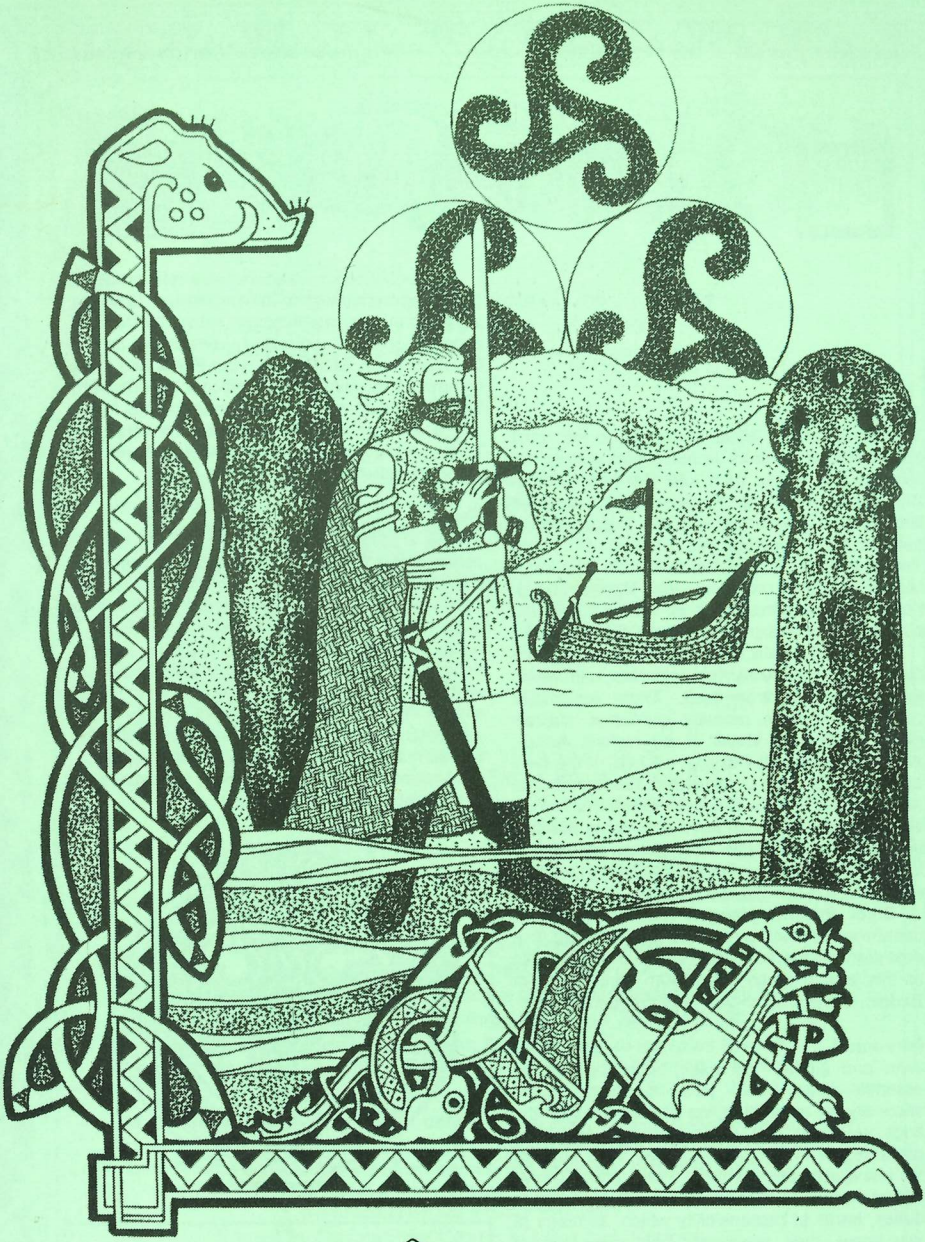

pendragon

editorial

Vol XXVIII No 3 Spring 2000

Themes

The cover for this issue, according to the artist Simon Rouse, "depicts Arthur stepping from the mists of his pagan past into the new faith of Christianity. His boat Prydwen symbolises his links to the Otherworld and the stylised boar's head could represent his chasing of Twrch Trwyth and his 'Boar of Cornwall' title. The three triskell designs represent the Welsh Triads, rising over the mountains of Wales." And the bird and beast design? Well, that balances it all.

The whole neatly illustrates the theme of the **Origins of the Arthurian legends** with which this edition concerns itself. There are major contributions from recently published authors giving alternative views of an historic Arthur, articles looking at the mythic aspects of the hero and a note on John Gloag (1896-1981), author of *Artorius Rex* (1977). Snippets of information on other matters Arthurian have also come flooding in over the last couple of months, and so the usual features of *The Board*, *BookWorm* and the reviews are bulging at the seams.

Other material planned for this issue has therefore been held over - but not forgotten! The next planned theme is **the Future of Arthur**, but as this year may be the 1500th anniversary of **Badon**, something on that may creep in too.

Personnel

John and Linda Ford have been running the essential boiler room jobs of treasurer and secretary for more than two years now, with the huge workload that all that entails. With the pressures of work, however, they have decided to relinquish both posts; Fred and Marilyn Stedman-Jones have now shouldered those duties, areas of responsibility which, as many of you know, they previously held. The current committee thanks the Fords for so ably stepping into those posts at a time of crisis for the Society, and for keeping the show well on the road. May they enjoy their well-earned retirement!

The boiler room activities have now returned (rather appropriately) to Smithy House, to which all general correspondence, subscriptions and enquiries should be directed - details are on the Contents page. Meanwhile, your Editor has been committed to gaining an additional qualification, and as a result some correspondence has fallen into a kind of limbo. I apologise for this, and hope that a more acceptable level of communication will soon resume.

Envoi

Finally, a programme in BBC2's *We Are History* series entitled "King Arthur - Myth or Legend?" may have caught your eye recently [Tuesday 4th April]. David Oxley's digging team unearth a body - will this put paid to all those theories? Sadly, as the title suggested, this was a weak documentary spoof by Marcus Brigstocke, in which a would-be Time Team, amateur in all senses of the word, dig a naughty hole by some archaeological investigations near Heathrow. We can all rest easy now - the King is not dead yet.

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

The Pendragon Society investigates Arthurian history and archaeology, legend, myth and folklore, literature and the arts

PENDRAGON

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Theme this issue **Origins of the Arthurian legends**

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PEN-DRAGON

A DEBATING ISSUE

First, congratulations on the last few issues. I very much regret missing the last two Pendragon get-togethers ... Perhaps things will be better next year.

It has taken the coincidence of *Wiðowinde* and *Pendragon* to get me writing to the magazine. If you see the current *Wiðowinde*, which is one of the exchange magazines, you will see my article in it, which was comparing the trend in historical novel publication of Arthurian and Anglo-Saxon stories. I make the point that the Anglo-Saxons are being squeezed at both ends of their period by the Arthurian / Celtic publishing boom at one end and the rehabilitated cuddly Vikings at the other.

Having grown up on Arthurian literature, it was quite normal to see the Anglo-Saxons as baddies, but having joined The English Companions, my view of the period has become rather more balanced. These are a group of people, who are as passionately dedicated to their period as we are to ours. With a foot in both camps I have now reached the stage of becoming a little uneasy about the cultural supremacy of Arthurian popular literature and media at present. I think it would be great for children to know about King Arthur and King Alfred equally, but I feel Alfred is definitely losing out. This has major consequences for our sense of our English origins.

I speak as someone who can still remember the thrill of the first Geoffrey Ashe book on the Matter of Britian and has bookcases full of history and fiction on the subject. I am starting to worry however about whether the flood of publications on this subject - most of which add very little secure knowledge of the period - is not now doing more harm than good in terms of informing the public about the Dark Age period.

It might be interesting to do a vox pop of the membership on this and ask a few questions:

- Has reading history and fiction on the Arthurian period affected the way that members feel about the Anglo-Saxons - are they genuinely interested in the post-Arthurian period and visit sites and read books about it? The Arthurian stories usually end in a wasteland with the feeling that the barbarians are taking over and nothing will ever be as good again. But it did improve and the Saxons defended the country bravely in their turn - does this really come over in any medium?
- How does interest in the post-Roman period of history contribute to people's feeling of national identity - would people prefer to be Arthur's Romano-Brits rather than of Anglo-Saxon origin which most of the non-Celts are likely to be?

I notice from the latest issue that you mention the similarities between Arthur and Alfred. These are true but there are also some howling differences, such as one being at least an historically attested character with major far-reaching achievements to his name, while the other is this elusive, mystical presence with excellent PR! I think it is dangerous to ratchet up the allure of the Arthurian period so much that poor old Alfred looks mundane and boring in comparison. Like global warming, I fear it may already be too late but perhaps we could at least debate the issue.

The Dark Ages tv programme is a good illustration of the points I am making! Hoping this will not lead to me being struck off...!

◆ *The Anglo-Saxons as villains (not just villeins!) of the piece, and the concept of national identity - two powder kegs just waiting to go off? Celts good, Saxons bad? Or vice versa? Would members care to respond?* (*See too* The Board.)

LAKE PEOPLE

◆ *In last issue's* **PenDragon** *Andrew H W Smith queried Anne Lister's identification of "the fairy of Gibel" in* Jaufré *as hailing from Gibraltar, and favoured Mount Etna, an alternative name of which was Mount Gibel (various spellings - another Mongibello features in the recent film* The Talented Mr Ripley*).*

My location of *Gibel* as Gibraltar was based on the text and on the studies of Brunel. The sub-aqua fay in *Jaufre* takes him by underground passages to the castle of Gibaldar, and later introduces herself as the *fada de Gibel* and lady of this castle. Brunel considered both names to be Arabic, situated in Arabic-speaking Spain and therefore known to the author(s) of *Jaufre* through other tales (*Djebel* = mountain, Gibraltar = *Djebel al Tarik*). Which would locate it in Gibraltar. Rita Lejeune links Gibel with Etna, without explaining "Gibaldur", and this "watery tart" with Morgan, but it has to be said she is not called Morgan here.

In the context of the story, of course, this Gibaldar/Gibraltar/Gibel is said to be in Brittany, as is Arthur's main city of Cardueil (generally supposed to be Carlisle) and both are within riding distance of the forest of Broceliande. No mention whatsoever of Italy, Sicily or volcanoes. Geography was clearly not to be taken too literally, and I suspect that authors in medieval times borrowed names and associated legends from all manner of sources (as does Terry Pratchett, among others, today).

What this lady has in common with other Breton, Irish, and Welsh tales (and Arabic - you may well be able to add to this list) is that she lives under water, where she has an extensive realm, and will kidnap by force if necessary to find a champion. She gives magical gifts as her reward for services rendered. She may or may not be a version of Morgan.

But I have to admit surprise that no one has raised objections to the article on Lancelot [Edward Ford's *The Birth of a Literary Character* in the 40th anniversary edition]. Chrétien de Troyes was a very clear and specific writer (leaving *Perceval* out of this particular context, because we will never know his full intentions for this tale), with careful choices of words - my analogy with Jane Austen is one I will stick with - and if he takes time out of the narrative to explain that the *charrette* was the cart in which condemned criminals were carried then I think it's an extraordinary and indefensible leap to see it as a hearse. It was a shameful thing to ride in it, so Lancelot's decision to do so was proof of his love and devotion to the queen.

With my academic hat on it seems to me that, as the author is long gone from this mortal coil, we really have to look at the evidence in the text rather than anything else, and the text is absolutely clear and not in the slightest way ambiguous. Whatever the source of Lancelot's name might, or might not be. With my entertainer's hat on I can only add that the various levels of interpretation that were suggested in the article are so far hidden (if, indeed, they are there at all) that a listening audience would be highly unlikely to perceive them.

Anne Lister, London

THOSE OLD CLASSICS

I have to say that I found a lot of the material in the Summer issue [28/1] rather heavy going, though I enjoyed the articles detailing the information and subsequent 'history' of the Pendragon Society, by Jess Foster, yourself, and Fred. Again, I marvel ruefully at the fact that I lived in Bristol from 1965-70, but I didn't get to hear about the Society until after we moved to Cornwall!

You will probably have gathered (from my remarks in the review of C4's *Merlin* in the Summer issue) that I haven't much patience with the mediaeval mess-ups of the original legends; I would therefore have much preferred to read Edward Ford on Bedwyr rather than Lancelot - an entirely fictional character, invented (according to Mr Ford) by Chrétien de Troyes - and, in my view, a highly unsympathetic character, also!

As for Gawain [John Matthews' *Reappraising Gawain*]: in Mary Stewart's *The Wicked Day* (the story of Mordred), he is the eldest of Morgause's four sons by Lot of Lothian, and I have never been able to come to terms with Mrs Stewart's reasoning in allowing Arthur to take all four, as well as Mordred, into his household - even if they were his nephews. Apparently Merlin said that they would grow up to join Arthur's fighting companions - yet he (Merlin), with his gift of foresight must have known that they would eventually encompass Arthur's - and Guinevere's - downfall. Just one instance of what Prof Markale called "the silliness of mediaeval literature"!

I have never read, or attempted to read, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and, after struggling through Prof Russell's exposition, I'm quite sure I never shall! I have just come to the regretful conclusion that I must be a literary philistine: the so-called literary classics - Dickens, Thackeray, Bronte, Austen, Gaskell *et al* hold no appeal for me at all. I never watch these much-vaunted costume dramas on TV - I did watch the first instalment of *Pride and Prejudice*, just to see what all the fuss was about, and was bored stiff!

And I can only take Shakespeare in films and videos - which reminds me that my VIth form teacher of English literature once said that he abhorred the necessity of requiring pupils to read Shakespeare in class - "Shakespeare can only be properly appreciated when acted on a live stage." (Incidentally, why didn't Shakespeare ever write a play about Arthur? Or did he, and I've missed it?)

No, keep your boring old classics: give me Sir Arthur Clarke, Mary Stewart, and Terry Pratchett every time! (I hope that doesn't make me a candidate for expulsion from the Society ...)

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

◆ *If it ever comes to expulsion on the criterion you have outlined, I'm afraid that you'll have to join the queue! My own excuse for lack of familiarity with many classics is time, and the need to be selective. I have to say though that, first, I am glad that we are in the position to choose which genres and authors we read; and that I wonder whether Arthur C Clarke has more than a passing acquaintance with Dante ...*

Rosalind Myles was on Radio 2 again, on February 24 on Richard Allinson's late evening programme, talking about her new book, second of the Guinevere sequence, *The Knight of the Sacred Lake* (Simon & Schuster). She still seems to believe she's the first to ever write from Guinevere's point of view. Apparently she has a degree in Old English (as well as being a racing driver!), and had been to Glastonbury to lie on the Tor with her arms out to "get the vibration" (said even in winter "the air ... does smell like apple blossom"!).

One idea she came up with, no idea where she sourced it as it wasn't pursued by the interviewer, was that Guinevere was a queen in her own right, and the Round Table her property, which Arthur married her to obtain.

Steve Sneyd, Almondbury, W Yorks

A VERY GRAIL AREA

Recently a number of articles have discussed relics of the Grail [including Tristan Gray Hulse's last issue] and I think it is worth looking back at what Chrétien actually described. It was golden, it had jewels and precious stones and it was big enough to hold a pike, lamprey or salmon. This hardly sounds like a chalice and does not compare with any of the relics associated with the Grail. Equally, it isn't a cauldron, since this was normally used for cooking a meal, but the earliest version of the Grail seems to be only for serving something - in this case a host. The Holy Eucharist of the Catholic Church had gained popularity at this time but I do not think that there is any particular ritual taking place in the procession Perceval saw at the Grail Castle.

There is certainly more than meets the eye in this original story but I doubt there is any secret behind it. What I would suggest is that much of what Chrétien writes about could be easily understood by the audience of his day. We, living eight hundred years later, just cannot relate fully to what Chrétien had to say. So we theorize and try to find explanations making connections with Templars or Cathars or going further back and looking for Celtic or Pagan origins.

It is likely that the grail story has nothing to do with Arthur and that Chrétien was merely using a particular genre, which was very popular at the time, to tell a tale. By searching for Arthurian origins, Christian chalices or Celtic cauldrons we may well be missing the point of Chrétien's story. I hope to go into more detail soon ...

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

◆ *That Chrétien's grail was a platter for serving fish is one of the more likely scholarly explanations. There may be a subtext about Christ-like suffering figures and the early Christian symbol of the fish (as my poem* Questions *last issue hinted). In any case, some of Chrétien's contemporaries were baffled by the concept of a 'graal', and indeed it was Wolfram who confused the whole issue with notions of stones and Lucifer's crown and who introduced the association with Templar-like guardians. Anyway, I certainly look forward to receiving an article elucidating the point of Chrétien's story!*

ALL SAINTS

Do you think any of your members or contributors could let me have any information, or [suggest] where I may get any information, about the Life of St Cadoc?

I lived in Caerleon, Gwent for 35 years and was married there in St Cadoc's Church. I also worked for 25 years in St Cadoc's Psychiatric Hospital and became interested in St Cadoc but up till now have only been able to acquire isolated facts.

In *Pendragon* (Spring 1999) there is some information together with that of other saints in connection with King Arthur. Is it possible that there may be a more detailed history especially that of his early life? I would be grateful to receive any other information.

◆ *The classic scholarly study is by Canon Gilbert Doble earlier this century: his essay on Cadoc is included in a 167-page paperback with Petroc and Carantoc, republished by Llanerch at £7.95 as* ***The Saints of Cornwall, Vol 4****. You can get this directly from Llanerch Press (tel/fax 01570 470567, www.llanerch-publishers.co.uk) or order it through a bookshop.*

Beryl Mercer was asking about the Cornish St Veep in the last *Pendragon* [28/1 6]. What little is known (and it is very little) can be found in Nicholas Orme's *English Church Dedications with a Survey of Devon and Cornwall*. According to Orme, the church of St Veep had been dedicated to a saint named *Vepe* since at least *c* 1236. However, there is no evidence of a strong cult; the name is recorded in both male and female forms in the later mediaeval period, suggesting that locals were not sure even whether St Veep was a man or a woman.

The church is now dedicated to St Cyricus and Julitta, whose cult had been introduced into the church in the 14th century, and came to supplant that of the unknown St Veep.

Incidentally, the book by Orme I mentioned above is an excellent one, and well worth bringing to the attention of *Pendragon* readers, since it includes a great deal about the Celtic saints of Devon and Cornwall.

Nick Grant, Reading, Berks

◆ *Nick's review of* English Church Dedications *appears in this issue.*

A H W Smith's piece on St Meriadoc [last issue]: I was surprised to find no mention of the church of St Meriasek in Camborne. *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints* is quite informative on 'Meriadoc, or Meriasek, bishop. 6th cent. (?)': 'F[east] D[ay] 7 June. There is a church in Cornwall, at Camborne, dedicated in honour of this saint, who is venerated in Brittany as a bishop at Vannes. Nothing is known of his history (he may have come from Wales), but he is of interest as being the hero of a medieval play in the vernacular about a saint, the only example of such a thing surviving in Great Britain. It is called *Bewnans Meryasek* [= *Life of* ...], and was composed, or transcribed, in the Cornish language by a local priest in 1504. Unfortunately the play, with its local allusions, has no value as sober history, but the early church dedication suggests an actual connexion between Camborne and the St Meriadoc of Brittany.' Ubiquitous little chap, wasn't he??

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

◆ *A H W Smith's article was a rejoinder to Tristan Gray Hulse's piece in 27/4 ('Celtic Saints'), where the Cornish saint and the Camborne play were discussed.*

PEN(DRAGON)PALS

I have been wondering whether it would be possible if an extra section could be added to the magazine - a Penpal Corner. I should imagine that *Pendragon* is sent to the four corners of our island and, no doubt, abroad. It would be really nice to be able to be in touch with other Arthurian enthusiasts.

