefacts, which he immediately passed on to Wasson. The following year Wasson organised annual visits to the Mazatec Indians in the county of Oaxaca, Mexico. This culminated in his privilege in being the first outsider to have participated in a sacred ritual ceremony involving hallucinogenic mushrooms among the Mexican Indians, held on the night of 29-30 June 1955, and presided over by the female shaman (or "healer" as is the correct terminology), Maria Sabina.

An article, "Lightning bolts and mushrooms, an essay in early cultural exploration", soon followed in a scholarly publication (1956) and the first public announcement of Wasson's discoveries in Mexico appeared in the May 13th 1957 edition of *Life* magazine. The article triggered the "psychedelic revolution" of the 1960s - enter names like Andrija Puharish, Carlos Casteneda and Timothy Leary. Maria Sabina herself was visited by Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, John Lennon and Pete Townshend - something which she found distressing, resulting in the Mexican government closing off the village where she lived from prying outsiders.

Gordon Wasson travelled extensively: to Mexico, to Europe, to the Far East, to Oceania; always steering clear of being associated with the hippies who took drugs for kicks which he regarded with disdain. As one contributor to this book described him: "A man of august bearing, insatiable curiosity and insistence on meticulous accuracy, Wasson was aptly described by a British colleague as the perfect old-fashioned gentleman, with a twinkle in his eye."

From 1963, Wasson began research on the Indo-European plant deity *Soma* which he eventually identified in 1968 as the Fly-Agaric mushroom (in 1970 John Marco Allegro had mistakenly idenitfied the Fly-Agaric as the drug of the New Testament). In 1978, with fellow scholars, Wasson invented the word *entheogen* ("God generated within"), hoping that it would replace *hallucinogen*, a word he considered to be totally inappropriate.

Ex-journalist, ex-banker-turned-amateur-scientist, R Gordon Wasson died in his daughter's arms on 23 December 1986, aged 88. His remains were cremated and his ashes were interred in the Chapel of St Joseph of Arimathea of the National Cathedral, Washington DC. R Gordon Wasson had always described his researches into sacred mushrooms as the Quest for the Holy Grail.

I feel privileged to have corresponded with him during the early 1980s.

Paul Smith

Chris Barber
In Search of Owain Glyndwr
Blorenge Books1998 £11.95
ISBN 1 872730 078 pbk 224pp
To order, contact 01873 856114

Owain Glyndwr, self-proclaimed Prince of Wales, passed across 15th century history like a blazing comet leaving behind a mysterious vacuum. Like King Arthur he just vanished from sight to an unknown location and eventual burial place (sorry Glastonians but I'm Welsh). Like Arthur he is the once and future hero who will return when his people most need him - the Mab Darogan, the Son of Promise.

A plethora of books have appeared about Owain's life and times, all more or less academic, so what need is there for another? Chris Barber himself says he is taking on the role of 'historical detective' to produce the first fully illustrated book on the subject. These objectives are well achieved, the author journeys all around Wales to find the tangible evidence of Glyndwr's rebellion and its consequences, bringing each location alive with historical facts and descriptions and conjuring up a gallery of historical personages to people his stage.There is a fine climax with Chris tracking down Glyndwr to his possible burial place, interviewing those with special knowledge and taking photographs of the secret locations. And Chris Barber really can take photographs - there are over 80 of them and as many line illustrations.

In her foreword, Jan Morris shrewdly observes that 'Chris Barber's achievement is to bring the poignant and heroic mystery closer to us, to set it against the background in a way that makes it no less strange but rather more poignant.' She adds, 'I can think of nothing more fascinating than to join Chris Barber in his search, this book in hand, for the great elusive shadow.' I actually found myself at Pilleth in Radnorshire a few days after reading it and the hillside churchyard, which contains some of my

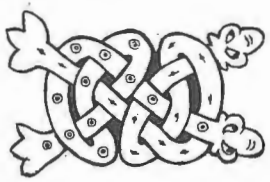
ancestors, suddenly came alive for me with memories of the notorious Battle of Bryn Glas where Rhys Gethin the Terrible defeated Sir Edmund Mortimer's forces. The bodies of the fallen lie in this now peaceful place and I included them in my prayer as I stood at Page Stedman's graveside on the sunny hill. You can experience such moments all over Wales if you care to join Chris Barber's tour - I don't know of a better guide.

Fred Stedman-Jones

Chris Barber
Arthurian Caerleon in Literature & Legend
Blorenge Books1996 £3.99
ISBN 1 872730 108 pbk 44pp

This is the only collection of stories and information about Caerleon's Arthurian associations to have appeared to date and as such fills a great need. Tourists arrive regularly to visit what is Arthur's Court in the *Mabinogion*, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Malory and Tennyson's *Idylls*, but they find little to make their journey worthwhile. Chris wrote this booklet to fill the gap and it finds a ready sale at Caerleon itself. With 23 line illustrations this is a must for your Arthurian collection. Plans are afoot to promote Caerleon's Arthurian profile, I'm glad to say. I'll keep you in touch.

