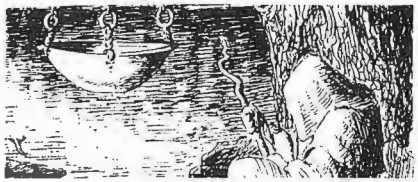
pendragon

editorial

Vol XXVIII No 4 Summer 2000



Caridwen

In Welsh folklore, Caridwen famously had a cauldron in which she brewed a concoction to endow her son with knowledge and understanding of the future. The recipe – sadly! – has not come down to us, but in this issue we share in the insights of a number of latter-day Caridwens, many of whom have spent rather longer than a year and a day in preparation.

Anna-Marie Ferguson, who has very kindly provided the cover design, has been labouring away for many moons in Canada illustrating a new edition of *Sir Thomas Malory's Morte D'Arthur*. This came out early September 2000 [Cassell ISBN 0 304 35367 1 £25.00] and here she evokes the experience of being the first woman artist to fully illustrate Malory. Sophie Masson is president of the new Arthurian Association of Australia, with a particular interest in the medieval developments of the legend which "The Questing Beast" perfectly underlines. She has already published more than twenty novels in Australia, and several have been released in the UK and the USA.

Beryl Mercer, on the other hand, is more interested in a Dark Age Romano-Celtic Arthur, and describes the processes of writing a novel from this point of view, while Pamela Harvey doesn't see Arthur as belonging to any particular timeframe, and presents her own view of the origins and future of the legends.

The whole is introduced by the beginning of Lady Charlotte Guest's *Tale of Taliesin*. She it was who a century and a half ago first made Welsh mythological and folklore material more accessible to an English-speaking world, and for this we must be very grateful to her.

Also in this issue are articles with a literary theme – two poetic treatments of Lancelot's relationships with women, and links between Merlin and Virgil – and, following discussion of the sidelining of the Anglo-Saxons, a 1979 examination of the parallels between Arthur and Alfred the Great is here republished. For reasons of space (extended news and reviews), the conclusions of pieces on Arthur and Jesus and on the name of Arthur have been postponed.

Next theme

This issue's motif was due to have been **The Future of Arthur**, but as you see it has turned out otherwise! There is some material in hand but not all specifically on this theme, so a plea goes out for your contributions — whether on history, archaeology, legend, myth, folklore, literature, the arts or popular culture — for the Winter 2000-1 issue. The 21st century beckons — what relevance will Arthur have in the new millennium?

Note on submissions

As is obvious, we publish some poetry and fiction, but in keeping with our aims priority is given to factual contributions, whether in the form of original research, news, reviews or overviews. Material submitted on floppy disk, compatible with Microsoft Word 6.0, is welcome but please make sure it is safely packaged. For reasons of cost illustrations should be black and white and preferably fit in with the three-inch column format currently being used. The next issue is due out in December-January and the deadline for submissions therefore is November 1st, 2000.

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

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CONTENTS

Illustrations *Anna-Marie Ferguson* - cover 2 4 14 34
Simon Rouse - titles, border 3 and handlettered feature titles
Ian Brown - 15 32 40 47 *Chris Lovegrove* - 8 11 19 28 30 38
T H Robinson illustrations from H Gilbert (1911) *King Arthur's Knights*

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Letters

ISSUE DEBATED

In response to 'A Debating Issue', the first letter featured in PenDragon [*Pendragon 28/3* Spring 2000], I sent Alison Skinner a set of my Anglo-Saxon Rune-cards with explanatory booklet, to show her that there is at least one other Arthurophile who is deeply interested in Alfred and the Anglo-Saxons. I have several books about Alfred and the Saxons, and a few years ago John and Linda Ford lent me a Grafton paperback called *The Edge of Light*, by Joan Wolf – historical fiction, very well done.

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

• *Unfortunately Alison Skinner's name did not appear appended to her letter last issue, which entailed a bit of detective work for Beryl and others – apologies to Alison and to other confused readers. See also Tim Porter's "Arthur & Alfred" in this issue.*

The "debating issue" [*Pendragon* Spring 2000] opens enormous questions – I'm sure [you] could easily devote a full issue to the questions raised. The magazine's very title, *Pendragon*, after all, spans the two cultures – *pen* being a Welsh word, yet *dragon* English.

It is of interest in that context, I think, that the only Anglo-Saxon figure who has accreted much of a numinous / literary penumbra is Beowulf, a figure, like Arthur, swordancing the margin between history and myth. Perhaps it is a case that others, like Alfred, are too fully attested to allow imagination, either folktale or literary, full scope – although Cerdic, that mysterious first West Saxon leader with the oddity of a Welsh name, seems oddly neglected in that regard.