Or maybe a section entitled Swap Shop for members to 'swap' literature, books, tapes/CDs, Celtic lore *etc*, posters, pictures, back copies of *Pendragon*. A fixed charge could be made for each advert inserted in either Penpals/Swap Shop - all monies could be designated for a worthwhile cause - anything that could be helped at, for example, Glastonbury?

Caroline Plant, Balham, London

◆ *If you wish to swap items or correspond with other members on specific aspects of Arthuriana, do send your details to the Editor for inclusion in future issues. We do charge for business inserts but subscribing members may advertise free.*

VISIONS

Thanks to Ian Brown for his kind words about the 40th anniversary cover. I may well ask Ian where *he* starts with his artwork, it seems just as complicated as some of the Celtic stuff I produce! Our styles are very different but each compliments *Pendragon*'s contents in its own way. I like Ian's work very much and I look forward to seeing it develop and expand in the future.

Simon Rouse, Montgomery, Powys

What an excellent idea: the interlacing of comments in *PenDragon* [last issue}: it's turned a few pages of correspondence into a lively conversation.

There was a very interesting mixture of contributions in this edition, both scholarly and imaginative. Geoff Roberts' version of Arthur's origins ("Chariot of the Stars") is certainly interesting and, as a part of a novel, does intrigue me as to how the story might unfold, both back to the beginning and forward to the end. The baby sailing in his little ark has echoes reaching right through Osiris, Moses, Taliesin, Tristan and Mordred: as an event embedded so firmly in myth and legend, it adds an aura of ancient magic to the atmosphere.

Speaking of magical atmosphere, Pamela Harvey's "Walking with Merlin" is so fantastically dreamy that it lingers afterwards in the mind. Actually, these two pieces compliment each other well, appraoching the legends from different angles as they do. And on the subject of writing, "Beginnings" was a great help to anyone

wishing to understand more of how literature works...

Ian Brown, Ormesby, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

◆ *This is a good place to point out that I should have mentioned then that Geoff Roberts' piece was set in the fifth century BCE, and not AD/CE, as he hypothesises that the Arthurian legends originated a thousand years before the post-Roman period.*

Your piece on the opening sentences of books in the last *Pendragon* reminded me of what is probably the most unexpected opening sentence for a non-fiction book dealing with Arthur:

'Monsieur, your dog has stolen my knickers!'
(Ronald Millar *Will the Real King Arthur Please Stand Up?*)

My own candidate for the most effective opening for an Arthurian novel is the following:

The telephone bell was ringing wildly, but without result, since there was no one in the room but the corpse.
(Charles Williams *War in Heaven*)

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

◆ *Any more favourite beginnings of Arthurian books, fiction or otherwise?*

FINGERS CROSSED

My latest effort at getting my own book published is my entry into a Westcountry competition called 'So you want to write a novel' - sponsored by the *Western Morning News* and Carlton TV. Fingers crossed for *Merlin's Quest*, everybody, please!

I was interested by the remarks of Alan Gunter, MD of Legend Court: "We now know that he [Arthur] was certainly Welsh and had a close relationship with Caerleon" [*The Board* page 43 last issue]. He must have been reading the MS of my book ...

Your own "Beginnings" [last issue] - I do so agree that the opening sentence of a story is all-important. The most memorable opening line I have ever read was: "Instantly, he remembered dying." Unfortunately, the name of the story, its author, and the magazine/anthology/whatever in which it appeared, have proved infinitely less memorable! I do recall that it concerned the 'reconstitution' of the composer Richard Strauss by some scientists...

However, as well as opening sentences, I think titles are also important. I originally entitled my book as *Britain Hath Need of Thee* - paraphrasing Wordsworth on Milton - but it was pointed out to me that many potential readers, especially the younger ones at whom the book is primarily aimed, would not take the allusion. Then it occurred to me that the story is more concerned with Merlin than with Arthur - and so it became *Merlin's Quest* ...

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

◆ *Good luck with* Merlin's Quest*! Hmm, I wonder what the opening line of your first chapter is ...*

ANACHRONISMS

"Beginnings" was very interesting but I was a little surprised that it wasn't pointed out that the dating system used by Henry Treece in his books was inappropriate and historically inaccurate. The Anno Domini system was not in use during this time and only became popular in Britain at a later date.

As far as I am aware the Roman dating system (calculated from the time of the founding of Rome) continued to be used until the late sixth or early seventh centuries and possibly even later. The new system may have been brought into Britain by St Augustine but didn't catch on, in official circles, until it was popularised by Bede.

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

◆ *It was a monk from Syria, Dionysius Exiguus, who in the early 7th century started dating events from the supposed time of Christ's Incarnation rather than from the accession of the Emperor Diocletian in 284.*

It wasn't my intention to discuss anachronisms in an article about opening sentences in Arthurian fiction; I suspect Treece however didn't want to clutter up his text with notes and so went for the modern convention.

CASTLE IDENTIFIED?

At the end of February got to the Great Stone of Fourstones, one of three places of that name (others being on Whernside, and near Hexham). Phillips notes in *Brigantia* when mentioning Balan's comment, on refinding his brother Balin in the *Morte*, "A man told me in the castle of Four Stones that ye were delivered."

It's very easy to find - a brisk two mile uphill walk on the Cross-O-Greet road south of Bentham station on the Leeds-Morecambe rail line. An isolated glacial erratic, with crude steps carved up it, about an eighth of a mile off the road onto the moor via a track. Not as big as I expected, but impressively strange because of its isolation, and wonderful views across to the Three Peaks.

If it was the one of the story, the "castle" must have been an underground castle of the dead, the stone being the portal; the view across to Ingleborough, with its "castle" or more precisely stone Celtic fort summit, suggested by Phillips as Klingschor's, might have helped assocaite it with the stories, in a "sacred landscape" way.

Steve Sneyd, Almondbury, W Yorks

ARTHUR IDENTIFIED?

I bought a book in Chester called *Flame Bearers of Welsh History* by Owen Rhoscomyl. The book is full of handwritten pencil notes, carefully printed. I enquired as to who the previous owner had been. It seems the shop brought a collection of Welsh history books owned by someone called Pritchard of Deganwy, who is known as The Prof. He makes the statement on page 41 as follows:

The figure he now refers to {Arthur] *is known to history beyond any shadow of a doubt as Athalaric, the last of the Gothic Emperors of the West. He is also known historically as the figure Fflamdwyn from which comes the title of this book.*

Incidentally, I have read the article entitled "Old Fireproof" by Charles Evans-Günther. I am also aware of the reference in *The Age of Arthur* by John Morris (page 235) "If Flamddwyn was Aethelric..." and to the question being aired in *Warriors of Arthur* by John Matthews and Bob Stewart (page 59) as to the possibility of the Visigothic connection. I have also looked up other material. Can you point me to an article or book which covers this idea in detail?

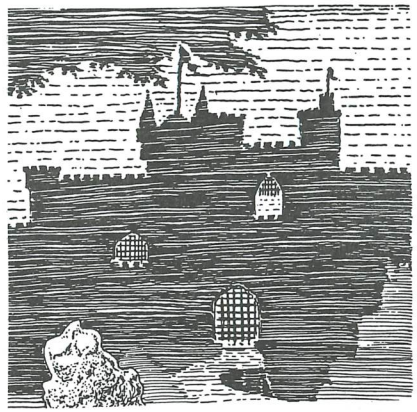
Paul S Parry, Prestatyn, N Wales

♦ *Any answers?*

Incidentally, we welcome letters on matters Arthurian or in reply to other correspondents. If, however, letters to the editor or chair are not for publication do please say at the time of writing.

A few late items find their place here out of sequence:

- *A new inquiry and ordering service for books about Wales on the Web is now available. Entitled* **gwales.com** *the database holds information, in both Welsh and English, on over 14,000 Welsh and Welsh-interest books, with a further 1,000 titles added annually. Sponsored by the National Assembly for Wales, Llwybr Pathway and Ceredigion County Council, the site allows you to compile a shopping list of books and to send an order to a bookseller of your choice. Visit* http://www.gwales.com
- *A couple of correspondents have drawn our attention to* **Lady Pendragon**, *a recent addition to the genre of Arthurian-inspired comics. The series has already been featured in* **Ceridwen's Cauldron**, *and a review will appear in our next issue.*
- *A day of mazes and labyrinths in Saffron Walden, Essex, will consist of lectures, slide shows, displays and demonstrations, as well as opportunities to purchase publications and other products. Provisional speakers include maze designer Adrian Fisher, the President of the USA Labyrinth Society, Helen Curry, writer John Kraft and editor of exchange magazine* Caerdroia *Jeff Saward. Saffron Walden of course has its own ancient turf labyrinth.* **Labyrinth 2000** *takes place on July 15th, and details may be had from 53 Thundersley Grove, Thundersley, Essex SS7 3EB [tel/fax 01268 751915] or by email from* Caerdroia@dial.pipex.com



A bolt from the blue

Phillip Clapham

The symbol of King Arthur was a *sword* that was fixed in stone. Releasing the sword gave royal status. This could be understood to mean Arthur was not crowned - he was *not* a *king* but a *god*. The connection with a stone is also interesting - as mythical and magical swords were invariably fashioned on a heavenly anvil by smith-gods (such as Wayland). Stony meteorites can also fall out of the sky.

The sword god is a common theme of folklore. It occurs on Hittite rock carvings at Yazlikaya, near ancient Hattusas. The Egyptian pharaoh Merenptah dreamt of the god Ptah appearing before him in a dream in the form of a huge scimitar - standing in the sky. The Hebrew god Yahweh appeared before King David in the shape of a sword - pointing downwards towards Jerusalem. These apparitions were almost certainly comets. In the English epic *Beowulf* the hero fights a great dragon with an *iron* sword. He is mortally wounded but not until he has vanquished the dragon. It had been casting fire upon the earth and burning human habitations, and generally belching hot meteoric material, possibly the residue of the passage of a comet.

Arthur was also associated with a sword retrieved from a lake. We may note a large body of water, in moonlight, is like a mirror - reflecting bright objects in the sky. A comet might fall into this category.

Excalibur

The sword was called *Excalibur* in Romance literature. It was known as *caliburnus* to Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Latinised version of the Welsh *caledvwlch* that in Irish is thought to have been *caled-bolg*. According to T F O'Rahilly (1971) *bolg* had the meaning of 'lightning bolt'. Indeed, it could be argued that the English word 'bolt' is derived from the same Indo-European root. According to O'Rahilly *bolg* is found more often in its shortened form, *bel* - as in *Bel-tane*, the Celtic fire festival.

At this juncture, we may note a fiery association not only with Bel but also with the thunderbolts of the gods - despatched out of the sky. These could actually be regarded as meteoric material of some kind, burning out as they raced through the atmosphere - or exploding and showering fire onto the earth below. Many gods of the ancients had the ability to cast thunderbolts, Zeus for example, and Lugh who shot a fiery dart into the eye of the Fomhoire ogre *Balor*. Bulga is the name of the spear of Cuchulainn and *bolg*, according to O'Rahilly, is derived from an IE root *bheleg*, "to shine or flash". This is a description that fits lightning, an electric phenomenon, and shooting stars, or meteorites. Cuchulainn also possessed a sword that shone at night like a torch - a distinct cometary parallel. *Calad-bolg* was also the weapon of Fergus. In a battle rage he used the sword to smite three hills in Ireland. At the point of impact the sword is described 'as big as a rainbow in the heavens'.

The meaning of *caled* is unclear. It is said to mean something like 'hard', 'steely' or even 'strong'. Others suggest it has the meaning 'to crush' or 'destroy' - which is roughly the meaning of the word *Apollo* as applied to the god of that name. It seems to also mean something like 'to make a tumultuous noise' as in a great blast from an exploding bolide. The 1908 Tunguska incident is often cited as a recent example of what is meant. This seems preferable to the conspiracy theory that a UFO was involved, presumably an alien spaceship that broke up in the atmosphere. (Tunguska is currently being investigated by a team of western scientists.)

Fire from heaven

In the Bible the Assyrian army of Sennacherib was struck by a blast from god, Yahweh. This can be dated fairly certainly to 702/1 BC, and represents a failed attempt by the Assyrians to invade Egypt, their main rival for control of Syria and Palestine. The army of Sennacherib had laid siege to Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah (who became a hero as he refused to submit to the Assyrians). Foiled, and with the intention of invading Egypt, Sennacherib decided to leave Jerusalem and proceed with his grand plan. A hastily mustered Egyptian army under an otherwise unknown pharaoh, a so-called priest of Vulcan (the fire god), recorded for posterity by the name of Sethos (reminiscent of the Egyptian deity Set or Seth, a serpent god with cometary parallels), rode out to meet the Assyrians in classic Hollywood style (the John Wayne version).

No clash is reported. According to the Greek historian, Herodotus, the camp of Sennacherib was destroyed in a single night. It is said that 185,000 men were killed in their sleep and that the remainder fled in terror back to Nineveh. In commemoration a temple was built which housed a statue of a deity - holding a mouse in one of its hands. Herodotus, in trying to make sense of the story, said a multitude of mice had descended on the camp of the Assyrians and gnawed at the bowstrings. The army, deprived of their arms, had fled.

Almost certainly this is a garbled version of events, possibly due to language and translation difficulties. The Hebrew word for mouse was *akbar*, a reverse order to *barak*, which means 'lightning'. Indeed, in Islamic tradition the Prophet Mohammed was carried up into heaven on the back of a magical horse known as *Borak*, a residue of folklore associated with Jerusalem. This appears to be the reverse tale of the site of Solomon's Temple, on the threshing floor of Araunah - where a bolide had struck the ground. In the Biblical version of the Sennacherib tale it was a blast from heaven that struck the camp, spewing fire out of the sky. The bolt from the blue, a fiery arrow of Yahweh's vengeance, came from a heavenly bow - possibly a comet.

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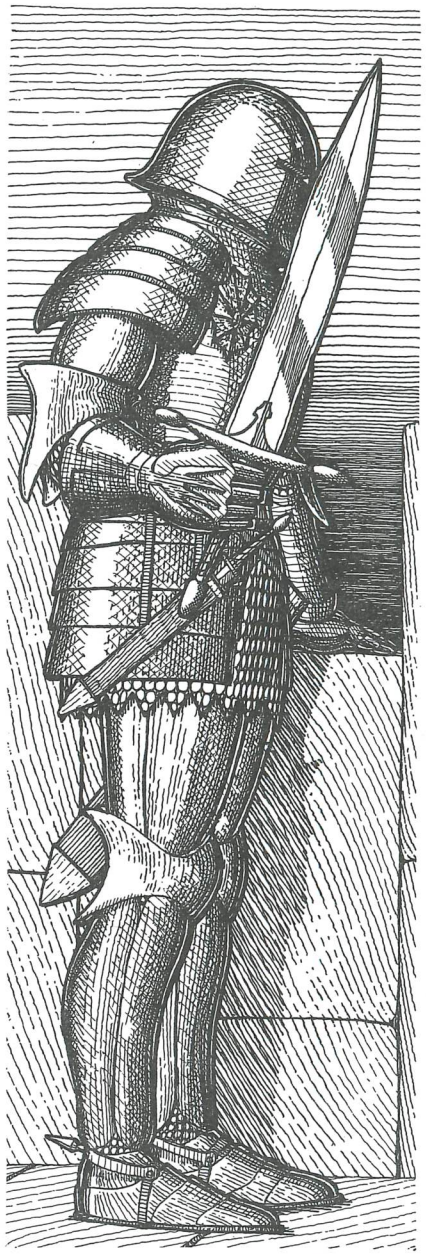


Knight Watchman Ian Brown

King Arthur and Jesus Christ Charles W Evans-Günther

One of the most popular books of the Middle Ages was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. In fact, it was so popular that it rivalled the Bible, and you can take it a step further - the two books have certain similarities. The Bible, Christians believe, tells a story that culminates in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Geoffrey's *History* also tells a saga that builds up to the reign of King Arthur. In both cases we hear about the unusual birth of the main characters, barely anything about their childhood, their later life, betrayal and subsequent mysterious 'deaths'. Jesus, though executed, is said to rise from the dead and ascend into heaven, while Arthur, though mortally wounded, is taken to the Isle of Avalon to be cured of his wounds.

However, historically, the picture of both characters may be different. Evidence for 'King Arthur' and 'Jesus Christ', outside of the *History* and the Bible, is extremely limited. Over the years we have taken a lot for granted. Many believe that Geoffrey's great work is based on fact and millions trust in the Bible as being historical. However, in both cases, we are more likely to be dealing with a mixture of fact, fiction and mythology. Much of what is believed about 'King Arthur' has been adopted from other legends - some classical - while other aspects can be found in tales from Ireland and Wales. How much more true is this of the life of Jesus?

Arthur

Evidence for Arthur as a historical person is meagre, to put it mildly, and yet many believe him to be a real person. When asked, many will tell you that he was born at Tintagel, lived at Camelot with his wife Guinevere and his Knights of the Round Table, had a magic sword called Excalibur, searched for the Holy Grail, lost his wife to his best knight, was betrayed by his nephew (or illegitimate son) and having been mortally wounded was taken to the Isle of Avalon.

This is the legend! What little there is from a historical point of view can be put into a paragraph. The earliest reference seems to be from an epic poem - *Y Gododdin* - composed by Aneirin in the late 6th or early 7th century, but not written down till hundreds of years later. Other early mentions - some possibly historical - come from the *Triads*, *The Welsh Annals*, *The History of the Britons* (credited to Nennius), *The Stanzas of the Graves* and from various poetry and legendary tales, such as *Culhwch and Olwen*.

Much of what is accepted as Arthurian would seem to have their origins in more ancient times, possibly even from the pre-Roman period. Certainly, some tales can be traced to Ireland. For example, the story of Finn, Diarmuid and Gráinne is remarkably similar to the love triangle of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere, and the beheading test of Cuchulainn surely must be the origin of *Gawain and the Green Knight*! No matter what the source of these tales, and others, they entered into the orbit of 'King Arthur', who was moreorless the creation of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* became an instant best seller and its influence went far and wide. Some other writers were translating or paraphrasing his 'factional-history' within his own lifetime! Wace brought it to the French-speaking nations and soon Arthurian spin-offs were appearing all over Europe. Possibly the most popular writer was Chrétien de Troyes, who brought in Lancelot and started the Grail stories rolling with his *Perceval*. Arthur's fame spread from one end of Europe to the other and beyond, even to Palestine, probably with the Crusaders. Then suddenly the legend became 'fact' with the finding of 'King Arthur's grave' at Glastonbury. 'King Arthur', to the people of the late 12th century, was no longer a character from fabulous tales but 'history'!