Fred Stedman-Jones



Laurence Main
Camlann - the True Story?
Meirion Publications 1997 £2.50
Post-free from 4 Village Workshops, Cemmaes Road, Machynlleth, Powys, Wales SY20 8LY

If you are receptive to channelled teachings, dreaming on holy mountains and summoning helpers with prayers and offerings, this booklet will interest you. The author is a reincarnation of Derfel who survived the Battle of Camlann, who carried the Holy Grail from Glastonbury, away from the invading Saxons to the Strata Florida area of Ceredigion on behalf of the nine maidens who guarded it at Chalice Well. With him travelled a pregnant lady whose womb may have contained the bloodline of Jesus. Derfel retired to Llanderfel and ended his life as Abbot of Bardsey Island. Awesome.

Fred Stedman-Jones

Adrian Gilbert, Alan Wilson, Baram Blackett
The Holy Kingdom
Bantam Press 1998
ISBN 0593 040627illus hbk 379pp

Longtime *Pendragon* readers will be familiar with the eccentric theories of Wilson and Blackett, passionate believers in not just one but two South Wales King Arthurs. Has the contribution of successful mysteries author Adrian Gilbert and the passage of time made their theories more acceptable?

Sadly, no. It is true that Wales has been dealt badly with by English regimes over the centuries - there is little to argue with in the general thrust of their analysis here. But first and foremost, all three authors are *conspiracy theorists* - any facts or lack of facts are evidence that the powers-that-be are hiding the truth from our honest researchers. If you aren't with them you're against them - the English, the North Welsh, the Romans, the Catholic Church, academia, the press... the list is seemingly endless. Paranoid, or what?

Second, the authors work not by true argument but by *assertion*. A favourite opening gambit is "You must understand that ..." No contradiction is allowed: *we're right and you're wrong*. Statements are often made with either no references or by circular proof.

Third, their solutions are based on the *jigsaw puzzle* or *crossword puzzle* method: they have the *only* true template and all the pieces fit, or are made to fit, or are otherwise rejected. There is no doubt in their minds that their vision of the past is correct. Fourth, this vision of theirs is one with no sense of *anachronism*. Artefacts and writings and events and ideas are arbitrarily assigned dates to fit in with their jigsaw mentality, and there is a constant intrusion of mythic archetypes into historical reality.

So, Andragathius and Athrwys, the authors' candidates for their two King Arthurs, are unlikely to be anything of the sort, quite apart from the philological argument which tells against any such identifications. And as for the two stones produced to aid identification: because of the unscientific way they were removed from their alleged sites one must immediately have doubts about their provenance. Even with the expertise of Adrian Gilbert this is a tiring, humourless read, full of spite and misguidedness (the holy kingdom of the title is yet another spin on the descendants of Jesus concept). To rebut every point would take a whole book in itself, and the effort would only serve to confirm their prejudices. Why bother, then?

Chris Lovegrove

Guy de la Bédoyère
Hadrian's Wall: History & Guide
Tempus 1998 £9.90
ISBN 07524 1407 0 illus pbk 160pp

A wonderful little treasury this, a period expert's guide to Britain's "most visited" Roman monument, written in straightforward language for the intelligent visitor. Map, plans, photos and line reconstructions (all by the author) embellish the text which includes introduction, gazetteer, glossary, sources and bibliography.

For a long time now Birdoswald has been identified as *Camboglanna*, a possible candidate for Camlann, Arthur's last battle. Nowadays, Birdoswald is recognised as the settlement of *Banna*, and *Camboglanna* as the largely destroyed site at Castlesteads by the Cam Beck (the name *Camboglanna* meaning something like "the bank on the [river's] bend"). If Arthur was ever mortally wounded here, the river may have eroded any trace of his presence here. Ironically, recent painstaking work at Birdoswald has revealed post-Roman occupation, including the construction of timber halls, well into the fifth century. (In addition, Charles Thomas has even suggested that this was St Patrick's birthplace, but that's another story!)

That aside, this is a useful *vademecum*, filling an apparently vacant niche in Wall literature.

Chris Lovegrove

Norris Lacy
A Camelot Triptych
Round Table Publications 1997 [£5.50]
ISBN 0 9630918 2 4 A5 80pp

For today's politicians, defeat or retirement brings at least one consolation - the chance to set the record straight, as they see it. Usually ghost-written, perhaps, but the memoir will do its best to prove its subject right when all the rest were wrong, misunderstood but never misguided, human yet high-minded, striving to set the world aright with the highest motives, such as a cruel world may have cabined and confined their full expression.

Norris Lacy's book imagines that three key participants in the events of Arthur's reign have been similarly occupied.

Merlin has dictated an account of his purposes to his old teacher, Blaise, Guinevere the story of her downfall to a nun able to write in her convent of final refuge, and Mordred a final self-justification *cum* "longest suicide note in history", to use a phrase from more recent politics, to the obscure scholar John of Carlisle.

In the process, each is allowed to reveal himself or herself, with all the all-too-human self-deceptions and depressing discoveries that other people do not in life behave according to the roles for which we cast them in our minds.

We are given coherent personalities. Merlin, manipulative, vain of his political skills, dictating the memoirs as much to have an audience for his cleverness as from real need - hence we do not question why a spell-caster, likely to be literate, does not simply write his own text - yet allowing bewilderment at the inconvenient way reality refuses to follow the script - reveals himself as a dangerously unsuccessful meddler. Guinevere, deprived of independent voice by the circumstances of her role, paradoxically recovers it when all is lost. Mordred convinces himself, and to some extent the reader, that he has acted to destroy what has imperceptibly become tyranny.

The accounts are deliberately bare of descriptive colour - background and setting are assumed, plausibly since participants would not break off their accounts to describe familiarities of their lives' surroundings. It is an interesting approach, and a readable one, though I would have liked to have also the memoirs of at least two more key figures, Arthur and Lancelot - perhaps a sequel will come?

One tiny irritant - the book has an effective cover illustration, a drawing of a three-towered castle, the towers doubtless symbolising the three voices, but nowhere could I find an artist credit.

Steve Sneyd

An Arthurian Miscellany
Edited by Barbra Tepa Lupack and Alan Lupack
Round Table Publications 1997 [£2.75]
pbk 20pp

Seven poets are represented in this anthology, of whom the two Britons are well known to *Pendragon* readers. Fred Stedman-Jones' *Camlann* is reprinted from a 1989 issue of *Pendragon*, while the late Eddie Tooke's *Seekers of the Real (?) King Arthur* is a

revised version of a poem which first appeared here too.

Camlann takes the form of a lament for defeat and ending paralleling in form and grimly elegiac imagery actual surviving poems of the era like the Cattraeth poem. Utilising the persona of Taliesin, it is strongest in the stark simplicity of such images, almost kennings, as "Stallions red-shinned" and "King, Oaken Door", while *Seekers* gently takes issue, jovially and tolerantly, with those who would strip the Arthurian story of chivalrous and romantic accoutrements.

Of one of the American poets represented, Myma Jackson, the contributors' notes point out her "fascination with the retelling of ... Arthurian tradition ... Every age sees the story in new ways ... this process of reformulation", and these words apply in different ways to all the transatlantic contributions.

Myma Jackson's own poem here, *Lancelot Interrupts the Performance*, utilises the Audenesque (or Brechtian) technique of having a participant in the events turn aside to address us as audience, summarising the events in which "We are bread of your communion / with a world you dare not re-invent" while subtly denigrating both said audience for which he, Arthur and Guinevere will perform, "bought for the evening / to fill the hollows of the flesh you wear", and himself - "my bass dismythmics" - a Guinevere he portrays as almost vampiric in her demands for control, and an Arthur teetering between hypocrisy and self-deluding madness.

Karen Vincent, much more gently, portrays in *The Keeper* the Lady of the Lake Ophelia-like in liquid sleep, still calling by her presence to seekers even though they "will not be able to catch her / With a camera by day / Or a flashlight by night."

In *Tree Temple* Susan Landgraf centres the wise waiting wood of the Round Table at the heart of the story, an effective refocusing, though I felt the leap to Runnymede overstretches the implications of the story, and the reference to "the little folk" remains ambiguous - perhaps deliberately so? - as to whether the ordinary people left adrift in the aftermath, or the woodland little people are meant. In either case, the poem ends with haunting evocativeness - "shake out the cobwebs / while they talk. / They would never stoop // to beg / for company to come / into the unknown."

Melissa Johnson offers a triple dreaming. A short Oedipal dream by Arthur, five intense line culminating "I scream at their making, my undoing", is set between a long dream of Lancelot's in the wild, and Guinevere's in bed. The former is an intensely physical vision that brings encounters with Arthur's "blood / flecking my face, iron in my nostrils", Merlin whose "green lightning lifts / my blood from my skin" to join a fearsome mist. He reaches "Gwen", the writhing dragons past, but wakes from this release to the reality of his condition: "I lie in the snow, naked and numb, / blood become dirt." Guinevere's own dream, by contrast, casts herself as prisoner and tormented dragon.

Finally, the fascinating *Carmen Sine Nomine*, by Holly Webb, is the three-page exploration of Pellinore's thoughts as he waits to encounter the Questing Beast. The woods are painted as beautiful - "Lazy, dusty sunbeams / Make my yellow roof glow", "vertical dark stripes dance in the breeze" - yet can only remind him of the lost pleasures of tournaments, "golden times" now lost. His own name weaves concrete patterns at intervals through the poem - attempts to maintain self-identity, or the deceptive cries of his still-hidden monstrous opponent? Pellinore's shield has lost meaning - "dusky blank / Empty and vast" - and even the certainty of his objective is disintegrating, first into horrid pictures of defeat - "It swivels, spitting noxious, greasy grit // Spewing my gristle after it devours // Me" - then into existential doubt - "If there is no / Questing Beast... // Then what am I?"

Reformulation indeed - Pellinore as post-modern Childe Roland perhaps - and another reason for praising the overall strength of this anthology.