In the years following the 12th century right up until the 18th few people questioned the legitimacy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work and King Arthur was accepted as a historical character. But with the Industrial Revolution and the growth of academic studies much of our historical past started to be re-evaluated. Despite a certain number of cranks during this period, the investigations into the possible historical evidence for Arthur began to peal away the coatings of fiction and mythology. However, even today, it is still very difficult to separate the possible 'real' Arthur from the legendary 'King Arthur'. It is now suggested that Arthur was probably a petty leader who fought against the incoming Anglo-Saxons in the fifth or early sixth century. The earliest evidence, and the cross referencing of material, gives us only the ghostliest of figures - little more than a name! Yet from this name has grown a vast plethora of fictional material dating from pre-Galfridian times up to recent novels. The discussions about the reality of Arthur have also created a genre of investigative books ranging from the ridiculous to those of academic standards. However, we have still not found Arthur! Many have tried to

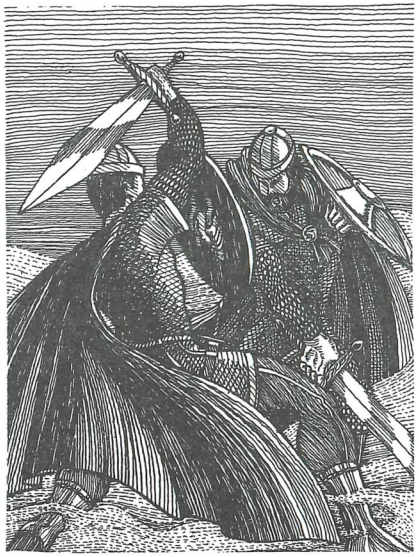
find him behind secret identities - Riothamus, Urien Rheged, Athrwys ap Meurig, Arthfael and Owain Danwyn - yet none have successfully discovered the Truth. It is very unlikely that Arthur will ever be found, but that does not mean that we should stop looking. Of course, most of the stories are pure myth - 'King Arthur' belongs not to history but the world of heroes and legend!

The Hero

A similar process can be taken with Jesus Christ. But first, please, allow me to look briefly at a book, published in 1936, entitled *The Hero*, written by Fitzroy Richard Somerset - Lord Raglan. While writing a previous book, *Jocasta's Crime*, he noticed certain similarities between the legend of Oedipus and other heroes. So he made a study and comparison of notables such as the classic heroes of Greek and Roman mythology (Theseus, Perseus, Heracles, Jason, Romulus and so on), Biblical characters like Joseph and Moses, plus figures from various cultures including Siegfried, Robin Hood and Arthur. He then produced a checklist of twenty-two points of comparison:

1. the hero's mother is a royal virgin;
2. his father is a king, and
3. often a near relative of his mother, but
4. the circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
5. he is also reputed to be the son of a god.
6. At first an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him, but
7. he is spirited away, and
8. reared by foster-parents in a far country.
9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but
10. on reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.
11. After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon or wild beast,
12. he marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
13. becomes king.
14. For a time he reigns uneventfully, and
15. prescribes laws, but
16. later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, and
17. is driven from the throne and city, after which
18. he meets with a mysterious death,
19. often at the top of a hill.
20. His children, if any, do not succeed him.
21. His body is not buried, but nevertheless
22. he has one or more holy sepulchres.

Raglan goes on to give the results of the heroes' scores out of 22. Oedipus comes out on top with 22 out of 22, Theseus 20, Perseus 18, Heracles 17, Jason 15, Romulus 18, Joseph 12, Moses 20, Siegfried 11, Robin Hood 13 and Arthur 19. There are other characters not mentioned in the list above, but nevertheless Raglan neglects to include one obvious hero - Jesus Christ. If you use the author's list you will probably find that Jesus scores 17 out of 22. It is worth trying this with other characters not listed as well as those known to be historical!



Jesus

King Arthur fits well into Raglan's ideas as well as other people's theories on what makes a hero (see for example Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* - well worth the read). But what of Jesus - historical personage or mythical character? It does not take much to see that from the stories in the Gospels Jesus also fits well into Raglan's theories - I do not think I need to spell it out in much detail. The myth of the god that is killed and rises from the dead was not unknown in ancient times and can be found in Middle Eastern myths from Egypt, with Osiris, and Mesopotamia's Tammuz, amongst others. To my mind the background to many religions belongs well and truly in the human psyche rather than historical fact. However, many religious groups feel they need to justify their existence by giving their originators a place in history. This is not necessary, and often impossible to prove one way or the other by cross-referencing from separate material of the relevant periods.

What evidence is there for the existence of Jesus outside the Gospels? It would seem that early Roman writers took little or no interest in the growth of Christianity in Palestine, or

elsewhere. Gaius Suetonius Tranquilius (CE 69-122) mentions, in his *Life of Claudius*, riots amongst Jews in Rome instigated by someone called 'Chrestus'. Could this have been a mistake for 'Christ' and that his followers were causing problems in the Jewish community? Suetonius also refers to Christians in his *Twelve Caesars*. However, neither works give any reference to a historical Jesus Christ. Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus - Pliny the Younger (CE 61-113) talks about a group of people who worshipped someone called 'Christ', in his *Letter to Trajan*, but makes no mention of Jesus by that name. Finally, in the *Roman Annals* by Gaius Cornelius Tacitus (CE 55-120) there is an account which refers to 'Christ, who was executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius ...'. Despite fitting in well with biblical texts, Tacitus makes no mention of a Jesus and it more likely that he is reflecting the beliefs of Christians rather than basing his information on sound independent documented evidence.

An even greater problem arises when Jewish historians are consulted. Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (*c* 15 BCE - CE 45) was well informed about life in Palestine during the period when it is usually believed Jesus Christ lived, yet, though he does mention Pontius Pilate, he surprisingly makes no references to Jesus at all! Justus of Tiberius, who also lived during the 1st century, wrote a history of Herod the Great and lived in Galilee, but nowhere mentions Jesus.

Then come Joseph ben Matthias - Flavius Josephus who, born just after the end of Pontius Pilate's procuratorship (*c* CE 38) and living to see the destruction of Jerusalem, wrote extensively on the history of the Jewish people. In his *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Jewish Wars* there are mentions of John the Baptist, James (called 'the brother of Jesus') and Jesus. One entry is quite long and talks of Jesus being more than a man - in fact, Christ - to have been executed by Pilate and risen from the dead. However, what seems to support the Gospels is now regarded as a Christian interpolation. There are no ancient copies of Josephus' works, only medieval ones, and when a rare Slavonic version was found with a different entry, the 'rat' that scholars had been smelling for years was confirmed. That Jesus was not mentioned in the works of Josephus can be cross-referenced by reading that early Christian scholars who, though quoting the piece about John the Baptist, made no allusions to Jesus!

So far evidence is very slim and/or hearsay. Then in Rabbinical writings, such as the *Talmud* and *Mishnah* (dating from the 1st century onwards) strange references about Jesus are found. These seem to be a reaction to the stories being told by the new sect which had come into existence with people like Paul and James. What makes these references unusual is that they appear to be set in a different historical framework. Without going into great detail it seems that the Jesus - Yeshua, Yehoshua or Joshua (which I will return to a little later) - of these writings is placed in the 1st century BCE (or even earlier), prior to the arrival of the Romans in Palestine rather than during the occupation after CE6. A similar dating can be given to the story called *Tol'doth Jeshu*, which is definitely a reaction to the Gospels. Amongst the names mentioned in these stories we find Janai - Alexander Jannaeus - and Shelamzion - Salome Alexandra, wife of Janneus. Why would the Rabbinical writers place Jesus a century before the time he is normally placed? Did they know something that we do not? Is it possible that Christianity is older than the mid-1st century CE?

In 1947 a group of Bedouin shepherds discovered a cave containing a number of ancient manuscripts - the first of many to be found in the area of Qumran - which were to become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Those that have been translated show the existence of a Jewish sect that flourished up until around CE 70. Many of the Scrolls have remained virtually hidden but in recent years photographs of them have been made available for general study. Some of the translations indicate that this sect was messianic and fiercely nationalistic (see Eisenman and Wise). Studies also show that the Scrolls show this sect had similarities with the early Christians. Carbon-dating indicated that some of these manuscripts come from before the Common Era by about a century and may be copies of even older originals. What is equally fascinating is that none of these documents mention Herod the Great but do include references to characters living at the beginning of the 1st century BCE. These include Aemilius Scaurus, who was quaestor under Pompey during the Middle Eastern campaign in 65 BCE, Alexander Jannaeus, Shelamzion, Antiochus Epiphanes, Demetrius (III?) and the rival brothers Aristobolus and Hyrcanos.

To be concluded

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Where is Britannia? The Arthurian crux

Steve Blake & Scott Lloyd

Where is Britannia? The answer to the above question is crucial to our understanding of the origins to the Arthurian legend for one of the major sources claims to come from this location. As readers of *Pendragon* will be aware the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, written by Geoffrey of Monmouth (*c* 1136) and dedicated to Robert of Gloucester, is one of the most important yet misunderstood texts in our quest to understand the enigma of Arthur. In the introduction to his work Geoffrey bemoans the lack of information available regarding the pre-Christian kings of Britain and the acts of Arthur in the works of the earlier historians Bede and Gildas. The references to his source which are of concern to us are given below:

Quemdam Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimum / A very ancient book in the British tongue.[1]

librum istum Britannici sermonis quem Gualterus Oxenfordensis archidiaconus ex Britannia aduexit. / The book in the British tongue which Walter the Archdeacon of Oxford brought from Britannia.[2]

Geoffrey also states: *At Walter's request I have taken the trouble to translate the book into Latin.*[3]

What exactly does Geoffrey mean by the book being written *in the British tongue* and *from Britannia*? This is the crux question to understanding Arthur, and the many different answers put forward in reply to this question have muddied the waters further. Some maintain that Britannia means Brittany and Geoffrey used a Breton text, for which there is no evidence whatsoever. Others have suggested that Britannia means Wales and Geoffrey used a Welsh text, which as we will show is highly probable.

The British tongue

Firstly we can show that the reference to the British tongue is a reference to the Welsh language and not Breton. The fact that Geoffrey translated his work is often overlooked today, but evidence from his contemporaries shows that they were well aware of the fact. The *Chronicle* of Robert of Torigni (abbot of Mont St. Michel) mentions the death in 1152 of:

Gaufridus Arthur, qui transtulerat historiam de regibus Britonum de Britannico in Latinum, fit episcopus Sancti asaph in Norgualis / Geoffrey of Monmouth who translated the History of the Kings of Britain from British into Latin, who is the bishop of Saint Asaph in North Wales.[4]

An even earlier text, *L'Estoire des Englies* written by Geoffrey of Gaimar c.1140, specifically states that Geoffrey's source was written in Welsh:

Robert li quens de Gloucestre
Fist translater icele geste
Solum les liveres as Waleis
Kil aveient des Breton reis
Robert, the earl of Gloucester
Had this history translated
According to the books of the Welsh
Which he had, about the British kings.[5]

The above excerpt led Professor E.K. Chambers to conclude in 1927 that, *In any case the book done for Robert of Gloucester was probably the* Historia *itself, and Gaimar regarded it as taken from the Welsh.*[6] Both Robert de Torigni and Geoffrey of Gaimar, two

contemporaries from the courts of the Norman kings and nobility for which Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote, state that he had translated his work from the "Books of the Welsh" and thereby confirm what Geoffrey himself tells us in his introduction. There is no reason to dismiss Geoffrey's claim on this point.

Those who hold the view that Geoffrey made everything up in his *Historia* absolve themselves from all responsibility to address the questions surrounding the origins of this most influential work of the middle ages and in doing so ignore the most important source in Arthurian studies. Those who believe that Geoffrey did use an original book have argued as to its origin, was it, a now lost, text from Brittany or Wales? This conflict can be resolved when we understand the exact meaning of the word Britannia.

Britannia

If Britannia meant the whole of Great Britain as it is perceived today, why would Geoffrey say that the book came from Britannia when we know that he was in Oxford, in the middle of Great Britain until 1139[7] The implication of his own words is that Britannia was a region outside the borders of England in which Oxford is situated. If Arthur was the ruler of Britannia, where exactly did he rule over?

By looking at references to Britannia in other works from this period it soon becomes obvious where the Britannia referred to by Geoffrey is located. *The Book of Llandaf* (written c.1150) contains a document called *The Privilege of St Teilio* written in both Latin and Welsh:

Latin: *aregibus istis & principibus brittannie*
The Kings and Princes of Britannia.[8]
Welsh: *Breenhined hinn hatouyssocion cymry*
The Kings and Princes of Cymry.[9]

This document proves that in the twelfth century Britannia did not denote the whole of Great Britain as we know it today, but Wales (Cymry is the Welsh name for Wales). This raises an obvious question. If Britannia meant Wales than what was the original name for England? An answer to this can again be found in *The Book of Llandaf*, which names the lands that bordered Britannia on more than one occasion:

The borders of Britannia and Anglia towards Hereford and *From both parts of Anglia and Britannia.*[10]

The region that bordered Britannia to the east was called Anglia, a Latin name used for present day England. Anglia was the land ruled over by the Angles (English) and the Britons (Welsh) ruled Britannia.. *The Life of King Alfred* written by a Welsh monk named Asser in the year 893 gives a clearly defined geographical boundary to Britannia when it states:

There was of late in Mercia a certain strenuous king and a formidable one among all the kings about him and the neighbouring countries, Offa by name, who ordered to be made between Britannia and Mercia, *the great dyke from sea to sea.*[11]

Offa's Dyke is the large earthwork that runs from the Dee estuary in North Wales to the Severn estuary in the South and Mercia was situated to the east of it meaning that Britannia is to the west, modern Wales. *The Life of King Alfred* also supplies us with further evidence of a different geographical understanding 1100 years ago when Asser tells us he was summoned by the king from:

The remote western parts of Britannia, and I came to the Saxon land (MS: Saxonia).[12]

The King asks him to stay with him at his court and leave his lands in Britannia (Wales). Asser agrees to a compromise by spending three months in Britannia and three months in Saxonia (England). Alfred's court was at Winchester and it is interesting to note that Asser is referring to Southern England as Saxonia, a fact that has interesting implications regarding the Saxon invasion of Britannia by Hengist and Horsa, which are dealt with in Chapter Four of *The Keys To Avalon*.

Confusion

How has the current confusion over the original meaning of Britannia arisen? The answer lies in the translation from Welsh into Latin. By using Geoffrey's *Historia* as our example we find that when the Latin text reads *Insula Britannia* or *Britannia* the Welsh texts read *Ynys Prydein* or *Prydein.* The geographical confusion has arisen over the meanings of two words, *Ynys* and *Insula*, and the key to understanding this confusion is in the original meaning of *Ynys*.

The meaning of *Ynys* in modern Welsh is, an island or an area bordering water, whether it be an estuary or the coast. Numerous examples of this can be seen on any large-scale map of the North Wales coast between Porthmadog and Aberystwyth. In medieval Welsh *ynys* also had the meaning of *Realm* or *Kingdom.* An example of this can be seen in the poetry of two bards from the fifteenth century. Guto'r Glyn refers to a part of Powys called Gwenwynwyn as *Gwlad Wenwynwyn* (the land of Wenwynwyn) whereas in a poem by Gutun Owain, from the same period, the area is called *ynys Gwenwynwyn* (the realm of Wenwynwyn). *Ynys* is also used on several occasions in the Welsh chronicle *Brenhinedd Y Saesson* (*c* 1450) with the meaning of realm or kingdom[13] and this meaning was still in usage in Wales as late as the sixteenth century.[14]

Geoffrey understood *Ynys* as *island*, translated it into *Insula* and from that point on the confusion began. This led to a situation whereby *Ynys Prydein* (The Realm of Prydein) became *Insula Britannia* (The Island of Britannia), which in turn became *The island of Britain* and was understood to mean the whole of Great Britain as we know it today. The identification of Britannia/Wales with the Ynys Prydein of early Welsh texts causes us to read *The Mabinogion*, the *Triads* and the like with new eyes as regard to the geography of events.

A much neglected source for Arthurian studies is the poetry of the Welsh bards known collectively as the Gogynfeirdd (Poets of the Princes:1100-1350). Within their work are several occasions where Wales is referred to as *Prydein*.[15]

The Bruts

Over seventy Welsh manuscripts survive of *Brut y Brenhinedd* (Chronicle of the Kings) which have long been treated as mere translations of Geoffrey's text, although this point is far from established. It is possible from these texts to determine the original personal and placenames which Geoffrey had written in front of him when he did his translation in Oxford in 1136. Geoffrey copied the original Welsh names from his source and then added an explanation as to there location for the sake of his Norman audience *eg Kaer Guenit id est Guintoniam.*/Caer Wynt or Winchester.[16]

These explanations are absent from nearly all of the Welsh texts as their authors where writing for a Welsh audience, who presumably knew where these places where. It is these additions that Geoffrey made to his translation that have corrupted the geographical locations of the places mentioned in his *Historia.* Only by returning to the original Welsh names of his source can we define the sphere of Arthur's activities. His actual source may be long gone but the placenames are preserved in the various copies of Brut y Brenhinedd that survive. By using other early Welsh sources (Triads, poetry etc) that mention these placenames it is possible to find their original locations and therefore get closer to Arthur than ever before.

One final simple point which reinforces the above argument is the differences between the titles in Welsh and Latin. The Welsh title *Brut Y Brenhinedd* simply means *The Chronicle of the Kings*, the Latin title however translates as *The History of the Kings of Britannia*, not *The Kings of Anglia* or anywhere else. The implications of this new geographical understanding are dealt with further in *The Keys To Avalon*. In regard to Arthur we now feel confident that we have satisfactorily narrowed down the area in which to look for his origins to the hills and valleys of Wales and the Marches. We will end this short article with a quote from Prof. Thomas Jones regarding the earliest texts concerning Arthur:

The evidence for the existence of traditions and stories about Arthur in the period before 1136 is restricted to Welsh texts and a few Latin texts, which are for the most part the work of Welshmen.[17]

Combine this fact with the geographical boundaries of Britannia and a secure foundation for future research can be established. The pages of *Pendragon* await your findings.

• *The Keys To Avalon* by Steve Blake & Scott Lloyd is published by Element Books on 6th April and deals with some of the points raised in this article in greater depth. The book also contains many obscure sources concerning Arthur and information on the physical location of Avalon.

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[1] Latin from *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, A Griscom, Longmans Green & Co, 1929, 219. Translation from *The History of the Kings of Britain*, L Thorpe, Penguin, 1966, 51

[2] Griscom, 536. Thorpe, 284

[3] Thorpe, 51

[4] E K Chambers *Arthur of Britain*, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1927, 262

[5] French text from Alexander Bell (ed), *L'Estoire des Engleis by Geffrei Gaimar*, Anglo-Norman Text Society, Vol. XIV-XVI, Oxford, 1968, 204, lines 6448-53. Translation from *Lestoire des Engles,* Vol II, edited by Sir T D Hardy & C T Martin, Rolls edition, 1889, 203

[6] Chambers, *op cit*, 55

[7] *The Life of Merlin,* Basil Clarke, University of Wales Press, 1971, 26-35

[8] Rhys & Evans, 1893, 118, lines 13-14

[9] *Ibid* 120, lines 5-6

[10] *Ibid* 192, lines 4-7

[11] *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred*, Penguin, 1983, 71

[12] *Ibid* 93

[13] Edited and translated by Thomas Jones, University of Wales Press, 1971, 10, line 9 and 64, line 25

[14] *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies,* Vol. XVII, 268-9 and references therein (article in Welsh)

[15] J G Evans, *Poetry by Medieval Welsh Bards,* 1926, 421 and references there cited

[16] Griscom, *op cit*, 260. Thorpe, *op cit*, 80

[17] *The Early Evolution of the Legend of Arthur* translated by Gerald Morgan in Nottingham Medieval Studies, Vol VIII, 1964, 3

Fair play for Arthur and Geoffrey of Monmouth?

Writing *King Arthur: the Truth behind the Legend*

Rodney Castleden

My book about Arthur has just been published. Many of you will wonder why I felt it necessary to add my hundred thousand words to the ever-growing Arthurian book mountain, and what I could possibly bring to the debate that has not already been said at least once and probably a thousand times before.

As a researcher and writer I have an instinct for radical analysis, and a questioning nature that drives me to question orthodoxies and received wisdoms about the processes of geography, history and prehistory. I want to get at the truth, which often involves challenging conventionally-accepted assumptions about people and places. It was this radical approach combined with rigorous academic training that I brought to Stonehenge - I had the courage (some would say impudence) to add two full-length volumes to the Stonehenge book mountain. It was the same approach that I brought to the British neolithic generally, to hill figures, and to Knossos and the Minoan civilisation. It is when I stumble on an issue or a place that I see differently from other people that I begin the serious inquiry that may lead eventually to a book. To my way of thinking, it is entirely unhelpful simply to rush into print with an assertion that contradicts the prevailing view. Once I realize that my view diverges from the orthodox view, I search out the logical flaw in the argument that underlies the conventional wisdom in order to understand how a wrong turning has been taken. Caution is important. If other, often far more intelligent and better informed, people have come up with an explanation or scenario totally different from one's own, it is a sensible precaution to try to trace, read and evaluate their sources, to see precisely how and why they arrived at their conclusions. Let me give you an example of my approach.

Quests

When I first visited Knossos with my old friends Trudy and John Urmson in 1985, it was as a tourist, albeit a fairly well-read and very interested tourist compared with the hundreds of people disgorging from the tour coaches. I was expecting to see round the ruins of a bronze age palace - which was what my reading had led me to expect - but as I explored the site, room by room, I developed a strong sense that it could not possibly have been a palace. The chambers officially called 'the Queen's Apartments' were subterranean, dark and claustrophobic: no queen of a wealthy sea-empire in 1600 BC would have tolerated incarceration in this vault. And so it was with room after room.

The visit sent me back to the literature, where I discovered that the site's excavator, Sir Arthur Evans, had been similarly conditioned, when he visited Heinrich Schliemann in Athens, to expect that if he excavated the Knossos site he would find a bronze age palace. To my surprise, Evans, often credited with the discovery of Knossos, not only knew about the site before he started excavating, but had been given (what would become) his interpretation well before he ever set eyes on it. I went back to Evan's imposing four-volume publication, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, and read it all. I tracked down the original excavation notes of both Evans and his assistant Duncan Mackenzie in a cupboard in the Ashmolean Library. Whenever possible, I go back to original sources.

Careful analysis of the original notes and plans led me to the conclusion that the building was not a palace but a temple. In spite of mounting evidence of religious ceremonies, Evans would never let go his original preconception about the site. He even converted his 'royal palace' interpretation into concrete reconstructions of parts of the site, to persuade later generations of visitors - and very successfully, too. *The Knossos Labyrinth* tells the story of my personal quest for the truth, which led on to a sequel, a re-examination of the nature of the Minoan civilization as a whole in *Minoans*.

Tintagel

With Arthur, my quest for the truth began at a particular place - Tintagel. I first visited Tintagel when I was perhaps 8 or 9. Like most small boys I was fascinated by castles. The nearby village was, then as now, given over whole-heartedly to 'selling' the idea of Tintagel Island as Arthur's stronghold, but in the 1950s that interpretation was politically incorrect as far as the archaeological establishment was concerned. I remember reading the official Ministry of Works guide book, and remember also the profound disappointment at finding that at the time when Arthur was supposed to have lived, in the sixth

century, Tintagel Island was not a royal stronghold at all but no more than a poor, windswept monastic settlement. I kept that guidebook and have it still. Hoarding is another obsession I have yet to outgrow. The guidebook was written (in 1939) by Ralegh Radford. The title page seems almost to dare the reader to disagree with its hyper-distinguished author, who is announced as 'C A Ralegh Radford, MA, D Litt, FBA, FSA, Formerly Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wales and sometime Director of the British School at Rome'. Time was when readers could be clubbed with scholarship.

Radford it was who in the 1930s excavated some of the buildings on Tintagel Island and interpreted them as monks' cells. If Tintagel was a monastery, then Geoffrey of Monmouth, the great twelfth century story-teller who popularized Arthur as a powerful early medieval king, cannot have been telling the truth. This clash of story-lines yielded three significant outcomes;

1. for fifty years following Radford's excavation, Arthur's links with Tintagel was utterly annihilated,
2. the arguments for an historical Arthur were seriously weakened, and
3. Geoffrey of Monmouth's reputation as an historian, already shaky, went into a seemingly irreversible decline.

So, what, for me, was the piece of grit in this particular pearl-oyster? Where was the flaw in Radford's work, the Tintagel equivalent of 'the Queen's Apartments' at Knossos? In 1983, the Cornish archaeologist Charles Thomas examined boxes of pottery fragments from Radford's Tintagel dig in the Museum of the Royal Institution of Cornwall at Truro, which Radford himself had apparently not had time to examine, and found that many of them were fine, high-quality ware imported from various places in the Mediterranean around AD 520. Clearly, Tintagel was not a monastery after all but a secular site and, what is more, a secular site of very high status. The way was open to a reinterpretation of dark age Tintagel Island as a royal stronghold - with all that that implied.

Review

I approached Routledge with the outline idea for a book. It would be a modest treatment of just this one aspect of the Arthurian debate: a re-examination of the hypothesis that Arthur was a dark age Cornish king or sub-king, with his headquarters or principal stronghold at Tintagel. As it happened, I was having a change of editor at the time. My 'old' editor, Andrew Wheatcroft, was stepping aside into a consultancy role to make way for my 'new' editor, Vicky Peters. Having newly taken on Routledge's archaeology list, Vicky invited me to write a comprehensive review of the literature on Arthur and send it to Andrew in Scotland. The idea was that this would provide a background for my proposal. Given the huge literature that exists, the review was a very substantial undertaking, though in fact it later proved to be very useful as a kind of intellectual work-out, one that tended to stretch my book in terms of the range of ideas that it would encompass.

Andrew had always been mercurial and unpredictable. On one occasion when I had, in my rather dull and conventional business mode, made an appointment well in advance to meet him in his London office, he greeted me in the reception area in a state of some agitation; in the lift on the way up to his office he seemed anxious and preoccupied. After a brisk discussion of some of the matters I had travelled up to London to air, he took me to a nearby room, introduced me to his assistant, a pleasant young man called Chris, and left us to discuss some aspects - I forget what - of my latest project while he returned to his office for some other purpose. Chris eventually took me back to Andrew's office, which was empty except for, on the floor in the middle of the room, a small heap consisting unmistakably of Andrew's jeans and suede shoes. It was as if he had spontaneously combusted, though without the tell-tale smoke or residual hand or foot, or been beamed up by passing aliens. No explanation was attempted - or for that matter sought.

After working with Andrew for several years, and with experiences like the spontaneous combustion behind me, I should have been ready for anything, but I was still startled by his advice that I should take on the entire Matter of Britain, and review objectively all the principal theories about Arthur within a larger geographical context. Whether, at the end of this analysis, Arthur turned out to have existed or not should be of secondary importance in terms of Routledge's acceptance of the book, though obviously it would be a bonus from the point of view of the book's appeal if there was a positive verdict.

I felt as if I had been given Captain Kirk's sonorous mission: 'To boldly go, etcetera.' To split infinity. I might well have been alarmed at Andrew's ambitious proposal, but there was something about Andrew's own past that made me swallow his advice whole. Long before, Andrew had been the editor of John Morris's *Age of Arthur*, the classic, standard treatment of Arthur as a genuine historical figure from the time of its publication in 1973. It had never been replaced and John Morris himself had unfortunately died just as he was completing the work; he was therefore not going to produce a revised edition. Excellent though Morris's work

was - and I remain a great admirer of it - scholarship had moved on and there had been, as I pointed out, significant advances in archaeology, with new sites discovered and old one reinterpreted. Andrew's idea was that my as-yet-unwritten book would replace Morris's and take the centre of the stage. It was a daring and ambitious plan, but I was won over by Andrew's and Vicky's confidence in me and agreed to try.

And that is how the book's geographical range came to be extended, to include not just the dark age kingdom of Dumnonia (which encompassed Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and part at least of Dorset), but the whole of Britain. I think the result more than justifies the work involved, as so much more has emerged as a result.

The Ride of Arthur

air is freezing a white darkness
through it thunders the great hunter

his chains drag headless mutilated
howling victims malefactors

at the crossroads he stumbles
out of the sky and all the trail

he punishes fall behind him
pained and bruised on the fierce ice

as if nothing had happened he rises
into the air again his horn

peels a triumph over space over time
he is gone like wild geese beyond the ocean

earth-clodded witness arises, past breathing

Steve Sneyd

Puzzle-solving

My method was, to begin with at any rate, to stand back from Arthur himself, leaving for the later the discussion about whether he was historical or not, and try to reconstruct the political geography of the period when Arthur is most likely to have lived. Once the physical, economic and socio-political setting was established, and in particular the relationship between British and Anglo-Saxon communities, it would be easier to see where and how an Arthur might have operated. The procedure was very much like the conventional approach to solving a jig-saw puzzle; start at the edges and work inwards from there. If, at the end, there was an Arthur-shaped gap in my dark age jig-saw, the chances of Arthur being a genuine historical figure would be greatly enhanced.

Again, as a starting-point, I decided to take the information given in the Easter Annals at face value; there was, as I explain in the book, no reason to treat them otherwise. The Easter Annals dates of AD 516 for the Battle of Badon and AD 537 for the Battle of Camlann suggest a birth date for Arthur around 475; this would have made him mature enough to have his first major military success as commander-in-chief at the age of 41, yet not too old to be fighting in 537 at the age of 62. The time window I should focus on for my study was clear, then; I needed a map of the Britain in which Arthur functioned as a warrior-king, a map of Britain as it was at the turn of the sixth century.

I bought a 1995 road atlas at a scale of 3 miles to the inch and, as I read source after source, added to it the late fifth and early sixth century sites and any events connected with those locations. It soon became clear that many of the Roman roads were still in good enough repair to be in use, so I added those. Patterns of finds - and common sense - told me that the pre-Roman trackways were also still usable, so I added those too. To avoid potential problems with modern motoring trips as opposed to the time travel I wanted it for, I changed the front cover. Its bold title now reads *The Sun Road Atlas: Britain 495. Super value £3.99.* And super value it is too. As new dark age sites emerged in books and learned articles I was reading in the Ashmolean Museum, I have been able to check where they 'are' in relation to the 495 communications system, ports, political frontiers and power centres. My customized atlas made the exercise of time travel much more vivid and real, and helped me towards exciting conclusions about the nature of the key battles, and even helped me towards discovering a new - and in my view likeliest - location for Arthur's Last Battle.

Palaeogeography

I was trained as a geographer. I have two geography degrees - one a BA in Geography, the other an MSc in Geomorphology - so it should surprise no-one that I instinctively go for a palaeogeographical approach. My instinct, in project after project, is to begin by reconstructing, at least in my imagination and if possible on paper as well, the landscape setting in which the past events took place. So much more becomes apparent once that reconstruction has been accomplished.

Then the physical travelling itself begins, exploring the countryside with *two* atlases on the passenger seat instead of one, and seeing *two* Britains - the Britain of the 1990s and the Britain of the 490s, which is somehow nested within it. This meant revisiting some very familiar old haunts, such as Tintagel, Glastonbury and South Cadbury, and seeing them in a new light, in the context of the dark age atlas. That has been very exciting. It has also meant exploring some sites that I had not seen before, and even one or two that have escaped general notice. Discovering, or perhaps I should say re-discovering, those was even more exciting.

Fair hearing

In the end, readers of *King Arthur* will have to make up their own minds whether they agree with my conclusions. The really important thing is that the book represents an honest attempt at a calm, objective analysis of all the available evidence, an attempt to deal fairly with Arthur in the context of the most up-to-date archaeological and documentary evidence available. Another thing I wanted to do, in the wake of the Tintagel re-evaluation, was to re-evaluate Geoffrey of Monmouth; he too deserves a fair hearing. A major ongoing problem in Arthurian research over many years has been personal agenda. I fear that too many writers write from fixed positions and that much of the writing about Arthur has been polemical. Political, cultural or racial loyalties need to be left to one side if we are to stand any chance of arriving at the truth.

I was in Tintagel a few weeks ago. A resident in philosophical mood said to me, in relation to my theories, 'I suppose you can argue Arthur was anywhere; there are Arthurian associations in so many places.' That is more profound than it sounds. The very breadth of scatter of Arthurian place names and folklore may suggest that a search is futile; the evidence could be taken to mean that even if Arthur existed he travelled far and wide and his headquarters must remain elusive; it could alternatively mean that he was as ubiquitous as Farther Christmas and, like Santa, didn't exist at all. The strongest Arthurian associations (or memories, depending on your mindset) lie in a belt running from Cornwall through Wales and the North of England towards the Scottish Lowlands. Seen in palaeogeographical terms, this was the string of dark age kingdoms whose eastern frontiers were the war zone; these were the territories under the greatest threat from Anglo-Saxon invasion in the sixth century - the time when Arthur may have been the co-ordinator of the British resistance. These areas are, in other words, exactly where memories of a heroic sixth century resistance to Anglo-Saxon penetration should be expected.

Reconstructing the geography of past worlds can, after all, tell us new things. Perhaps, in the light of what I have said, more devotees of Arthuriana will recognize the value of studying the geography of Arthur.

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The Name of the Hero

Chris Lovegrove

It is easy, when we read about Arthur, to assume that our hero's name is pretty much the same for all times and for all places and in all languages. The truth is of course not always that simple, and when we examine a text in translation the undifferentiated, all-purpose label *Arthur* in fact covers a number of variant spellings. Is it whimsy dictating what version is used? Or can we spot some clue instead as to not only the development of the name but also the origins of the legend itself?

Read any reference book on the etymology of names and it is clear that there is no agreement even among experts. The name is "of uncertain origin" or of "obscure derivation", is the subject of "much speculation" and its meaning "disputed". Those who were under the impression that the name is Celtic may be dismayed to be told that it is perhaps from the Anglo-Saxon meaning "valorous" or even from the Old Norse *Arnthor* ("Thor the eagle", this latter derivation favoured by novelist A A Attanasio).

Generally, the preferred options narrow down to three:

1. the name is from a Celtic root *artos* meaning "bear", cognate with the Greek word *arktos*;
2. it derives from the Irish *art*, meaning "stone";
3. it is first found as the Roman clan name *Artorius*.

It's worth looking at these three suggestions, but in reverse order.

Artorius

The traditional sign of a civilised Roman citizen was the use of the *tria nomina*, the "three names". This consisted of

1. the forename or *praenomen*
2. the *nomen gentilicium* or clan name
3. the *cognomen* or personal nickname.

This classic form is demonstrated by Caius Iulius Caesar - Caius (Cai, Kay) to his friends and Caesar ("Hairy", perhaps?) to the public at large - who was from the powerful Julian family.

By the 4th century the use of the *praenomen* was extremely conservative, an example being Lucius Aurelius Augustinus, better known by his *cognomen* as St Augustine. By this time the *cognomen* or nickname was often a freed slave's own personal name, tagged onto the *nomen gentilicium* of whoever had freed them (Birley 1979). Virtually a kind of surname, the *cognomen* came into its own in Late Antiquity - for example, Magnus Maximus ("Big the Greatest") became Macsen in Welsh tradition (the Magnus seems to have been dropped).

The arguments for Arthur's name being derived from a *nomen gentilicium* (sometimes called the gentile name) seem to be quite strong, usually from the constant repetition that a possible model for Arthur appears in the 2nd century general Lucius Artorius Castus. He is known from a Dalmatian inscription as the *praefectus* of VI Victrix, nominated as *ad hoc* commander or *dux* of the British legions sent "against the Armoricans" of Brittany, who had apparently revolted (Birley 1979, 45). This is supposed to be a probable origin for the story that Arthur took his armies to Gaul, and then on towards Rome (Ashe 1985, 116).

The problem with this attractive theory is that it would be unusual to see a *gentilicium* used as a personal name in this way. Only in later times would this practice not seem odd, as the modern habit of calling Caesar by the sole name Julius demonstrates. In the 2nd century such a usage would be laughable to L Artorius Castus ("the Chaste"), and in the 5th and 6th centuries still

rather peculiar. This suggestion ought really to be quietly dropped.

British roots

Looking for a Celtic root for the hero's name may be a more logical approach to origins. It is here that a glance at the various forms of the name through time may prove useful.

The name seems to appear spontaneously in the 7th century, some two hundred years after the man is generally supposed to have flourished. In the form now familiar to us Arthur is famously alluded to in the poem *Y Gododdin*:

gochore brein du ar uur
caer ceni bei ef arthur

("He would feed black ravens on the wall / of a fortress, though he were not Arthur": Coe and Young 1995). The problem is that scholars dispute whether these lines come from the original stratum of the poem or whether they were inserted when the legend was first being developed a couple of centuries later by, for example, Nennius' *History of the Britons*:

tunc arthur pubnabat contra illos ...

("Then Arthur fought against them [*ie* the Saxons].")

Both these texts come down to us in later manuscripts, after the flowering of the Arthurian romances, but, perhaps significantly, the name is left in its primitive form whenever used in the Latin nominative (though becoming *Arthuri* in the genitive).

In later medieval documents *Arthur* is latinised either as *Arthurus* (the *Life of Gildas* and Gerald of Wales in the 12th century, the *Waverley Annals* in the 13th, and Ranulph Higden and John of Glastonbury in the 14th) or as *Arthurius* (in the *Life of Illtud*). The *Life of Cadog* has both forms of the name in two different episodes, which suggests at least two separate sources rather than outright invention.

In the various *Bruts* (of controversial relationship to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*) Arthur's name of course appears in the form familiar to modern English readers and speakers. And in other Welsh saints' medieval *Lives* in Latin (Carannog, Padarn) *Arthur* always appears as such in the nominative.

Arthur in Europe

It is instructive to examine Continental versions of Arthur's name over the same period. In 11th and 12th Breton manuscripts (the *Lives* of Goueznou and Euflam) and in Herman of Tournai's *Concerning the miracles of St Mary of Laon* the form *Arturus* is found. This might suggest the traditional problem that Francophones have with the "th" sound, whether voiced (as in "bathe") or unvoiced (as in "Bath").

In a host of Breton or Norman French-inspired sources this same form is found - Ordericus Vitalis, Étienne de Rouen, Alain de Lille, the glosses in William of Malmesbury, the later contents lists in Nennius, Peter of Blois and so on - even in the Otranto mosaic in Italy (unless the *I* of *ARTVRIVS* was lost when it was "restored"). In this many may have ultimately been inspired by the example of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who in the early 12th century favoured this version of the name.

Incidentally, in modern Breton the forms *Arzhul* and *Arzhur* are noted (Autret 1996) where the "z" or "zh" represents the voiced "th" sound introduced during the Dark Age migration period to Brittany. (There is even a name day celebrated, on November 15th, just like a saint's feast day might be.)

A legacy of this French difficulty with voiced "th" is found in *Domesday Book* where many names were likely to have been transcribed by Norman clerks. A large number of despoiled native landowners, who held land in the reign of Edward the Confessor, are listed along with undertenants, and among both groups we find the following names:

- *Azor* is noted as holding lands in many parts of England, including Somerset, though it is not clear whether this refers to one man or to many others who possessed this "peculiar" name (Birch 1887). The same name is also associated with undertenants in Hampshire, Middlesex and Lincolnshire, and, in the form *Azo*, in various counties;
- *Azor Rot* is reported as holding land in Kent before the Conquest;
- *Azur* is listed as a former landowner in Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire;
- finally, the unfortunately named *Asso* is listed under Essex.

The names in *Domesday Book* are representative of persons whose origins were not only for example Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norman and Jewish but also Celtic. Under the forms of Azur, Azer, Azor, Azorius, Azo and Asso we may see the name Arthur as interpreted by scribes whose native tongue sounded "a" as in "father" and gave an almost equal stress to all syllables in a word.

This habit continues a century later in the *Curia Regis Rolls* (1189-1213) where the forms *Acur* and *Azur* are encountered as well as the more familiar *Artur* (Withycombe 1976 32f).