Steve Sneyd

◆ *Round Table publications are available from PO Box 18673, Rochester, New York NY 14618, USA, or from Excalibur Books [01247 458579] at the sterling prices quoted (but note that postage is extra).*

Mary Caine
Celtic Saints and the Glastonbury Zodiac
Capall Bann 1998 £9.95
ISBN 1 86163 0220 pbk 150pp

Mary Caine's work on the Glastonbury Zodiac will be familiar to our readers. A long-standing member of our Society, it was wonderful to see her again at the AGM in May and to walk and talk with her on Cadbury Hill. In this fascinating new book she makes a bold advance in her studies of the Ancient Temple of the Stars and links over 45 of the Celtic Saints to the Zodiacal figures, arguing that their legends provide clues to the lost teachings of the Celtic Church. In the often 'preposterous nonsense' found in the *Vitae* she sees 'tell tale traces of Druid beliefs, hints of Arthurian and Zodiacal connections and of a vast Cosmology more in tune with the stars and with Mother Earth than that of its successor and suppressor, the Church of St Augustine.'

Useful at one level as a summary of each Saint's story, the text is both thorough in its research and audacious in its conclusions. This is one of those books that ought to be true even if it isn't; it describes a symbol-system that might well have existed even if it didn't - and that's true mythmaking. William Blake would have got on well with Mary Caine, I'm sure.

Fred Stedman-Jones

Marion Davies
Sacred Celtic Animals
Capall Bann 1998 £11.95
ISBN 1 898307 75X pbk 252pp

Another well-researched book from the popular Capall Bann stable, it deals with the myths, legends and correspondences that link the Celts and the animal world. Over forty animals are included, together with linking thematic sections. It is bood to find a 'Celtic' book that uses true Celtic sources. Pleasing illustrations by member Simon Rouse.

Fred Stedman-Jones

Richard North
Heathen Gods in Old English Literature
Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 22
Cambridge University Press 1997 £45.00
ISBN 0 521 55183 hbk 374pp

What can one say about the pre-Christian gods of the English? What part do these gods play in the prehistory of the nation? What relationship was there between the old gods and the new god of the Christians? How did the English understand their new faith on the verge of their conversion? All these fascinating - some might say - crucial - questions are addressed in this new work of epic proportions.

Despite the title, which wrongly suggests a dry discussion of the handful of explicit literary references, the scope of the book is absoloutely vast. North sets out to rethink what we know - what we think we know - of Germanic paganism: he feels that the work of mythologists earlier this century has promoted Woden/Óðinn to the exclusion of all other contenders; that the Anglian fertility cult of Nerthus has been misunderstood due to Tacitus's confused and confusing reinterpretation of it in Roman terms; that Balder is actually a Gothic version of an Arian version of Christ; that the Norse traditions of Óðinn were actually fostered through their close association with West Saxon kings who looked back to Woden as a divine ancestor; that the position of Woden in heathen times was never as prominent as the church described it, but his rise to prominence in popular perception was actually *promoted* by the church as a foil to a much more pernicious and persistent cult which they had been unable to eradicate.

All this is relatively new ground, certainly way outside the mainstream of mythological investigation which has tended to build on the twin pillars of the work of Jan de Vries and Georges Dumézil; North rejects the latter's tripartite ideology as unhelpful in interpreting the religion of the English. It is unlikely that his arguments will escape critical examination by fellow academics who will probably point out several flaws in the logic - not least, that if Woen was a relatively minor figure in pre-Viking times, how is it that he alone of Germanic gods turns up in the traditions of the Lombards? Or that his myths seem to be represented on bracteates and other amulets?

North postulates an Anglian cult based on the information about *Nerthus* in Tacitus, but since this word is apparently a masculine form (**nerþuz*) he concludes that the Roman ethnographer was misled into equating the god with 'Mother Earth'. This is a neat solution to the long-standing problem of how *Nerthus*, a feminine divinity in the first century AD, transforms herself into the later Scandinavian tradition of (masculine) *Njorðr*. But of course a neat solution is not necessarily a correct one - it does not explain anything, but tries to avoid having to explain.

A rather better case is made for a cult of *Ingwe / Ingui* among the Angles, drawing on royal genealogies, the names *Ingaevones* and *Ingwine*, and various other clues; a link is then drawn between the Germanic form *Inguz*, the World Tree and the OE poem *The Dream of the Rood*. This latter line of thought was explored forty years ago by Brian Branston, yet North does not acknowledge Branston's research at all.

It will be interesting to see what the academic world makes of this book. On the one hand, it does break the mould to some extent and gets away from the constrainsts of 'received wisdom' in Germanic religious studies; on the other, it departs so far from the established notions of the subject that it will take several years to develop all the ideas presented here fully, and to explore the ramifications in other areas of research.