In some literary texts another common form occasionally appears. *Artus* appears to be a contraction of *Arturus*, and is found on the Modena archivolt as *Artus de Bretania*, in the Breton placename *Camp d'Art(h)us*, in modern

German as *Artus*, and as *Il Re Artù* in Italian (Castelli 1994), *Arturo* in modern Italian. *Artus* is even re-Latinised as *Artusius* in a 12th century Paduan MS (Chambers 1927). It is clear that, early though some of these versions are, we are getting away from anything that may inform us as to origins.

Insular origins

If Continental versions are clearly derivative, we have to return to theories that the name is of Insular origin, in particular Irish.

Coghlan (1979) notes that the Irish name Art was sometimes anglicised as Arthur but that it is really a separate name. It can mean either "stone" or "bear", which doesn't really help us much. The matter is confused by the word *ard* which, as used in the name Ardál (Artegal or Arthgallo in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*), means "high". Can we be enlightened by the appearance of a name closer to the expected Arthur?

In a cognate form, Arthur does in fact appear as *Artúr* in an Irish text using material from the late 7th century (in fact roughly contemporary with the Arthur mentioned in *Y Gododdin*). *The History of the Men of Britain* gives some genealogical material related to the settlement of western Scotland by peoples from northern Ireland. Included among the sons of Conaing, son of King Áedán of Dalriada, is a certain Artúr. The contemporary *Life of Columba* latinises this Artúr (confusingly named a son of Áedán) as *Arturius*, a form we have not - yet - noted as appearing anywhere else.*

Another Arthur with Irish links appears in mainland British setting, this time in Dyfed. Material from the late 8th century mentions an Artúr son of Petor (*Artúir maic Petuir*) who flourished around 600. In an equivalent Welsh genealogy he is named unequivocably as Arthur, son of Petr (*ie* Peter).

Richard Barber (1972) believed that these two Irish-related Arthurs, one from a Scottish setting, the other from a Welsh context, were the inspirations for the legend that developed the King Arthur we now know. The trouble is, there are other Irish Arthurs, and their appearance could suggest that the influence may be in the other direction.

Various Irish annals, based on early material, note an incident in Scotland in the early 7th century when a certain Mongan mac Fiachna Lurgan died after being struck by a stone by yet another Artúr. This Artúr is described as the son of Bicor the Briton, and was an exact contemporary of Artúr, son of Conaing (or Áedán).

In addition, the 12th century *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* describes early on a young man serving with the legendary 3rd century Irish hero Finn. This youth is called *Artúir mac benne brit*, Artúr son of Béine Brit (perhaps, as John Morris suggested, Benignus the Briton).

If a significant number of these 'Irish' Arthurs are found in a mainland Britain context, two even being specifically described as sons of Britons, it may be that the notion of the name of the hero somehow being exclusively Irish in origin needs to be questioned. The next stage needs then to examine the case for a British origin for Arthur's name, with a look down the by-ways of antiquarian and academic speculation as we get stressed and follow the bear.

To be concluded?

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* Arturius *appears in some near contemporary reports of the finding of the Glastonbury cross in the late 12th century, and* Azorius *is mentioned of course in* Domesday Book, *noted above; discussion next time.*

The Once and Future Author: John Gloag

W M S Russell

The interest of the historical (as opposed to the legendary) Arthur lies in his attempt to preserve the dying civilization of the Roman Empire in Britain. The ingenious maps prepared by John Morris, based on place names and archaeological finds of various dates, show that Arthur's achievement was considerable.[1] For something like half a century, he held up the advance of the Anglo-Saxons, recovering from them for the British a larger proportion of Britain than Alfred was to recover for the Anglo-Saxons from the Danes centuries later. Morris plausibly suggests that this tided over the survival of civilization through the missionary journeys of the Irish and British up to the conversion and civilizing of the Anglo-Saxons themselves.

In spite of all this, it is obvious that the fifth and sixth centuries in Britain witnessed the utter destruction of a comfortable and flourishing material civilization. It was this disaster that made an indelible impression on one of the most interesting writers of the twentieth century, John Gloag. He served in the Welsh Guards during the First World War (his mother was Welsh), was gassed and invalided out, and the experience clearly preconditioned him to expect world disaster. In the 1930s and 1940s he wrote a series of science fiction novels and short stories in which devastating wars again and again destroyed human civilization. These stories have been well summarised by Brian Stableford, who was able to consult Gloag before he died.[2] Finally in 1969-77, Gloag wrote three historical novels set in the 3rd to 5th centuries, ending with perhaps the first, and certainly the most scholarly, novel about the historical Arthur.

Science fiction

Tomorrow's Yesterday (1932) begins with the showing of a film, in which two creatures evolved from cats explore the past fate of mankind, exterminated, after a decline to savagery, as a result of destructive wars. The film theatre is then closed by a state of emergency, which is clearly ushering in the war to destroy humanity.

Sacred Edifice (1937) is about a cathedral tower that collapses. It is Gloag's weakest novel, since it inevitably challenges comparison with one of the finest novels ever written, John Meade Falkner's *The Nebuly Coat*. There is nothing like the Aeschylean grandeur of the fall of Cullerne Tower in the Falkner story: Gloag's tower only falls as a pretext for its replacement by a modern structure, financed by a millionaire. This millionaire is the best thing in Gloag's novel. He is an automobile tycoon on Henry Ford lines. But the historical Henry Ford was an unmitigated scoundrel, who contributed largely to Nazi Party funds, via the Wagners and a gang of Tsarist Russians: he was decorated by Hitler in 1938.[3] Gloag's millionaire, in complete contrast, is a delightful character, a more believable version of one of Dickens' Cheeryble Brothers. But the novel contains a vision of future ages seen by a Megalithic priest, and naturally the new architect's tower suffers the fate of the old one!

In 1946, in a short story called 'Pendulum', the victim of an accident experiences a kaleidoscopic jaunt forward and backward in time through London, which is again and again reduced to savagery. In 1950, in 'The Slit', a man thinks he is visiting ruined London in the past, when it is actually the future.

In *99%* (1944), a number of people are exposed, via a kind of racial memory, to experiences of their remote ancestors. All these experiences are unpleasant, but the worst, which

actually kills the victim from shock, is that of fighting a hopeless rearguard action against Saxons, in the person of a Romano-British soldier.

Historical fiction

After World War II, Gloag had apparently exhausted his capacity to predict future disasters, and wrote his three historical novels, precisely about the collapse of Roman civilzation. *Caesar of the Narrow Seas* is about the brief independent British Empire of Carausius, *The Eagles Depart* concern the final abandonment of Britain by the legions, and *Artorius Rex* describes Arthur's resistance movement. The heroes of the novels are successive generations of a family of Roman soldiers, the last one being sent to Britain as a kind of political commissar, to watch Arthur's loyalty to the (Eastern) Empire.

These heroes are not very attractive people. They take slavery, torture and mutilation for granted, and are all unreconstructed pagans, with intense anti-Christian prejudices. They accuse the Christians of intolerance, when what is so remarkable is their tolerance of paganism for so long a period, after the frightful pagan persecutions. Again the Christians are accused of hating beauty and art. In fact, even pagan idols were tolerated if they were great works of art, and many an indifferent piece of sculpture was saved by having 'Phidias' or 'Praxiteles' scratched on its base.[4] But these prejudices are no doubt realistic, and show the resistances the Christian revolution had to overcome.

Although Gloag mentions Morris's books as a source, he does not share Morris's view of Arthur's achievement. His hero returns to Constantinople disillusioned: Arthur has sold the Imperial principle and set himself up as a petty king - Artorius Rex. Gloag remains a pessimist to the end, but his book remains a remarkable reconstruction of the historical Arthur.

References and note

[1] John Morris (1995) *The Age of Arthur: a History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* [Phoenix, London]

[2] Brian Stableford (1995) *Algebraic Fantasies and Realistic Romances* [Borgo Press, San Bernardino, California]

[3] James and Suzanne Pool (1979) *Who Financed Hitler?* [Macdonald and Jane's, London]

[4] E R Curtius (1956) *La Littérature Européene et le Moyen Age Latin* [Presses Universitaires de France, Paris] 629

I am most grateful to Brian Stableford for the loan of five of Gloag's books of science fiction.

The Lie of Glastonbury

(Henry II speaks)

Go, says the King, go dig up a tomb,
I cannot stand too much reality.

Bring them out in the open, for all to see
My forebear, his queen, and the shimmering

Crown of golden thatch
About her grimy corpse -

Now feast your eyes, you peasants -
They'll never come back again.

Geoff Sawers

Song

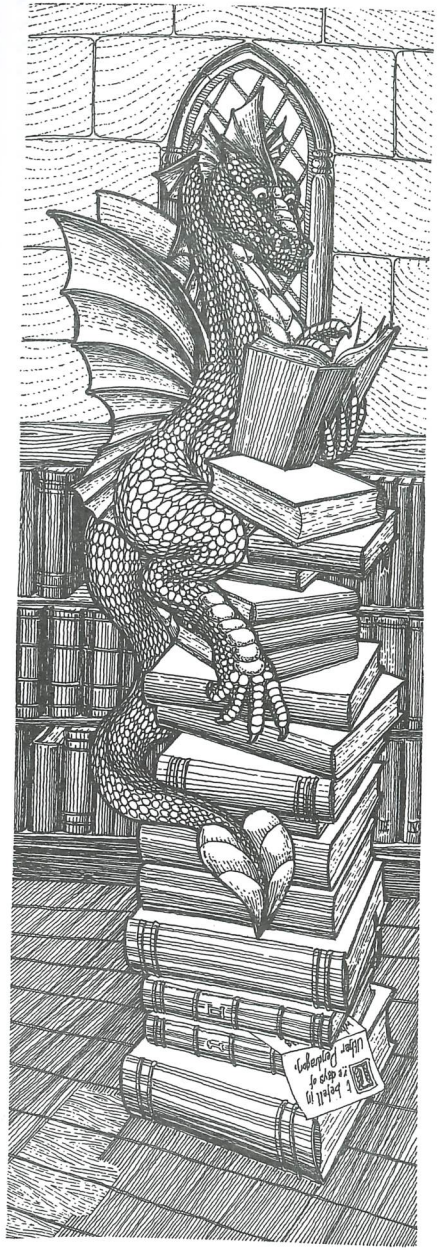
(Arthur speaks)

My sister, my sweetheart, my lover,
A garden shut up, a fountain sealed -
We circle our own son,
Pride of our guilt, and pack him off
To a Kingdom far away.

But for now lay him a place at this table,
Our map of our destiny, map of the stars
He will be the scorpion's tail, let us
Pray -
He never comes back again.

Geoff Sawers

Book*Worm* Ian Brown



CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Kevin Crossley-Holland is best known for his work with early Anglo-Saxon texts, but a recent book of his deals with the Matter of Britain. First issued in hardback in 1998, ***The King who was and will be*** is subtitled *The World of King Arthur and his Knights*. Though aimed at the juvenile reader it is a delight for all ages. Illustrated beautifully by Peter Malone, the paperback is published by Dolphin (Orion Children's Books) and well worth £6.99 [1 85881 674 2].

The late Rosemary Sutcliff, one-time Pendragon member, appears to have a new title, ***King Arthur Stories: Three Books in One***, published by Red Fox (Random House £4.99 ISBN 0 09 940164 9] but this is in fact a re-issue of *The Light Beyond the Forest* (1979), *The Sword and the Circle* (1981) and *The Road to Camlann* (1981). Quite good value, but a little bulky for young readers, and completely lacking any illustrations whatsoever.

Enid Blyton's ***The Knights of the Round Table*** has been available in paperback from Element Children's Books since 1998 [£3.99, ISBN 1 901881 72 5]. This was first published in 1950; if you prefer a first edition a good copy with no dust wrapper may still be available at £7.50 from **Louise Boer Arthurian Books and Prints** at 2B Rainbow Street, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 8DQ [tel/fax 01568 616084 or email <hatcher@netmatters.co.uk>].

Finally, a couple of titles I seem to have missed. Marcia Williams' ***King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*** was published by Walker Books in paperback for £5.99 in 1997 and hardback in 1996; this tells the familiar tales visually using cartoon techniques with a hint of Bayeux Tapestry [0 7445 4792 X]. And a little further back in time, but still available, Angelika Lukesch's 1995 hardback, ***Arthur and Excalibur*** (originally *Artus und Excalibur*), illustrated in sub-Pre-Raphaelite style by Iassen Ghiuseler, is published by MacDonald Young Books, but is a little short on text.

FICTION

A crime novel that liberally uses Arthuriana was apparently published at the end of 1998. Peter Guttridge's ***The Once and Future Con*** (Headline £17.99) features one Nick Madrid and his journalist companion Bridget Frost (the "Bitch of the Broadsheets") in search of a serial killer in the West Country. According to a cutting from *The Guardian*, sent in by Steve Sneyd, "the satire is spot on, with Camelot casinos, Avalon theme parks, Heritage Industry mavens and mediaeval Excalibur banquets all duly skewered ... There's a pinch of Pratchett, a drop of

Hiaasen and a deep affection for the worst of Fleet Street ..."

Also from Steve Sneyd, notice of ***The Search for the Plastic Grail*** by Brian Lewis (Pontefract Press 1 900325 04 7 £7.00). This is apparently one volume in a series called *The Jude Poems*, only "outwardly disposable, mock heroic stuff" according to one reviewer, and in it the heroine Jude "searches for a Cup of Truth" in Pontefract.

Jonathan Gunson and Marten Coombe's 1999 puzzler ***The Merlin Mystery*** (HarperCollins) got the thumbs-down in Seán Russell Friend's review in *Strix 17*, according to Steve. "The mystery itself, having apparently been validated by Mensa, is largely overshadowed by cliché and mediocrity, which leaves one asking: Has the over-taxing of Mensa brains squashed all original thought and individual panache? ... If you're after something you can actually read without cringing, whose enigma and elan are on equally worthy footing, buy *Finnegans Wake* instead..."

Stephen Lawhead's most recent Arthurian novel is set in the present day: ***Avalon, the return of the king*** (Avon/Eos hb 442pp £19.99). Is this the last of the series? Rosalind Miles' ***Knight of the Sacred Lake*** (Simon and Schuster hb 384pp £17.99) is however only the second in a series based round the character of Guinevere.

Member Susan Morgan draws our attention to A A Attanasio's ***The Perilous Order: Warriors of the Round Table*** (Hodder & Stoughton hb 0 340 69629 X, now in paperback), which stars Arthor, "one and only child of Uther Pendragon and Ygrane, queen of the Celts"; and also to a reprint of Alfred Duggan's Dark Age classic ***Conscience of the King*** (Methuen pb £6.95 ISBN 1 902894 01 4) about Cerdic and the Saxon invasion of Britain which Evelyn Waugh rated as his own favourite of Duggan's novels. Reviews, anyone?

Finally, Susan notes that the May 1999 edition of the *Book Collector* (No 182, £2.80) featured a comprehensive list of Arthurian books in fiction and poetry.

FACTUAL

Susan Morgan found a recent CD ROM of limited interest though she thought newcomers may find it more exciting. ***The Arthurian Tradition*** (Cromwell Productions, originally £89.95) claims to separate the myths from the reality, tracing "the progression of King Arthur from his historical roots as a Romano-British warlord through the mythology of the Celts to his final resting place as the most English of Kings". In addition to guides to literature and sources (including primary texts) there is analysis, expert interviews, sections on legends, sites and principal characters, plus an art gallery and filmography with filmed reconstructions.

To order you can dial the mail order hotline (01789 292779), fax (01789 415210), e-mail crom@compuserve.com or visit their website www.comhistory.com and follow the on-screen instructions, or order direct from Cromwell Productions Ltd, 11 Central Chambers, Cooks Alley, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 6QN. Book club members can get it even cheaper: for example Mind, Body & Soul (Guild House, Farnsby Street, Swindon X, SN99 9XX) offer it at £5.00 less than a reduced recommended retail price of £24.99.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's ***Of Giants: sex, monsters, and the Middle Ages*** appears to promise a salacious read, but is a study of medieval masculinity and identity from a psychoanalytic perspective. It features *Beowulf*, Chrétien's *The Knight with the Lion*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, and is published by the University of Minnesota Press [0 8166 -3217 0] at around £13.00. Review next issue.

The following items of information, which have come via Excalibur Books, deserve to have your attention drawn to them; no dates are given but I assume these are recent publications.

The first title began life as a medieval Cornish text, was translated by John of Cornwall into 12th century Latin, and has now been translated by Julyan Holmes back into Cornish as ***An Dhargan a Verdhin*** and into a parallel English text as ***The Prophecy of Merlin***. This 20 page paperback, published by the Cornish Language Board, includes a 9 page introduction and is priced at £2.99.

Victor Pierce Jones investigates the early Matter of Britain in his ***Glastonbury Myth or Southern Mystery*** [Rosamund pb £7.99 116pp], questioning the traditional Glastonian basis for the insular legends of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, the Grail and Merlin, proposing Havant instead as where Arthur found Excalibur

and associating Hayling Island with the Grail and Merlin.

The Book of the Holy Grail [Pulpless pb £17.99 242pp] is authored by no less than Joseph of Arimathea himself: this publication 'calls the book the Merovingian Bible and says there is a Merovingian lineage and that Joseph founded the Order of the Holy Grail at Rennes-le-Château. J R Ploughman' [is he out to lunch? A very Arthurian *nom de plume*] 'who has supplied "Keys to the Quest" calls himself the Patriarch of the Merovingian Gnostic Church, Order of the Holy Grail and we are told he is married to a Grail princess and runs a band which blends punk, goth and babydoll music.'

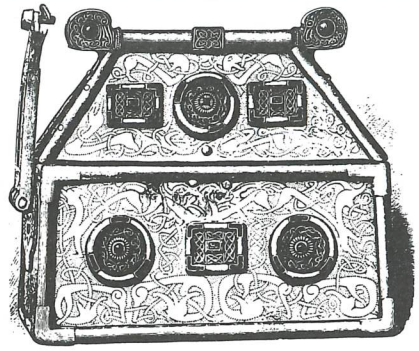
Some hardback studies that may require a second mortgage now follow. Arthurian literature in French is the subject of B Schmolke-Hesslmann's ***Evolution of Arthurian Romance***; published by Cambridge University Press, this 372-page volume retails at £37.50. Taylor and Francis publish the ***Arthurian Name Dictionary*** [hb £54.00 544pp] which lists legendary Arthurian characters, places, objects and themes. From the same publishers come Scott Littleton's ***From Scythia to Camelot*** [pb £15.99 440pp] which as most Pendragons know proposes that key Arthurian legends originated in eastern Europe.

Lastly, your attention is drawn to Frank Reno's ***Historic King Arthur*** [McFarland hb £38.25 458pp]. All these titles should be obtainable from your local bookshop. Alternatively, try **Excalibur Books**, who may be contacted at I Hillside Gardens, Bangor, BT19 6SJ, Northern Ireland (phone 01247 458579 or email excalibur@bangor.fbusiness.co.uk).

REVIEWERS WANTED!

Arthurian literature is constantly burgeoning, and it is getting increasingly difficult to monitor even a fraction of it all. Can we appeal to all readers to keep us up to date with notices or reviews, however short, and however diffident you feel about your expertise? Please include as much of the following as you can - author, title, publisher, publication date, price, number of pages, ISBN, and whether it is hardback or paperback.

Or write original stuff yourself. Editor Ian O'Reilly is looking for prose between 1000 and 7000 words as well as epic poetry, all on the subject of the Grail, for a new publication. "We will consider any style or genre as long as it deals with the Grail Myth in some way," an advert for ***The Grail Anthology*** reads, sent in by Steve Sneyd. "What is the Grail? Whom does it serve? You decide!" Send submissions to Ian O'Reilly, 38 Pierrot Steps, 71 Kursaal Way, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2UY.