Not the least of the re-thinks will be in the nature of the conversion. North indicates what many of us believe: that Bede's narrative is a biased and artificial account of events, and it should be viewed with suspicion. The story of the conversion of Edwin of Northumbria - the king consults his Witan; 'man's life is like the flight of the sparrow through the king's hall'; heathen priest desecrates his own temple and accept Christ; Edwin is baptised before he has had time even to build a proper church - may actually hide the fact that Edwin was already a Christian! Bede's narrative makes him an earnest pagan, which is better than being a Celtic Christian, in

his Rome-centred book! North suggest that many English pagans couldn't tell the difference between the rich, multi-layered heathen religion they practised and the relaxed, tolerant form of Christianity that Augustine was advised to bring to them. In such a context, a poem like *The Dream of the Rood* might well be read as one which contains material and themes familiar to both heathens and Christians, and could possibly be a deliberate attempt to find some 'middle ground' where the two groups could find agreement.

In sum, this is a fascinating book which will cause no end of arguments among historians. Not everything in it can be accepted, even tentatively, on the present evidence, but there is simply so much in the book that a full and detailed critique will prove a huge undertaking. North has done the cause of Germanic mythology and religion a huge service in offering a fresh perspective on some tired material.

Steve Pollington

◆ *This review first appeared in* ***Widowinde*** *114 Summer 1998*

BookWorm

FICTION

The two Michael Moorcock novels mentioned in Steve Sneyd's article last issue ("Moorcock's Grail") are available in one volume entitled ***Von Bek*** (Millennium 1995 ISBN 1 85798 436 6, 1997 reprint £6.99). Included with *The Warhound and the World's Pain* and *The City in the Autumn Stars* is *The Pleasure Garden of Felipe Sagittarius*, a revised short story from 1965 featuring Minos von Bek, "metatemporal investigator"! All three form the first of fourteen volumes comprising *The Tale of The Eternal Champion*.

Ronan Coughlin draws attention to John Whitbourn's ***The Royal Changeling*** (Earthlight £5.99), "set at the time of Monmouth's rebellion against Charles II. Monmouth himself has elven blood and King Arthur, evil in this story, is trying to make a comeback to overthrow the Stuarts." Phil Rickman's ***The Chalice*** (Pan £5.99) is, on the other hand, a "ghost story set in modern Glastonbury, where the protagonists struggle against an evil anti-Grail."

In addition to the Round Table Publications titles mentioned in the reviews, the following Arthurian paperbacks are obtainable from the same sources: Cherith Baldry's short story ***Sir Kay's Quest*** (18pp £2.75), Norris Lacy's novella ***The Mordred Manuscript*** (24pp £2.75) and Wendy Mnookin's book of poetry ***Guenever Speaks*** (50pp £5.50). Barbra Tepa Lupack and Alan Lupack also edit ***A Round Table of Contemporary Arthurian Poetry*** (52pp £3.99) while Alan Lupack's own ***A Dream of Camelot*** (78pp £6.85) is available in a limited edition, signed by author and illustrator, from Green Chapel Press.

A review in Ottokar's *SF & Fantasy Newsletter* demonstrates a very neat example of "Arthurian intertextuality", writes Steve Sneyd. Jack McDevitt's ***Eternity Road*** (Voyager Press) apparently depicts a post-apocalypse far future in which occurs "the discovery of a book which, the archaeologists hope, will give a valuable insight into the workings of the 20th century mind and the habits and traditions of their ancestors. And the book in question? Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in the Court of King Arthur*!"

CHILDREN'S FICTION

Michael Morpugo's ***Arthur, High King of Britain***, originally published in 1994, is now available in a new hardback edition from Pavilion [ISBN 1 86205 230 1] at £9.99, with attractive illustrations by Michael Foreman.

In contrast, Margaret Simpson's ***Top Ten Arthurian Legends***, with cartoons by Michael Tickner, retails the medieval tales in a jokey modern style, making them available to a younger audience though with the expected loss of *gravitas*.

FACTUAL

Christopher A Syder's ***An Age of Tyrants: Britain and the Britons AD 400-600*** (Sutton Publishing) takes the view that the Britons were not a marginalised group waiting to be swept aside by Germanic newcomers (pbk £14.99). Fran and Geoff Doel and Terry Lloyd's ***Worlds of Arthur: King Arthur in History, Legend and Culture*** (Tempus hbk £15.99) looks at the evidence, such as it is, for the historical figure, and includes yet another gazetteer of British Arthurian sites.

Trumpeted as the latest, and one of the longest, long-distance footpaths in Britain (722 miles) the Celtic Way passes through South Wales, Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, and includes Arthurian sites such as the Preseli Mountains, Glastonbury, Caerleon and Cadbury. Sigma Leisure have published ***The Celtic Way: a long-distance walk through Western Britain***, a handbook to this route edited by Val Saunders Evans [ISBN 1 85058 618 7 £9.95]. **Sigma** also publish a range of walking, cycling and local heritage books: contact them at 1 South Oak Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 6AR or phone for a free catalogue from 01625 531035 or access http://www.sigmapress.co.uk or e-mail sigma.press@zetnet.co.uk

Capall Bann's 1998 catalogue features some recent titles of possible interest. Marion Davies' ***Sacred Celtic Animals*** is illustrated by member Simon Rouse [ISBN 1898307 75X £11.95], Alby Stone's ***Ymir's Flesh: North European Creation Mythologies*** [1872883 45 1 £12.95] explores themes touched on in past *Pendragon* articles, while John Billingsley's ***A Stony Gaze*** [1898307 717 £10.95] investigates the archaic carved heads of Britain and places them in a broader folk tradition of the severed head. Order from your local bookshop or contact Capall Bann Publishing, Freshfields, Chieveley, Berks RG20 8TF, tel 01635 247050.