Reviews

Rodney Castleden
King Arthur: the truth behind the legend
Routledge 2000 £19.99
0 415 19575 6 hb 265pp illus

Pendragon member Rodney Castleden is well known as an investigator into prehistoric enigmas - the Minoan civilisation, Neolithic Britons, hill figures - and has now turned his attention to Arthur. As expected, this then is a thoroughly researched book, burrowing into scholarly literature, archaeological reports, fringe theories and texts both ancient and modern. Many contributions to *Pendragon* are here referenced too, which is nice. There are photos of relevant sites and a generous helping of detailed maps, plans and figures mostly by the

author himself, and the whole is attractively laid out. There are a few typos, which may well be corrected before a paperback edition, but which don't detract too much.

After setting the scene, Castleden plunges into an examination of the nature of the available early documents and what is known of the archaeology of post-Roman Britain; he then outlines the historical context before turning his gaze on the man himself, his possible power bases and his disappearance. It won't be giving too much away to say that he plumps for a West Country setting for Arthur, but that he places his demise and burial far away from Glastonbury, and not at any of the expected sites.

Though mostly based on plausibility, this is a frankly speculative work. In a wide-ranging and difficult area such as Arthurian period research, it is impossible to be sure about most so-called facts, the only certainty being most of the evidence remains ambiguous. Castleden builds possible scenarios upon attractive hypotheses, and this is fair enough, but the whole fails to persuade. Consciously planned as a successor to the late John Morris' *The Age of Arthur*, this book falls victim to the same assumptions about the reliability of medieval texts, despite a fair amount of critical appraisal.

The author is unfailingly polite to recent theories that Arthur was Owain Ddantwyn, Athrwys or Arthmael, or that he was located exclusively in South Wales or Scotland, and equally politely rejects them. I think however that there is not enough discussion of the Arthurian placename and folklore evidence outside the Dumnonian peninsula, or of the forms and distribution of the name Arthur in place and time, or of any influence that mythic archetypes may have had on the development of the Arthurian legend. Nor am I convinced by the attempts to account for Camelot, anvil-shaped stones and the like as support for his historical reconstruction. And I think the problems of chronology thrown up by the perhaps irreconcilable dates of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Welsh Annals* are too easily skated over.

There are a few other blemishes which may be laid at the door of an editor; for example, Bede never mentions Camlann (page 107), and a previously unknown 10th century document, *Some of King Arthur's Wonderful Men* (page 317) is a modern title given to a translation of an excerpt from *Culhwch ac Olwen*. But these are minor quibbles. Castleden has made a bold attempt to locate and give substance to the best known of the insular Dark Age figures, and I for one will need little excuse to dip back into these pages.

Chris Lovegrove

Nicholas Orme
English Church Dedications
With a Survey of Devon and Cornwall
University of Exeter 1996
0 85989 516 5 pb 248pp

Christian churches are in the first instance dedicated to God. However, since the 4th century AD, it has been the practice to also place the church under an additional patron - a saint or spiritual being such as the Virgin Mary, St John, or St Peter. This saint then also serves to identify the church. Nicholas Orme argues that the dedication of a church represents a part of the church's history, and is as deserving of historical study as, say, the actual fabric of the church. Yet this is a neglected field of research. Fundamental questions such as: how old is the dedication? has it changed over time? why was the dedication chosen? are distributions of dedications meaningful? have not really been addressed with adequate research. Nicholas Orme's book is the first full-length work to deal with these issues meaningfully. The result is a fascinating, scholarly and pioneering study in the history and geography of devotion to the saints.

In approaching the subject of church dedications, Nicholas Orme has chosen to examine in detail the evidence for a particular region, Cornwall and Devon. The significance of this choice is that there is a distinct contrast between the dedications of the parish churches of the two counties today. In Cornwall, nearly two-thirds are dedicated to Celtic saints of the 5th-8th centuries, many of them utterly obscure, such as St Ia of St Ives and SS Meva and Idi of Mevagissey. However, the pattern of dedications in Devon reflects that of the rest of England, with dedications being mainly to Biblical, Roman and western European saints - Mary, Peter, All Saints, Michael, Andrew and John the Baptist - although some 10% of Devon dedications are to Celtic saints such as Petroc and Nectan.

The book begins with a 60-page survey of the history of church dedications in England from Roman times to the present day. This section is illuminated by the conclusions drawn from Orme's detailed study of the dedications of Devon and Cornwall, which forms the bulk of the book, about two-thirds of the text. Here is provided a detailed list of the 700 ancient parish churches and 100 mediaeval religious houses and hospitals of Devon and Cornwall. For each church, full details of the documentary evidence, in chronological order, for the church dedication, including place-name and other evidence, is given. The records checked include mediaeval records of the Crown, charters, bishops' registers and wills, plus the later directories of the 18th and 19th centuries. Related evidence on the parish feast dates is also noted. Each entry also

includes Orme's commentary on the dedication evidence. The book is concluded with an index of dedications by saint's name, a substantial bibliography and a text index.

Orme's researches leads him to draw a number of interesting and important conclusions. It has often been assumed that dedications were fluid, changing, for example, when church ownership changed. Orme found, however, that saints were honoured consistently throughout the mediaeval period. Whilst new saints might be added to make dual dedications, it was rare for saints to be wholly superseded. There was no evidence at all for changes of dedication in Devon, and only limited evidence in Cornwall, where some of the more obscure Celtic saints were lost or identified with more famous saints.

It was only after the Reformation in the 16th century that we can see church dedications changing. The Reformist church organisation was hostile to the cults of saints and observation of their feasts, and interest in the saints waned. In the 18th century, there was a reawakening of interest in mediaeval church dedications by antiquarian writers. However, when they tried to research and recover the dedications, local knowledge was often lacking. These writers were reduced to conjecturing many lost dedications using the dates of the parish feast days, but these did not necessarily have any link to the mediaeval patronal festival. One of the early surveys had fewer than half the Devon dedications correct, the remainder being incorrect or unknown. Corrections could be made by later writers as more evidence of the mediaeval dedication became available. However, in many cases the 18th century 'dedications' acquired currency and have replaced the mediaeval dedication. Even now, we do not know the mediaeval dedication of 30% of Devon churches.

Orme also discusses the origins of church dedications. Not only did dedications rarely change in the mediaeval period, the majority seem likely to be of considerable antiquity, of at least Anglo-Saxon date in Devon, and of the Celtic period in Cornwall. Although evidence for the actual dedication of the church is most common from the 13th-15th centuries, place-name and other early documentary evidence proves that some churches were associated with their saints already by the 10th century. It is thus likely that many dedications were adopted at or soon after the time of the original church foundation. Of course, this makes it very difficult to now assess why a particular saint was chosen as church patron, since sources for the pre-Conquest period are limited.

Nicholas Orme's book is an original and important contribution to the field of ecclesiastical studies. It is the summary of what must have been a vast amount of research, and makes a great deal of well-referenced information easily available. It will allow other students of the cults of saints to investigate further and develop the summary conclusions presented by Orme. In particular, because of the preponderance of Celtic saints in Cornwall, this book is an important contribution to the study of the early Celtic church. It will also form a vital reference work for parish historians. Future students in all these fields will owe Nicholas Orme a considerable debt.

Nick Grant

John Billingsley
A Stony Gaze:
investigating Celtic and Other Stone Heads
Capall Bann Publishing 1998 £10.95
1898307 717 pb 206pp illus

I first closely encountered, and felt the fascination of, the so-called Celtic head a few years ago, at a behind-the-scenes open day at our local museum; the resident archaeologist let us take turns holding one of these stylised, intently gazing, ostensibly crude pieces, then asked us to try to guess when it was made. When we'd finished our guesses, we waited for the authoritative answer. Instead, he told us he had no idea, it could have been made at any time from 400 BC or so to a few years ago.

This extraordinary fact, that, particularly in the Yorkshire Pennines, people continued right to the last century - perhaps still continue - to carve heads identical to those pre-Roman Britons made, was the author's starting point. The trail he follows in this book then took him through a web of mythical and historical associations, not just in Britain or even the wider Celtic world-as-was, but as far abroad as Siberia and Japan, and back across millennia of history and folk memory to the Stone Age.

Severed head as soul-seat, as trophy, as proof of punishment; as guardian of thresholds, warder-off of harm, purveyor of prophetic wisdom, Green Man, gurner, grinner, grimacer, heirloom and screamer and squatter in the house, as disturbing invader of church decoration; these are just a few of the areas explored. The author indicates where they are and were found, geographically and in terms of structures, on houses, bridges, wells and so on, tells of some of the known makers of more recent times, and tracks the heads through ancient religions, involving Odin, Hermes, and many other early divinities, and across lore and literature.

Arthur, as might be expected, enters the story, for example when the author looks at the related field of the "female exhibitionist" sheela

na gig figures, and relates them to the hag transformed of Arthurian tales; in the discussion of protective heads, like that of Bran, unwisely disinterred from Tower Hill by the Rex Quondam; and again when discussion how the appearance of a head symbol on swords and daggers, as far apart as Celtic times and the English Civil War, can be related to the special bond between weapon and owner demonstrated, for instance, in the case of Excalibur.

This is, without doubt, an essential book for anyone with an interest in the particular field of Celtic heads, but more than that, it will be valuably enlightening to anyone intrigued by the Celtic heritage and indeed by the endless interlacings of myth, folklore, and physical heritage of these islands.

Numerous photographs and line illustrations by the author and by Craig Chapman enliven the pages, although it's worth remarking that Sidney Jackson's pioneering 1973 book on *Celtic and Other Stone Heads*, which consisted predominantly of photographs of over sixty, retains its value as a visual complement on that aspect.

My only quibble with this book, and it is a very slight one, is that, reflecting the book's origin in the author's MA thesis, the traditional academic structure of "tell them what you're going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you've told them" causes an element of repetition, albeit with expanding detail and depth, as *Stony Gaze* proceeds.

Steve Sneyd

Arthur Part 1
A ballet by David Bintley
with music by John McCabe
World premiere by The Birmingham Royal Ballet 25th January 2000, Birmingham Hippodrome UK

The Arthurian legend has not often been the subject of a ballet (notable exceptions being Frederic Ashton's *Lady of Shalott*, with music by Sibelius, in 1931, and Gustav Holst's balletic interlude in his opera *The Perfect Fool* in 1936). This new work, choreographed by David Bintley, with music by John McCabe, adds a significant chapter to the legend. As the first half only of a major two part work, it will eventually extend to some three and a half hours, making it one of the longest and most ambitious ballets produced in Britain.

Essentially, the story is based on the early part of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, with glances at the *Historia* of Geoffrey of Monmouth and contemporary sources. It covers the period from just before the birth of Arthur to his marriage to Guinevere, and includes the story of Uther and Igraine, the Sword in the Stone, and (somewhat conflated) the events of Arthur's wedding, Lancelot's growing love for the queen, and the massacre of the innocents. The battle of the red and white dragons is transposed from the episode of Vortigern's tower to the clash of Uther against the Saxons, and is used to good effect as two dancers enact the struggle between the two beasts.

All of this is admirably portrayed in a series of tableaux, some powerful ensemble dances and some notable duets. There are some particularly moving moments: as when Igraine is reunited with her son and crowns him; when he learns the true identity of his half-sister; and the climactic events of the marriage, which here take place synchronously with the massacre and Lancelot's expression of his guilt.

Merlin is a notable figure, appearing first in a wheel chair and gradually growing younger and stronger as Arthur's reign gets under way (once again, the invention of T H White, that Merlin lived backwards, appears as though it were an original part of the story). Merlin is a rather sinister figure here, master-minding the birth of Arthur and then dismissing Uther as no longer necessary to his grand design. Later, it is Merlin who imposes his will on the young king, determining that he commit the terrible crime of infanticide.

It is this event, and those leading up to it, around which the entire ballet revolves, and in one terrifying scene we witness the birth of Mordred who emerges as a blood-stained monster already preparing to destroy his father's world. This balances the rather silly birth of Arthur, with nuns and midwives trotting about the stage with blood-stained towels, while Igraine gives firth behind screens. But apart from this the mood and staging of the production was both striking and powerful, and there are a number of references to contemporary themes, such as 'ethnic cleansing', throughout.

The work reunites Bintley with veteran composer John McCabe, whose earlier production of *Edward II* was a huge success. The music veers between lush, romantic sounds and a spiky, contemporary vocabulary which ideally suits the tale itself. Alongside the conventional orchestral forces there are some more exotic instruments, including croatales, flexatone, rototoms, whip and anvil, waterphone and rainstick!

There is a careful use of individual instruments to represent the characters (almost leit-motifs) whose themes wind in and out of the action and help to unify the whole. The music which accompanies the passionate union of Uther and Igraine and later of Lancelot is full of an aching sadness and unrequited passion which lingers in the mind long after leaving the theatre. Indeed, McCabe's score and Bintley's choreography work so well together that the

work, which is the product of a lengthy gestation, is at times almost miraculously synchronous.

Costumes by Jasper Conran and sets by Peter J Davison all work well. The former are vaguely modern - as is the setting - and there is an underlying timelessness about the production, with knights carrying kalashnikovs as well as swords, showing the relevance of the story to our own time. As Bintley says in his programme note: "Armies are armies in any age: they pillage, rape, and slaughter. By spear or bullet; by firebrand or napalm."

With part two set to appear in 2002, this looks set to become one of the most impressive additions to the canon, and seems an especially appropriate one with which to begin a new millennium of Arthurian story-telling.

John Matthews, Oxford, England

Steve Sneyd
What Time Has Use For
and other Arthurian Poetry: third edition
Kite Modern Poetry Series, KT 83
K T Publications 1998 £4.95
0 907759 12 2 pb 64pp illus

Poetic truth has its own validity, and Sneyd's vision of the Arthurian matter is as true as true can be. Myth, legend, history, archaeology - all distinctions are merged one into another in a collection that logically links the unlinkable. In these pieces there is an intensity that is not dense, a language that reads easily though it looks obscure, a shorthand that speaks volumes. Here humanity is manifest in mythological contexts that might have been impersonal, here there is a sense of place when we read of sites not yet visited.

It is hard to single out individual jewels. I liked the short, haiku-like miniatures such as *Time Of The Goatstar* ("this moth-eyed / man Merlin winks aloud") and the poetic equivalents of The Collected Works of Shakespeare in ten minutes flat (like *A Band Of Brothers Hunt The Grail*), as well as the epic feel of *A Time Of Buried Questioning* with its different levels of allusions and its hauntingly simple final commentary on Gildas' judgement of his contemporaries, "They employ the dark and stormy nights in watching the hostile motions of their enemies, saying, *Fighting is better than loneliness*":

lonely without Arthur
dying in his name
name of the undying
god in all but name
to them he came
they said but never
truly went away again

The whole really does deserve several re-readings. Perhaps a fourth edition could be complemented by facing illustrations, though as it stands the text generates its own powerful images. This is an expanded version of the collection that appeared in earlier editions in 1992 and 1996, and includes a selected Arthurian booklist with commentary, and further notes and a glossary. It can be ordered direct from K T Publications, 16 Fane Close, Stamford, Lincs PE9 1HG for £5.50 including postage in the UK or £8.00 / $15.00 overseas. A few of the shorter pieces appear elsewhere in this issue.

Chris Lovegrove

Christine Poulson
The quest for the Grail:
Arthurian legend in British art 1840-1920
Manchester University Press 1999 £17.99
0 7190 5537 7 pb 268pp illus

The author is a Fellow of the Centre for Nineteenth-century Studies at the University of Sheffield, but this is no-dry-as-dust academic publication. Plentifully illustrated with fourteen colour and sixty monochrome plates, this is an engrossing enquiry into the 19th century renaissance of the Arthurian legend, stimulated by the re-publication of Malory and by Tennyson's reworking of the stories. Frescoes by Dyce in the robing rooms at Westminster Palace and murals by Rossetti and others in the library of the Oxford Union Society opened the floodgates for further works of art developing the often difficult themes of the legends, right through to the early twentieth century.

The treatment of the legends naturally reflected the obsessions and outlook of the Victorian period. Adultery, seduction and other sexual misdemeanours were not easy topics then for public consumption, and examination of the traditional Arthurian stories revealed few moral virtues that could be safely appropriated in national works of art without some adjustments. The High Church movement in Anglicanism, occult ideas, concepts of Saxon stereotypes, women's increasing financial independence in the eyes of the law, solar mythology - all these and other topics of debate were somehow incorporated in the Arthurian art of the period.

It is to Christine Poulson's credit that this study entertains as well as educating the reader on how Victorian attitudes shaped the way we still view the legends in our mind's eye. The often disturbing visions of the Pre-Raphaelites, the questing imagery of war memorials, the orientalism of Beardsley, sentimental views of fate of the Lady of Shalott, the curious perceptions of Lancelot or Galahad with Viking helmets and Saxon hosiery - the responses are varied and surprising and rarely predictable despite our apparent familiarity with them.

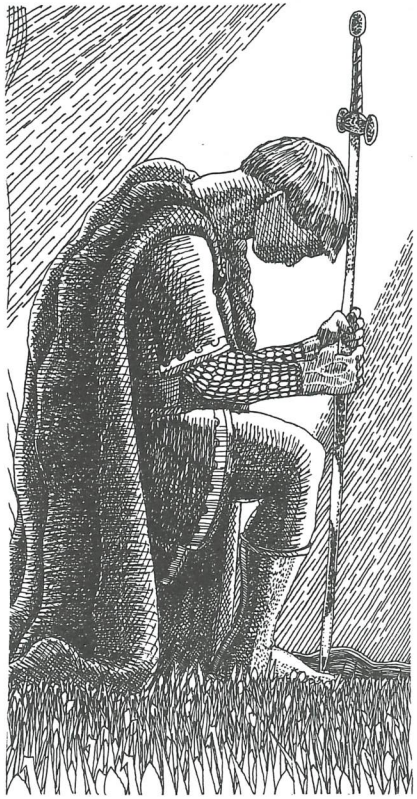
Chris Lovegrove

Beatrice Phillpotts
The Faeryland Companion
Pavilion Books 1999 £14.99
1 86205 120 8 hb illus

The Faeryland Companion is a charming, illustrated work describing the history of faeries in folklore and in the popular imagination. It contains artwork by such excellent illustrators as Brian Froud, Alan Lee, Arthur Rackham and several more. The author does touch briefly - and not entirely accurately - on the Arthurian legends (she claims that Morgan-le-Fay tries to seduce Gawain in *Gawain and the Green Knight* - but it's not too far off the mark).

Perhaps not a book for the serious scholar, it is nevertheless an enthralling work for anyone interested in folklore and, as a little light reading with some pleasant pictures besides, I'm certainly happy to have it in my collection.

Ian Brown



Cindy Mediavilla
Arthurian Fiction: an annotated bibliography
The Scarecrow Press 1999
0 8108 3644 0 trade pb 156pp

The author, a professional librarian and library studies teacher, clearly aims primarily at fellow librarians and teachers wishing to recommend books to teenage readers - there's a Reading Level system relating to age groups, for example (novels primarily for adults, for instance, are coded High School Level, making spotting them easy). Nevertheless, anyone with an interest in Arthurian fiction will find this book a useful overview, with plenty of intriguing discoveries among the two hundred-plus novels covered, each given an average of a half page of description.

After a brief introductory discussion of Arthurian origins, and of recent trends in Arthurian fiction, including more female viewpoints and those of traditionally negative figures like Morgan Le Fay and Mordred, reasons for exclusion from this book are explained: explicit sexual content, archaic/pedantic prose, and already established classic status (*eg* Malory).

Defining Arthurian fiction as either set in Camelot, featuring characters from the legend, depicting an historic Arthur, incorporating a major theme like Grail or Return, or hinging on a key Arthurian artefact, the author then explains the overarching themes into which she has grouped the books. There are eight such, restricting more specific themes to be located via the index (examples being "time travel" and "science fiction", both, in my opinion, rather arbitrarily treated - the index pinpoints only a few of the books included here I'd regard as fitting those categories).

Her "Big Eight" are:

1. Romance of Camelot - the tragic loves and love triangles;
2. Arthur the Roman leader - "Dark Age" would perhaps be a less disputable adjective 0 *ie* historical;
3. Women of Camelot;
4. Merlin, Kingmaker and Mage;
5. "Unlikely Heroes of Camelot": minor figures, coming-of-age (except Merlin, but including Arthur's childhood) - in effect a category for everything that doesn't fit her other categories!
6. the Holy (Grail) Quest;
7. Return of the King - including 20th century onwards;
8. "The Legacy Continues" - non-Arthurian characters, past, present or future, thrust into Arthurian situations.

Inevitably, these categories produce anomalies - why, for instance, is *A Connecticut Yankee at*

King Arthur's Court an "unlikely hero" rather than an example of the continuing Legacy? But then *any* system would produce oddities, so intertwined are different aspects of the Matter of Britain.

As an *ad hoc* test of the book's comprehensiveness within its own parameters, I checked my own reasonable-sized collection of modern Arthurian fiction against her entries, and found the majority included. Of the exceptions, three were readily understandable: *The Spaceman and King Arthur*, a poor novelisation of the Disney film; Adam Fergusson's *Roman Go Home*, an account of Vortigern's dealings with the Saxons, used as an excuse to pillory modern radicalism, which is set just pre-Arthur; and Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Road to Camlann*, basically a straightforward Malory rewrite.

The fourth, *Eusebius the Phoenician* (Christopher Webb 1969), a dramatic story involving the Grail, I would have thought relevant to her purpose; although from a children's book publisher, it seems to me to be aimed at early/mid teens.

The omissions which really did surprise me were two: firstly, and among the most original Grail novels I know, Michael Moorcock's Von Bek series, of a military family's hereditary involvement with the sacred cup, and with Lucifer's plan to use it to perfect Earth in despite of God. I would have thought these books would appeal to older teenagers, full of adventure and dramatic historical settings like the Thirty Years War and French Revolution, and that she would have found their pro-feminist elements of interest. (Perhaps the title of one in the series, *The Brothel in Rosenstrasse*, 1982, damned all by association!) Secondly, Patrick McCormack's 1997 *Albion: the Last Companion* - set post-Camlann, but with masterly handling of flashback through the entire story - again an adult novel, but again one with teen-gripping qualities, surely.

Although, thus, there are gaps, this volume does include many remarkable but sadly little known or nearly forgotten books: I was particularly pleased to see the inclusion of H Warner Munn's extraordinary *Merlin's Godson*, a pulpish but wonderfully "what if" saga of escape by survivors of Camlann to America to overthrow the Mound Builders' empire. Further evidence of thoroughness comes with inclusion of two intriguing oddities that interface thriller and Arthurian fiction, Elizabeth Peters' agreeably daft comedy-melodrama *The Camelot Caper*, and Anthony Price's *Our Man in Camelot* with its tense Cold War-set hunt for the Badon battlefield site.

Although descriptions of individual books generally seem balanced and adequate, there are occasional instances of the over-terse, and, at the other extreme, of plot summaries so detailed as to leave little need to ever read the books.

One final useful feature is the barebones, but useful, list of Arthurian short story anthologies, drawing attention, for example, to Mike Ashley's series, with their many rediscoveries.

Steve Sneyd

Brian K Davison
Tintagel Castle, Cornwall
English Heritage 1999 £2.95
1 85074 701 6 pb 44pp illus

This is the new official guidebook to Tintagel Castle which, incidentally, includes details of the 1998 Artognou slate find, the so-called Arthur Stone. The text is divided into three parts, a tour and description of the site, a history of the castle, and an overview of the Arthurian legends which takes up a good half of the book. There are plentiful colour photos, plans and reconstructions which serve both armchair traveller and authentic visitor equally well.

Full acknowledgement is made of recent re-evaluations of the significance of Tintagel in the Dark Ages. Following his excavations in the 1930s, Radford's interpretation of the site as a monastery has given way to a recognition that Tintagel really was a royal stronghold in the post-Roman period, though Davison refrains from identifying the "man of considerable importance" who fortified the site with Uther, Arthur, Mark or any other name. With the evidence of considerable quantities of quality imports from Turkey, Greece, North Africa and southern Spain a local dynast seems to have built on the 3rd or 4th century occupation of the site, a place that might have been called *Duroconovium* in the Roman period.

This is an attractive publication, well illustrated and cautiously authoritative, given that it's an official mouthpiece. Edited by Louise Wilson, there is one curious mismatch between text and picture caption on page 33: "the link between Glastonbury and the Holy Grail is an entirely modern idea" says the text, while "Glastonbury Tor ... has been connected ... with the Holy Grail since the twelfth century" says the caption.

Chris Lovegrove

Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd
The Keys to Avalon
Element 2000 £18.99
1 86204 735 9 hb 302pp

A new Arthurian hypothesis is always welcome, particularly if it constitutes an all-out assault on what one had previously taken for granted. Blake & Lloyd undoubtedly set out to shake the reader's convictions. The main thrust of their argument is that Geoffrey of Monmouth, in translating his Welsh original, misunderstood the phrase *ynys Prydein* as 'the island of Britain', whereas (by their account) it should mean 'the realm of Wales'. Thus, if we are to believe, places and events from Welsh history have wrongly been spread to cover the whole island and beyond, resulting in any number of historical absurdities in Geoffrey's narrative, such as Arthur's continental campaigns, unattested by any continental historian. That Geoffrey's *Historia* (hereinafter *HRB*) contains such absurdities is true; that the authors have found the reason is more doubtful.

Granted, *ynys* in Welsh can mean something like 'province' or 'realm'. Blake & Lloyd adduce evidence from Asser, amongst others, that Latin 'Britannia' can denote Wales (14-15). I may have missed it (the index is no help), but I don't remember their offering unequivocal evidence that *Prydein* in Welsh can mean this.

Geoffrey's own use of 'Britannia' (apart from his references to Walter of Oxford's book coming from 'Britannia') is clear. He uses it for both Brittany and Britain, being careful to indicate which he means once Brittany has appeared in his narrative. Wales he calls 'Cambria', adding that it is now called 'Gualia' (II.i). [It is thus unlikely that the 'Britannia' the book came from was Wales.] This being his normal usage, he could well, if confronted with *ynys Prydein* meaning Wales, have taken it to denote the whole island. So far so good. [He does, however, call Welsh the British language (*lingua Britannica*, II.i), so the issue isn't as clear-cut as it might be.]

But did Geoffrey's book contain the phrase *ynys Prydein*? We don't know. If it ever existed, it is lost. Blake & Lloyd, however, are sanguine that we can recover at least 'the original names of the people and places that Geoffrey had before him' (13) by examining the sixty-plus manuscripts that contain the Welsh *Brut y Brenhinedd* (*Chronicle of the Kings* - hereinafter *ByB*). No manuscript of *ByB* is earlier than 1200, and the title is a generic one that covers some six or seven different Welsh versions of *HRB*. *ByB* is not Geoffrey's Welsh original (the *ByB* texts translate Geoffrey's direct or oblique quotations from Latin sources), but it is remotely possible that some of the manuscripts contain matter derived from it. Blake & Lloyd exhibit commendable caution: 'until a complete correlation between all of the surviving Welsh manuscripts is undertaken a definitive answer remains impossible' (13). This caution, however, once exhibited, is then thrown to the winds: the arguments that occupy much of the rest of the book are based on the few complete texts and fragments of *ByB* that have been published, with no evidence that the authors have consulted a single unpublished manuscript. Moreover, they persistently refer to *ByB* as if it were a unitary text, rather than a number of different versions.

Unfortunately, when it comes to working out in detail the original idea that Geoffrey's 'Britannia' conceals a reference to Wales, the authors are driven to desperate shifts to squeeze Geoffrey's British geography into the map of Wales. Caer Efrog (Caer Ebrauc, Eboracum, *ie* York, in Geoffrey) is identified as Viroconium near Wroxeter, on the slender grounds that 'Constantine' in *ByB* (Constantius in *HRB*) died at Caer Efrog, and Eaton Constantine near Wroxeter has a burial mound supposed (by whom?) to be his. By similarly identifying Llundain/Caer Lud with Ludlow and the river Temys with the Teme (Geoffrey's London and Thames), Blake & Lloyd give us no fewer than three ancient Welsh archbishoprics, which would have astonished Gerald of Wales in his vain quest to have but one acknowledged. Shifting Geoffrey's narrative to Wales removes the absurdity of Arthur's continental expeditions by making them forays across the border, but then adds a new and larger one by having Caesar invade Britain *via* Shropshire, his fleet being wrecked on stakes set in the bed of the Teme. Caer Fuddai, a name used by *ByB* texts for both Silchester and Cirencester in Geoffrey, is located at Machynlleth for no more compelling reason than the authors' fancy (50).

Again, the 'Sea of Caitness' that bounds *ynys Prydein* has nothing to do with Caithness ('the only option available when the realm of Ynys Prydein/Britannia is understood to be the whole of Britain', 40) as literal-minded dolts like myself have long supposed. Instead, the authors place it off the coast of North Wales, though the only documentation they produce for this is Ptolemy's not very similar place-name 'Seteia', which his co-ordinates place at the Dee estuary (40, 259).

Now, this is bad practice. If Blake & Lloyd are happy to trust Ptolemy's nomenclature and geographical co-ordinates when it suits them, why do they not do so elsewhere? Ptolemy has many place-names that are earlier forms of those that they discuss: his 'Eboracon', for example, is philologically related to 'Caer Efrog' and is located *at York*. There is, in fact, a substantial body of Roman, and later, place-

name evidence (much of it handily available in Rivet & Smith) ignored by the authors, consideration of which might have saved them from numerous embarassments. Likewise, an acquaintance with, say, Sir Ifor Williams's introduction to his edition of Taliesin's poems could have kept them from repeating 19th-century errors about Rheged (238-40).

Blake & Lloyd are not at their best when dealing with scribal variations. The Saxons in *ByB* land in *Keint*, which is usually taken to be Kent. However, to fit the authors' arguments, it should lie in south-east Wales. Luckily, in the Welsh *Triads* they find a character called Cywryt (father of one of the Gwenhwyfars; Bromwich, No 56), whose surnames varies in different manuscripts between *Gwent* and *Keint*. 'Here,' say they, 'we had evidence that Gwent and Ceint were interchangeable names for the same place' (57). All that this is evidence for is that similar names were sometimes confused by copyists. Thus, the *Triads* also contain (Bromwich, No 46) one Llawfrodedd, whose surname varies similarly between *Varvawc* (bearded) and *Varchog* (horseman). By Blake & Lloyd's argument, we should conclude that being bearded and being a horseman were interchangeable names for the same condition. I fear the Saxons must continue to come ashore in Kent, until some better argument is forthcoming.

And so on, for page after page. There is no space here to consider the Procrustean onomastics that fit Arthur's battles (as listed by Nennius) into the northern half of Wales, or the alarming contortions by which Avalon and *Glaestingaburh* are identified with the locale of Valle Crucis Abbey (with a strong hint at the end that the authors' next book will be about Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail). Adequately to reply to all their contentions would take volumes.

Confused in its methodology, inaccurate in its reporting, occasionally inconsistent with itself, and forcing the available evidence to fit a preconceived theory, *The Keys to Avalon* is unlikely to command widespread acceptance. Since, however, the authors' guiding lights appear to be J Gwenogfryn Evans, Acton Griscom and A W Wade-Evans, they are presumably well prepared for rejection. The book exhibits both erudition and ingenuity, but the erudition is partial, the ingenuity all too patent. Yet the authors do raise issues that need to be addressed, Geoffrey's mysterious book and his misapplication of Welsh place-names he failed to recognise. [One instance of this occurs in *HRB* II.x, where 'Oppidum Paladur' should denote Dunpelder, the fort of Traprain Law to the south of Edinburgh, but Geoffrey, knowing nothing of Traprain Law and recognising 'Paladur' as the Welsh for spear-shaft, blithely translates it as Shaftesbury.] If Blake & Lloyd's work serves merely to focus attention on the questions surrounding Geoffrey's sources, it will not have been written entirely in vain.

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[For a different approach to the question of Geoffrey's sources, see my 1990 article, 'Gildas the Poet' in *Arthurian Literature* X 1-11.]

Andrew H W Smith

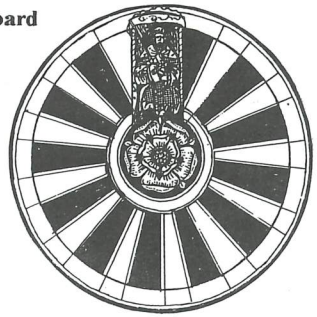
◆ Next issue, a review of Richard Barber's ***Myths and Legends of the British Isles*** (Boydell Press hb £30.00), second reviews of ***The Keys to Avalon*** and of the Lupack's study ***King Arthur in America*** (Boydell & Brewer hb 45.00) and an attempt to appraise Charles Thomas' ***Christian Celts: messages & images*** (Tempus hb £19.99).

The Spoils of Annwn

into
Deathjaw swan swift
Arthur like fish sword-bright
snatched fine prey darted back un-
dead yet

Steve Sneyd

***The*Board**



Kate Pollard

THE FOOD OF LORE

Composer **Karl Jenkins** was commissioned by BBC Wales to "depict the combined influences of Celtic and Christian mythology on Wales" at the Millennium. His work ***Dewi Sant***, based on the Dark Age saint and patron of Wales, was duly performed by a choir of 200 with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and broadcast by BBC2 Wales on Sunday 5 March 2000. Jenkins was born in Penclawdd in the Gower (not far from the Pendragon-sponsored dig at Llanelen) and, while classically-trained, was also in the jazz-rock group Soft Machine. According to the *Radio Times* he is "now one of the world's best-selling living composers".

Harrison Birtwhistle's opera ***Gawain*** was revived by The Royal Opera at the newly refurbished Royal Opera House in January 2000. Winner of the 1991 Evening Standard Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, and "one of the most monumental achievements in [The Royal Opera's] entire life span" (as the *Financial Times* put it), it received praise from *cognoscenti* when first aired.

The Birmingham Royal Ballet is promoting "an epic ballet cycle in two parts". ***Arthur Part 1*** was at the Hippodrome Theatre in Birmingham from January 25-29, resurfacing at other venues such as Bradford, Plymouth and Sunderland during March 2000, before settling to a London season at Covent Garden. With choreography by **David Bintley** and a score by **John McCabe**, the "magical and violent story" moves "from Arthur's birth up to his marriage to Guinevere ... with attendant bloody battles on the way" according to *The Guardian*.

Jenny Gilbert in the *Independent on Sunday* thought that *Part I* was "a largely satisfying, occasionally enthralling, entity in itself ... The great advantage of the legends of Arthur ... is that modern audiences have all but forgotten what they are, leaving the field clear for the necessary drastic cuts" (*Knights in black leather* January 30 2000). After the same team's *Edward II* there was initially a "sense of *déjà vu*" in the plot and design, but later it becomes clear "this isn't history, it's legend". While "Bintley is no Kenneth MacMillan" the reviewer declared herself "already impatient for *Part II*". Su Carroll interviewed both composer and choreographer for the *Western Morning News* (March 24), where it emerged that Merlin's Cave at Tintagel was a source of inspiration for the music.

The advertising makes use of a medieval crown surrounded by a bouquet of barbed wire with highlights looking like fairy lights; the "t" of "Arthur" looks like a scabbarded sword, and we are told that the ballet is "a legend in the making..." (For these details, thanks to Steve Sneyd, Kevin Byrne and Beryl Mercer; see also the review by John Matthews elsewhere in this issue.)

Joseph Holbrooke's Piano Concerto was given a rare outing on BBC Radio 3 on the afternoon of Monday January 3, played by Hamish Milne with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Martyn Brabbins. Inspired by Arthurian legend, the customary three movements, unusually for an abstract work, illustrate a story, the contest for Cordelia by Gwyn ap Nudd on May Day, in a piece with echoes particularly of Rachmaninov.

Holbrooke (1878-1958) wrote an opera trilogy also with an Arthurian theme, ***The Cauldron of Anwyn*** (*sic*), with a libretto by his patron Lord Howard de Walden. According to Percy Scholes, he "composed fluently and ably, but sometimes without sufficient self-criticism ... [A] vigorous, even violent, controversialist in support of British music in general and his own in particular ... he was largely forgotten, and became embittered and eccentric."

Eccentric (but not embittered) might a good way to describe the out-of-the-ordinary ensemble that is **Tintagel**. Grounded in medieval and traditional music, they bill themselves as a multimedia performance group playing "music from ancient Celtic lands, combining song with storytelling, imagery and dance". At Tintagel's core are Rebecca Austen-Brown, Rachel Hamilton and Clara Sanabras, who between them use fiddle, flute, recorder, harp, lute and hurdy gurdy as well as sing. They are joined by psaltery, gittern, bagpipe and percussion instrumentalists who also sing, tell stories and dance. Their programme ***Notes on the Old Cross*** features a number of songs and readings with an Arthurian connection, and a few pieces are transcribed as an interpretation of music from Celtic crosses. They recently played at the Purcell Room, Royal Festival Hall, in London on St David's Day; their contact number is 0181 905 5425 if you want details of future performances.

- Percy A Scholes *ed* (9th edition 1955) *The Oxford Companion to Music* [London OUP]

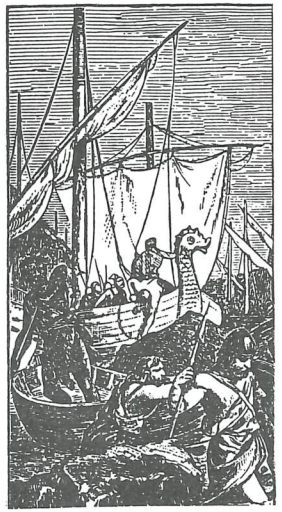
ARTHURIAN ART

Member **Anna-Marie Ferguson** has been working on original illustrations for a new edition of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (as previously mentioned in the journal). No stranger to the tales, she had already produced a set of tarot cards entitled *Legend: The Arthurian Tarot* in 1995 (with an accompanying book *A Keeper of Words*), and subsequently was NBC's Arthurian expert in New York when the TV mini-series *Merlin* was being promoted in the US in 1998.

She was short-listed for the job of illustrating the *Morte* after John Matthews, who was signed to edit the new edition, met her at a book-signing in London. The whole undertaking began as the millennium project of Cassell Publications, later taken on by Orion Publishing, though no immediate publication date has yet been announced. Thirty-two water-colour paintings and over thirty pen and ink sketches for the book were on display at the Red Deer and District Museum, Alberta, Canada in October 1999.

Ferguson is apparently the first woman ever to illustrate Malory, sharing honours with classic artists such as Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Rackham, Walter Crane and Howard Pyle. She admits that the task is "an artist's dream and nightmare. It is a book to seriously test an artist's ability." We hope to feature an article by her in a future issue of the journal.

- Penny Caster "The art of myth making" *Red Deer Advocate* September 19, 1999
- Teresa Neuman "*Le Morte d'Arthur* illustrated by local woman" *Our Community Red Deer* October 1999 12-13



TINTAGEL

A writer or poet was being sought to use Arthur's traditional birthplace as inspiration for a new work to celebrate the **National Year of the Artist** [*Western Morning News* December 29 1999, from Beryl Mercer].