Finally, though not strictly speaking part of the Matter of Britain, Christian Jacq's ***Magic and Mystery in Ancient Egypt*** [Souvenir Press ISBN 0285 634623 £9.99] raises issues of historical continuity which also affect Arthurian studies: can the ritual and beliefs of the ancient Egyptians have survived to the present day, accessible through the practice of a family of contemporary snake charmers?

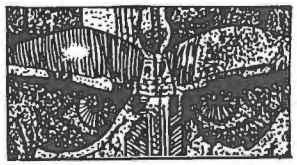
REMAINDERS

Many "as new" but remaindered titles are available in specialist bookshops and other outlets. Here are some of relevance to Arthurian studies (with approximate reduced prices).

Dent & Goodall's ***History of British Native Ponies***, originally *The Foals of Epona*, was republished in 1988 in hardback at £15.50 (now £7.50) and gives the background to debates about Arthur as a cavalry leader. Branigan & Dearne's ***Romano-British Cavemen*** (pbk 1992 £12.00, now about £7.50) looks at cave use in Roman times, including some caves with legendary Arthurian associations.

The late Stuart Pigott's ***Wagon, Chariot & Carriage*** (hbk £18.00, now £8.95) surveys symbol and status in prestige transport, and should illuminate discussion about Chrétien's Lancelot as Knight of the Cart. Finally, links between the Angevin Empire and the development of medieval Arthurian romance are studied in D D R Owen's readable ***Eleanor of Aquitaine: queen and legend***, especially in the section "Eleanor as Guenevere" (Blackwell 1993, hardback substantially reduced).

The Board



POETRY AND SONG

"Tales and poems of fantastic terror" is how *Penny Dreadful* describes itself, publishing literary horror in the traditions of Poe, M R James, Shelley and LeFanu in a 40 page A5 format. Payment is in copy for those submitting material, though the next year's issues are already filled; subscriptions are free for the asking but 9" x 6" SASE / IRCs would guarantee receipt. **Michael Pendragon** is the editor - write to him at 407 West 50th St #16, Hell's Kitchen, NY 10019 and read his poetry in this *Pendragon*.

Members were entertained by the singing of **Anne Lister** at Pendragon 98. Those in education may like to know that she is a professional storyteller, singer and songwriter who specialises in sessions with schools using in particular stories and songs about Arthur, the Celts, Saxons and Vikings. Her degree and postgrad studies focused on medieval French literature, and she has taught adults and pupils EFL, French and Music in the UK and abroad as well as releasing five albums of her music. Workshops start at £120.00. Contact her at 34 Nightingale House, Thomas More Street, London E1 9UA (tel/fax 0171-481-3619 or e-mail Anne_Lister@compuserve.com).

Heavy metal band **Blitzkrieg** have produced an album (item spotted by Kevin Byrne) with subjects including dragons, mystical places and King Arthur. *The Mists of Avalon* is available on the Neat Metal label.

SCREEN AND STAGE

Warner Bros' cartoon offering for the summer, ***The Magic Sword: Quest for Camelot***, must surely illustrate how commercial minds think. No doubt having done their homework they found that the keywords *magic*, *sword*, *quest* and *Camelot* all scored highly. But *Camelot* and *The Sword in the Stone* and *Excalibur* and so on had claimed them all before! What to do? Wizard idea! Use them all!

In the meantime, merchandising tie-ins flagged up its immanent arrival. For example **Tesco**'s own brand cereal packs featured cut-out stand-up figures including King Arthur and such other characters as stable boy Garrett, tomboy Kayley and a two-headed dragon called Devon and Cornwall. The animated musical (allegedly based on Vera Chapman's *The King's Damosel*) includes the voices of Gary Oldman, Eric Idle and Pierce Brosnan. *The New York Times* (in a crit sent from Mary Mayer via Beryl Mercer) reminds parents that this is only a cartoon in respect of violence, and there is *no* sex and *no* profanity. Review, anyone, before its transfer to video?

Whoopi Goldberg is taking the title role in a remake of ***A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur***. The Disney film also stars Ian Richardson as Merlin, Michael York (Arthur) and Amanda Donohoe (Guinevere).

Shooting took place at Alnwick Castle (the seat of the Duke of Northumberland) and at Bamburgh Castle, with interiors shot at studios in Budapest, according to cuttings from *The Journal*, Newcastle, of May 8th and 1st June 1998 provided by Kevin Byrne. According to reporter Christine Harle, Bamburgh is reputed to be the "real" Camelot. Persistent drizzle apparently "failed to dampen Whoopi's sense of humour".