The commission comes from North Cornwall Arts, English Heritage and South West Arts, and the writer-in-residence would be expected to hold workshops, talks and readings during the spring and summer of 2000, eventually producing a new poetry guide to enhance visitors' experiences of Tintagel Castle. More details were to be had from Sue Richardson, North Cornwall Arts, Market House Arcade, Launceston.

Meanwhile, it was hoped that Objective One funds could "kick-start" Tintagel's rejuvenation [wrote Julie Wheldon in the *Western Morning News* December 30 1999]. Few Arthurian tourists spend much time in the village itself, and local parish councillor Gandalf [!] Strutt hoped that a £750,000 regeneration scheme for street improvements, landscaping and a millennium clock would reverse this trend, with work starting before the end of 2000.

At the same time the *Western Morning News* was reporting **The Camelot Project**'s bid to attract overseas financial support for public access to historic Arthurian documents by sending out 500 copies of a new 18-minute video. As reported last issue, the Project is based at Worthyvale Manor near Camelford in Cornwall. The trustees will also be bidding for Objective One funds as well as a Lottery grant. Exchange magazine *Meyn Mamvro 41* notes the worrying development that free access to the nearby inscribed Latinus stone, once claimed as **Arthur's tombstone**, is now blocked. "Payment has to be made at the Centre, run by The Camelot Project..."

Meyn Mamvro also highlights problems at **Rocky Valley** and **St Nectan's Glen**, both at Bossiney near Tintagel. "Offerings at St Nectan's Kieve are getting out of proportion, and names and graffiti are being scratched onto pieces of slate at the site." Local lore claims this was where the quest for the grail began. Further down the valley "it is rumoured that the area by the [Rocky Valley] mazes has been bought by a blacksmith who has plans to charge people to see them and set up some sort of shop there selling Arthurian related stuff."

The century-old 65-bedroom **King Arthur's Castle Hotel** was built and designed in 1899 by Silvanus Trevail and dominates a headland at Tintagel, where the projected Great Western Railway branchline from Camelot failed to materialise. Entrepreneur **John Mappin** and

business partner **Ted Stourton**, backed by a financial consortium, plan to spend £5 million or more to transform the pile into a new five-star establishment re-named the **Camelot Castle Hotel**, according to Janet King ("Castle's new king and his vision of Camelot" *Western Morning News* February 21 2000).

"Look! they're at it again," notes Beryl Mercer, "mixing up the Arthurian sites. Camelot at Tintagel, indeed!" Meanwhile John Mappin thinks that the "ancient mythology of Britain ... is an untapped, unrealised national asset", though he apparently has no plans to turn Tintagel into a theme park. He wants to attract artists and poets and to create a centre for art exhibitions, poetry recitals, literary conferences and children's story telling evenings, a venue for weddings and local meetings, an open air theatre, a basement recording studio ...

"It could be worth between £200 and £600 million. *That really would be fantastic,*" *enthuses* John Mappin, who was educated at Winchester College, where the original manuscript of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* was discovered, and near where the high medieval Round Table hangs. We haven't heard the last of Mappin, who has a good line in self-publicity (despite some appalling factual gaffs in features about him, such as Jane Dickson's "The master of Camelot", source unknown, from Mark Cooper).

EVENTS

Anne Rouse notes a number of Arthurian events organised by **English Heritage**, from their *Events 2000* diary.

South West

- **May** Saturday 13, Sunday 14, from noon at **Tintagel Castle**: *Mists of Lyonesse* (performed by the Silures Iron Age Society) - the Cornish Arthurian legend of Tristan and Isolde told in drama and story-telling
- **August** Sunday 27, Bank Holiday Monday 28, from noon at **Old Sarum Castle**, Wiltshire: *King Arthur's Greatest Victory* (various performers) - find out the facts behind Arthurian fiction at this recreation of the Battle of Badon Hill, thought to be fought around 500 AD, plus fascinating living history

Midlands/North

Arthurian Antics (Inner State Theatre Company) - stories of brave knights and daring dragons, told by King Arthur, Guinevere and Pen, their pet dragon, held on the following dates at these venues, from noon:

- **April/May** Sunday 30, Bank Holiday Monday 1st May at **Mount Grace Priory**, North Yorkshire
- **June** Saturday 17, Sunday 18 at **Peveril Castle**, Derbyshire
- **July** Saturday 8, Sunday 9 at **Warkworth Castle**, Northumberland, and Saturday 29 at **Corbridge Roman site**, Northumberland
- **August** Saturday 5, Sunday 6 at **Wroxeter Roman city**, Shropshire

All events are subject to entrance charge (although free for English members), and there are also many other events involving Robin Hood and various other medieval capers. Further details are available from English Heritage (01793 414910).

MERLIN'S MART

Modern Originals: the Catalogue from around the World gives you the chance to "own the sword of myth and legend". With wondrous disregard for the pre-Malory legend, the catalogue tells us that "to become King of England [*sic*], King Arthur had to draw the **Excalibur Sword** from the stone..." With a handguard decorated with a dragon and the words *EXCALIBVR KING ARTHVR* on the scabbard, the 97cm sword retails at £39.50, with a scabbard thrown in for another ten pounds. Ade Dimmick also brings news of a recent offer from Franklin Mint, **The Sword in the Stone Diamond Ring**. "He'll feel like a king when he wears the first official ring of its kind ... sponsored by The International Arthurian Society." With black onyx, a sword of 9

carat gold, hand-set with a diamond and mounted on sterling silver plated with 22 carat gold, perfect fit is guaranteed for £195 or five instalments of £39.

"Beautifully hand crafted original Medieval clothing for parties, festivals and weddings" is available from **Camelot Dream Clothing**, though a rather Victorian or Edwardian vision of the middle ages is evident. Visit the shop at 7 Northload Street, Glastonbury BA6 9JJ; alternatively phone 01458 835990 or access

http://www.isleofavalon.co.uk/camelot.html

(notice sent in by Kevin Byrne).

Andrew H W Smith tells us that he was given the ***Puzz-3D Camelot*** jigsaw puzzle (*The Board* last issue) as a Christmas present: there are 620 pieces, "which suggests that it *is* one and the same as its *Puzzle-Plex* predecessor" mentioned before in *Pendragon*.

Herne Silver hand-craft Celtic jewellery in hallmarked sterling silver to historical and contemporary designs. For a copy of their colour catalogue write to 8 Levendale Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2TW, or call 0181 699 1590. Other replica sterling silver jewellery in limited editions is produced by Jeffrey Wallis of **Archaeofacts Silversmithing**, 59 Henley Street, Oxford OX4 1ES [tel 01865 247856] using lost wax casting, forging and punch work techniques. An Anglo-Saxon button brooch dating to around 425 from Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire retails at £46.00, and Bronze Age barb-and-tang flint arrowhead pendants and archaeologist's trowel earrings also feature in their catalogue.

Laurence Gardner and Adrian Wagner have a range of items entitled the **Realm of the Holy Grail Products**. If you are interested in Gardner's books try the website at

http://www.mediaquest.co.uk/lgardner.html

Audio cassette talks come in three volumes, *Bloodline of the Holy Grail*, *Genesis of the Grail Kings*, *Hidden Elements in Music and Sound / Feminine Element in Mankind*, and details of these are on

http://www.mediaquest.co.uk

Audio CDs include Multimedia CD extras: *Holy Spirit and the Holy Grail* and *Genesis of the Grail Kings*. Their CD Rom is entitled *Realm of the Holy Grail Volume One* [Mac/Win] - details from

www.mediaquest.co.uk/R1mCDR1.html

WORMWIDE WEB

Arthurian stories often feature a magical encounter by a natural fountain or well, and so it is apt here to mention the holy wells journal **Source**. This has been published on and off now for a number of years though there seems to be currently another hiatus. So it is good to hear that the first and second series, edited by Mark Valentine and by Tristan Gray Hulse, are planned to be available on the web.

Katy Jordan and Richard Pederick are currently compiling a full-text archive which will accessible at

http://www.bath.ac.uk/lispring/sourcearchive/logo.htm

Already in existence are ***The Holy Wells Web***, a gateway site for holy wells and waterlore:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/~liskmj/holywell.htm

an email discussion list, ***wells-and-spas***:

http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/wells-and-spas/

and, immanently, ***Living Spring Journal***, an electronic journal for the study of holy wells and waterlore, hosted at the University of Bath:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/journal/front.htm

Meanwhile, ***Internet Archaeology*** is about exactly that. Based at the Department of Archaeology of the University of York, the journal is accessible at

http://intarch.ac.uk/journal

though you have to be a subscribing registered user to see papers in full. One paper in summary that caught my eye was Christopher A Snyder's *A gazetteer of Sub-Roman Britain (AD 400-600): the British sites*, which was published in issue 3 in autumn 1997. A section on the nature of the evidence includes, for instance, identifying ethnicity in the archaeological record, and the classified index of the gazetteer allows you to search by site name, date, settlement type, burial rite and so on.

Freely available is ***British Archaeology*** which you can access at

http://www.britarch.ac.uk

Issue no 50, published December 1999, features for example the wealthy fourth-century Roman woman found in a sarcophagus at Spitalfields last year and who starred with Julian Richards in BBC2's *Meet the Ancestors*.

John Mappin, the new owner of Tintagel's *King Arthur's Castle Hotel, plans a new website* to tie in with his acquisition:

camelotcastle.com

"I've already got animators at two film studios in Los Angeles creating a fantastic website, which will feature Merlin himself greeting you at the door of Camelot Castle and showing you around the hotel, the grounds, the views and the bedrooms - that's real magic!" Along with the

hotel he hopes to "attract advertisers promoting all manner of things associated with mythology and legend" - travel, jewellery, pottery, gifts, books, *shops, services. With a Hollywood* background, making decisions to do with film distribution and selling story rights to movie and documentary film makers, he may be in a good position to know what will succeed financially...

EUROPE'S OFFSHORE ISLES

In late December 1999 the British-Irish Council met for the first time at Lancaster House in London. The BIC was originally to be called the Council of the Isles, but the Republic of Ireland apparently thought this was "too twee" (reported Michael White in *The Guardian* 17 December 1999, "Rebranding the kingdom").

The significance of this meeting was that the BIC was attended by leaders of all the "devolved" administrations within the British Isles - Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Jersey and Guernsey and the Isle of Man - "administrations within what some people are starting to call the Atlantic Isles".

The model being followed is that of the "Europe of the regions", according to Michael White, "in which local identity-plus-Brussels replaces the centralised nation state created by the Tudors, consolidated by the industrial revolution and war." Let's hope that this debate about identities (whether ethnic, regional, national or otherwise) is discussed properly so that the Atlantic Isles as a whole do not degenerate into Balkan-style mentalities.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

In the last issue, Pamela Harvey appeared as Patricia Harvey on the contents page, for which, apologies. A H W Smith spotted that in Pamela's *Walking with Merlin* the Sun would have been 'a quite unremarkable star' rather than a 'remarkable' one.

Due to untimely haste a number of Dürer's woodcuts of saints in the poetry section were wrongly attributed to the editor, and the illustrations supplied by Eric Fitch for his Swan King article sadly jettisoned at the last moment.

Finally, there occurred the (now traditional) omission of a strategic phrase in a contribution by Professor Russell. In the letter about humour, folktales and Richmal Crompton (pages 6-7) the following sentence needs to be inserted (line 17, paragraph 3):

William silences them by announcing the toy is a magic monkey.

It is not intended to make this a regular feature...

FEATURED JOURNALS

Summer 2000 sees the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of **Ceridwen's Cauldron**, the consistently readable magazine of the Oxford Arthurian Society, with an anthology of articles from its pages being prepared to mark the event. More on this next issue.

With the by-line of *The Magazine for the New Antiquarian*, ***3rd Stone*** examines the complex inter-relationship of archaeology, folklore and myth. The contents of issue 37 (Spring 2000) illustrate this very well: articles on the Anglo-Saxon *grubenhäus* in Britain and the debt we owe to Alexander Keiller in Wessex rub shoulders with the use of animals in folk medicine and an archaeological oddity in Worcestershire. Of particular interest is Frank Olding's "The Arthurian Landscape of South-East Wales": as curator of Abergavenny Museum he is well-placed to examine critically the sites and place-names of the area. Add to this Aubrey Burl's "Myth-Conceptions" (where he argues, none too convincingly, that the Stonehenge bluestones were really glacial erratics, and, rather more persuasively, that the Merlin-Ireland connection is not an instance of continuity in folklore) and this *3rd Stone* represents good value for only £2.75, or £10.00 for a year's subscription, with the usual letters, reviews and news items. The website is at

http://www.thirdstone.demon.co.uk

In this issue's letters pages Alison Skinner mentions her unease over the "cultural supremacy" of Arthurian novels to the detriment of the Anglo-Saxons. In the winter 1999 issue of ***Wiðowinde*** she elaborates on this state of affairs in her "Anglo-Saxons in popular historical literature" (No 120, 35-37). With comparative tables, discussion, suggestions and a select bibliography of Anglo-Saxon novels from the 1950s onwards she chronicles the relative eclipse of fiction sympathetic to the Saxons in recent years relative to Arthurian novels; she then wonders whether the debate about English identity in the wake of devolution may reverse that trend. In the rest of this number of The English Companions' periodical there is, as always, the expected stimulating mix of informed articles, news, views and reviews, plus puzzles, ads and, for the Yuletide period, seasonal jokes of the cracker variety with a Dark Age slant. A sample copy costs £3.50, but you have to be a member of the Companions to get the periodical regularly. Their website is at

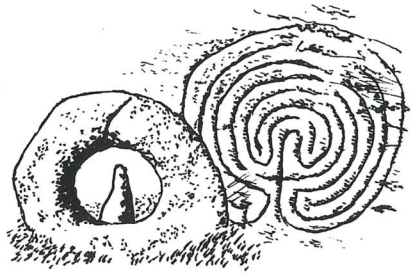
www.kami.demon.co.uk/gesithas/

Due to ill-health, Ade Dimmick has sadly had to retire as editor of ***The Dragon Chronicle***, though Kevin Matthews will continue the Dragon Project's work. No 11 contains material on

dragons from Bulgaria and Romania, ball-lightning and other atmospheric phenomena, late Roman dragons from Britain and constellations in the sky. Steve Sneyd writes on the legend of Melusine and there are the usual cartoons, poems, web addresses and news items. While I'm sure the journal's reincarnation will be every bit as entertaining, we wish Ade a return to health, with warm thanks for his past support for *Pendragon*.

Meyn Mamvro is Cornish for "stones of our motherland" and so naturally this magazine deals with ancient stones and sacred sites in Cornwall. No 41 (Winter/Spring 2000) features, among other items, pagan celebrations of last year's eclipse, news of Cornish holy wells, the horrific napalm attack on the Mên-an-Tol and Lanyon Quoit stones, the possible Maxentius inscription on the Tintagel Artognou ("Arthur") slate, and an impressionistic piece by Pamela Harvey.

◆ *More on other exchange journals next issue*



Exchange journals

CAERDROIA Journal of mazes and labyrinths *Editor* Jeff Saward, 53 Thundersley Grove, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB *Annual sub* £6.00 *Ffi* 01268 751915 *email* Caerdroia@dial.pipex.com *website* http://ilc.tsms.soton.ac.uk/caerdroia

◆ **THE CAULDRON** Paganism, wicca, folklore, earth mysteries *Sample* £2.50 *Four issues* £10.00 *Cheques* M A Howard, Caemorgan Cottage, Caemorgan Rd, Cardigan, West Wales SA43 1QU Please **don't** put *The Cauldron* on the *envelope*

◆ **CELTIC CONNECTIONS** Journal of Celtic and related *subjects Editor* David James, Sycamore Cottage, Waddon, Portesham, Weymouth DT3 4ER *Sample* £1.75 *Four issues* £7.00 *Cheques* D James *email* celtic.connections@wdi.co.uk *website* www.celtic-connections-magazine.co.uk

◆ **CERIDWEN'S CAULDRON** Magazine of the Oxford Arthurian Society *Editor* Andrew H W Smith, 41 Essex Street, Oxford OX4 3AW *Sample* £2.00 *Three issues* £5.50 *Cheques* Oxford Arthurian Society

◆ **DALRIADA** Insular Celtic culture, traditions and beliefs. Dalriada Celtic Heritage Trust, Taigh Arainn, Glenartney Hotel, Brodick, Isle of Arran, Scotland KA27 8BX *Sample* £2.25 *Four issues* £10.00 *website* http://www.dalriada.co.uk

◆ **THE DRAGON CHRONICLE** Dragon-related and -inspired myth, magick, folklore, fantasy *Editor* Ade Dimmick/Kevin Matthews *Sample* £2.00/$5 *Four issues* £7.00/$15 *Cheques* Dragon's Head Press, PO Box 3369, London SW6 6JN http://www.medp.freeserve.co.uk/dc/

◆ **HALLOWQUEST** Caitlin and John Matthews' publishing and teaching programmes *Four issues* £6.00 *Cheques* Graal Publications, BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX

◆ **MEYN MAMVRO** Cornish ancient stones and sacred sites *Editor* Cheryl Straffon, 51 Carn Bosavern, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX *Sample* £2.00 *Annual sub* £6.00 *website* www.cornwt.demon.co.uk

◆ **NEWSLETTER** News and views of the paranormal *Ffi* E F Davies, 19 Victoria Square, Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan CF64 3EJ (enclose stamp)

◆ **NORTHERN EARTH** Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group *Editor* John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W Yorks HX7 5NP *email* nemg@btinternet.com *website* easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~pato/ne *Sample* £1.20 *Four issues* £6.50 *Cheques* Northern Earth Mysteries Group

◆ **THE RENNES OBSERVER** Journal of the Rennes-le-Château Research Group (Saunière etc) *Editor* Gay Roberts, 'Cilhaul', Tylwch, Llanidoes, Powys SY18 6QX *Sample* £2.00

◆ **THE ROUND TABLE** Arthurian poetry and fiction *Editors* Alan Lupack, Barbara Tepa Lupack *Enquiries* Round Table Press, 375 Oakdale Drive, Rochester, New York 14618, USA (enclose IRC)

◆ **3RD STONE** Archaeology, folklore, myth *Sample* £2.75 *Four issues* £10.00 from PO Box 961, Devizes, Wilts SN10 2TS *website* http://www.thirdstone.demon.co.uk

◆ **WIÐOWINDE** Anglo-Saxon literature, history and culture *Editor* Steve Pollington *Sample* £3.50 *Enquiries* BM Box 4336, London WC1N 3XX *website* www.kami.demon.col.uk/gesithas

Readers Please mention *Pendragon* when enquiring from exchange journals, and enclose SAE or IRC for replies
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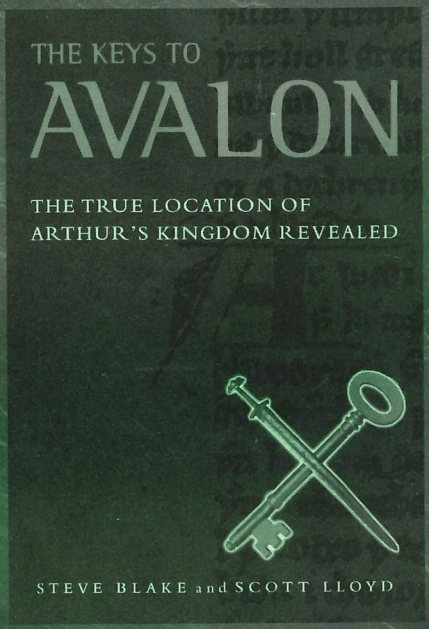

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