The story was first filmed in 1931 with Will Rogers, Maureen O'Sullivan and Myrna Loy. The more famous 1949 musical version featured Bing Crosby, Rhoda Fleming, William Bendix, Cedric Hardwicke and Mervyn Vye. In the 70s the plot was updated for Disney's *The Spaceman and King Arthur*, also filmed at Alnwick. Whoopi, meanwhile, makes it back to the past courtesy of a lab experiment gone wrong.

Female theatre duo **Lip Service** have produced *Tales of King Arthur & the Knights of the Occasional Table*, a reworking of the legends which asks those quintessential questions - Was the Round Table the first ever self-assembly flatpack? And what were damsels distressed about? They played at The Customs House, South Shields on 28th October, and are rated by *The Independent* as worth cancelling engagements for (item from, yes, Kevin Byrne).

This is a good place to mention **Britannia** who bill themselves as "the Arthurian Re-Enactment Society" in *The Current Archaeology Directory of British Archaeology 1998/9*. Founded in 1990, they provide re-enactment and living history demonstrations for films, television and English Heritage, as well as researching the period, with a 1997 publication *Barbarian Warriors*. Contact them at 13 Ardleigh, Basildon, Essex SS16 5RA, tel 01268 544511.

Another early medieval re-enactment society is **Regia Anglorum**, founded in 1980; they can

be contacted at 9 Durleigh Close, Headley Park, Bristol BS13 7NQ or ring 0117-964 6818 [email 101364.45@compuserve.com or website http://www.ftech.net/~regia].

The promising-sounding **Dark Ages Society** is however actually concerned with role-playing "9th-century Saxon-Viking interaction". The contact address is 9 Mill Street, Isleham, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5RY [tel 01638 780965, http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/kpollock/das].

NAME GAMES

We are always on the lookout for ventures that display a kind of "Arthur-consciousness". For example, some may be unaware that **University of Wales College, Newport** (Coleg Prifysgol Cymru, Casnewydd) includes on its Caerleon campus nineteen halls of residence in alphabetical order from A to S. These include C for Camelot, K for King Arthur and Q for Queen Guinevere, as well as other resonant names such as Machen and Offa.

A new out-of-town shopping complex near Bristol, The Mall, is situated on **Merlin Road**. Its logo features a merlin, a small falcon, but the initial inspiration for the streetname comes from the fact that Merlin aircraft engines used to be manufactured at Filton, nearby. Of course, the wizard's name was probably changed from Myrddin because of the connotations of *merde* in Norman French. Merlin's link with the bird of prey was underlined by his spending time in an e*splumeor,* presumed to be a cage for moulting birds. Other examples, please?

FEATURED JOURNALS

The English Companions were formed in 1966 in the wake of 1066-and-all-that fever, aiming to promote a wider interest, knowledge of and affection for Old English language, culture and traditions. The quarterly A4 journal of *Þa Engliscan Gesiðas* is ***Wiðowinde*** ("Bindweed"), edited by Pendragon member **Steve Pollington**. Its stated purpose is to stimulate debate by encouraging the expression of a wide assortment of views (rather as *Pendragon* aims to do) to produce a genuinely lively, informative, entertaining and, I should say, professional-looking journal.

Wiðowinde is available only to members of the society although single sample issues are available for sale. Steve writes: *Membership costs £10 a year to UK and Europe residents, and £15 elsewhere. There is a one-off joining fee of £5 / £7 respectively which covers some of the cost of sending the handboc (a manual including the rules of the society, extracts from past issues of the mag, pointers to research and so on).*

The current number of *Wiðowinde* includes Ken Parker's "The Significance of the Battle of Mount Badon" and comments on the Tintagel slate (see *Old News Special*). Interested readers should contact The Membership Secretary, Þa Engliscan Gesiðas, BM Box 4336, London WC1N 3XX, enclosing an SAE or 2 IRCs, or you could e-mail gesithas@heorot.demon.co.uk or try http://www.kami.demon.co.uk/gesithas

The Celtic Chronicles proclaims itself as The Journal of Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland & Wales (strictly alphabetical, see!) edited by Kevin O'Callaghan. Mentioned before in connection with a Steve Sneyd article, issue 31 (March/April 98) features one of *Gallagher's "Fractured Forest Fables"*. This is entitled *What is the Thing that Women Most Desire?* and is billed as "a blatantly ambivalent bastardization of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale*" (itself without Arthurian references). A year's subscription outside North America is $17 (sample issue $3) from 5100 NW 137th Avenue, Portland OR, 97229 - worth a look for its witty and sometimes trenchant transatlantic view of both ancient and contemporary Celtic culture.

Finally, an article from ***Wood & Water*** (No 63 Summer 1998) has been kindly supplied by Ade Dimmick. Entitled *The Matter of Britain*, this is a review by Daniel Cohen of a talk by Dr Juliette Wood, President of the Folklore Society, at the AGM of the Society for Storytelling. (Pendragons may remember Dr Wood from the Cardiff event a couple or so years ago.) Her talk dealt with "Arthur from British War Lord to New Age Celt", though apparently time ran out when the Victorians were reached. Cohen's comments are very apt, and deserve a wider audience.

MERLIN'S MART

Collectibles produced by **Franklin Mint** have been mentioned in these pages before: an Art Deco statuette of *Guinevere* last issue, and Donato's *King Arthur Collector Penknife* previously. From the pages of their recent catalogue Ade Dimmick highlights a number of other items: ***The Camelot Goblet Collection*** (six pewter items with individual Arthurian scenes, £390) and ***The Legends of Camelot Bowl*** (£195), both by David Cornell, and a ***Sword of Kings Watch*** "for the man who rules his own destiny" which features a sword-in-the-stone image (£195). The following are sponsored by the International Arthurian Society: ***The Sword in the Stone Diamond Ring*** (£145); ***The Sword in the Stone Sundial*** (limited edition of 5000, set to the latitude of

Glastonbury, £145); ***King Arthur's Dagger***, "the official re-creation of the dagger of the legendary Arthur ... with the fabled 'Sphere of Light' hand-set into the pommel" (£395); ***Merlin's Crystal Ball*** (£195, "authenticated by the International Arthurian Society") as well as ***Merlin's Crystal Hourglass*** (£295); and finally ***Romance at Camelot***, a three by four foot tapestry by Marc Waymel. All these items are obtainable from Franklin Mint, 1 South Quay Plaza, London E14 9WS. Ade Dimmick says that "a quick calculation tells me this little batch alone calls for around £3000!"

Available from **Raven's** catalogue (and spotted by the ubiquitous Steve Sneyd) is the ***Avalon Cross Pendant*** "reputed to have been found on King Arthur's grave". The pewter pendant, made by St Justin's of Cornwall, is 57mm long and costs £7.95 from Raven, 17 Melton Fields, Brickyard Lane, North Ferriby, East Yorks HU14 3HE, or phone 01482 631496. Add £1.00 for postage and quote catalogue ref no JXP01.

Ellis Brigham are outdoor sports retailers, partly specialising in climbing equipment. Their 1998 *Rock Hardware Guide* features the ***DMM Excalibur alloy ice screw***: this has five stainless steel teeth "for rapid placement plus self centering hangers with unique bracketing system". Lightweight and extremely strong they cost £48.99 each, but presumably you don't have to be an Arthur to retrieve them from the ice wall.

Finally, adverts in *The New York Times* (sent in by Mary Mayer via Beryl Mercer) tell us that *Arthur summoned mystical powers to unlock the magic of Excalibur. You can do it with a phone call.* "You're just a call away from a land of magic and enchantment, knights and ladies, dragons and wizards. A land of 4000 rooms, six restaurants, a casino, even a medieval jousting tournament." This magic land is the **Excalibur Hotel/Casino** at Las Vegas. Room rates start at $59 - call 1-800-937-7777 to *let your adventure begin.*

BIBLIOPHILIA

Somehow information on the **Library of Avalon**, principal venue for Pendragon 98, got squeezed out of the last issue. Established in 1988 as a sort of successor to Glastonbury Abbey's great library, its modern counterpart now has over 8000 donated books. As well as esoteric subjects and a large fiction section of novels which "fit with the spirit of the Library" there is a very large collection of titles on Arthurian and related subjects. The Library offers a free reading room and reference facilities, and membership (£20 pa, £15 unwaged) brings lending and other benefits. Write (enclosing SAE or 2 IRCs) to The Library of Avalon, 2-4 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9DU or phone 01458 832759.

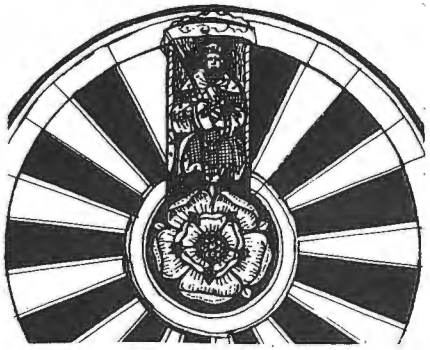
ARTHURIAN ART

A major exhibition continues at **Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery** until the 17th January 1999, Paul Smith informs us. This is to celebrate the life and work of Birmingham-born artist **Sir Edward Burne-Jones**, who died a hundred years ago, and takes place in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and with the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Burne-Jones was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and became a prolific painter of romantic subjects from Arthurian legend and classical antiquity as well as designing tapestries and stained glass. The largest Burne-Jones exhibition in England for over a generation includes paintings, watercolours, drawings and decorative art among the 170 works on show. The gallery is open until 5pm every day (phone 0121 303 1966 for exact times) with admission at £5.00 (or less with the usual concessions and group discounts).

*"**Pendragon** [is] a very impressive journal with something for everyone interested in the Dark Ages"*
Steve Pollington, editor **Wiðowinde**

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 *Cheques* Oxford Arthurian Society *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*

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