To raise a further area of apparent neglect, since the Vikings also – though their leaders tended to treat England as a temporary home or place of exile – had a long and important settlement in York and The Danelaw, it's intriguing that extraordinary figures among them, like Eric Bloodaxe, Hardrada, or Egil Skallagrimson, all with involvements here, have also never really entered English legend or literature – only the garbled story of Canute and the waves has entered our collective consciousness.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

Re Alison Skinner's Debating Issue (Spring 2000), I am puzzled why Alison should think that current popular literature and media which presents Arthur in his role of Celtic folk hero and deliverer should be a 'significant threat' to the memory of the historical Anglo-Saxon King Alfred. Surely this material works at the level of escapist melodrama: Nazis *v* Our Boys in khaki; Red Indians *v* Our Boys in cavalry blue; Klingons with acne *v* Kirk's clearcut crew?

In order to create a national 'British' hero to rival Charlemagne and Alexander's reputations in Europe the Normans naturally thought fit to elevate a Celtic rather than a Saxon hero, as they had just defeated the English. Some time later Lawman, an English parish priest at Arley in Worcestershire, rewrote the *Brut* to make his own people even more barbarous and their slaughter more bloody than the original author Geoffrey had done. This is called telling a good yarn! His fellow countrymen were not so thin-skinned or credulous that they felt he had slandered them personally and they liked good stories of gory punch-ups anyway, as their own legends clearly reveal.

In any case, philosophers seriously question the ability of most literature and the arts to actually change society in any dynamic sense.

Is the apparent break-up of the United Kingdom really such a threat to our current Anglo/Saxon 'majority' that they need to elevate a separate historical figure of their very own to bolster their confidence? Alfred must seem boring in contrast to the archetypal hero of world stature established by the Matter of Britain: the ever-living hero who will return to save his country in its hour of need.

As Beryl has reminded us in the past: 'history is bunk'; at least some of our pre-reconstructed history is now claimed to be. Historians now emphasise that the newcomers didn't all stay farming in the east and the Celts did not all try to squash into Wales with the fierce people already there, but there was integration and inter-breeding from early on in many regions of the island as the races merged.

Is it so important that Arthur may be seen as a victorious Celt (if such a separate racial group existed, even that is now questioned) by those encountering him only via popular culture? And what about our more recent ethnic arrivals? It may be time to put Rama or Saladin on the plinth at Winchester, or better still, Slough or Bradford perhaps?

Fred Stedman-Jones, Cheshire

WHY THE DARK AGES WERE DARK?

The Spring 2000 *Pendragon* was as always a pleasure to see. An interesting mix of material certainly ...

Some meteor science colleagues have recently drawn my attention to several notices posted to the Cambridge Conference Network e-mail group (you can find this by entering "CCNet" on your usual Internet search engine), a more or less scholarly ideas-exchange, during April this year, concerning the supposed *c* 540s AD impact/cometary events. I commented on these earlier regarding Mike Baillie's and David Keys' hypotheses in the summer 1999 *Pendragon*. I've extracted some items from these, and present them here for the entertainment – and probable annoyance – of Pendragoneers. My sole comment is I think it is not encouraging to see the level of misinformation bandied about as if it were scholarly debate in these.

Firstly, a pair of paragraphs from a long item by one Ed P Grondine. Other parts made clear his ardent belief that many seemingly inexplicable aspects of early societies have left little or no written records, or from mythology and legendary in those that did, can be accounted for by the widespread use of plant and fungal hallucinogens:

'In "Exodus to Arthur" Baillie notes a division of historical records around 650 AD in Britain and the lack of records from earlier periods. While numerous early Christian remains have been found in Britain, there is no literary remainder from these times, and this is not simply an accident of histroical [*sic*] survival: the early Christians in Britain were Pelagian heretics; with the arrival of orthodox Christians, and their asscendancy [*sic*] to secular power, they suppressed the records of these earlier heretics, who had been allied with earlier secular powers. This suppression was and remains so complete that to this day you can find entire books written about sub-Roman Britain without so much as one single mention of Pelagianism.'

He goes on to comment that he believes the Pelagian suppression was because of their use of hallucinogens.

Following his extended commentary on his belief in the unrecognised use of hallucinogens probably being responsible for many early references to bright lights in the sky, sometimes referred to as "dragons", Grondine continues:

'Yet another trap for those working with ancient records is working out of context, which can lead to errors in working with inadequate translations by earlier writers. For example, if memory serves me correctly, "draigne" [*sic*], sometimes translated into Welsh as "dreic", "dragon", is an early Anglo-Saxon title. Particular caution should be made with mentions of dragons in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Welshman with no knowledge of anglo-saxon [*sic*], as may be seen from his translation from anglo-saxon [*sic*] into welsh [*sic*] of "Brut y Brenhinedd". My advice is to always go as close to the original source document as possible."

In part of his reply to Grondine, Mike Baillie comes up with the following, again given here as a complete extracted paragraph:

"Merlin, the universally accepted side-kick of Arthur, which just about everyone would place in the sixth century is associated with dragons by writers like Nikolai Tolstoy. Anyone who cares to dig out his 'The Quest for Merlin' (Hamish Hamilton 1985) and leaf through to page 113 will get a hint of the background to dragons largely independent of Geoffrey of Monmouth."

Please remember, the paragraphs in quotes were not written by me, so don't shoot the messenger!

Alistair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

THE CART BEFORE THE HORSEMAN

Although the stories of [Lancelot's] living in a lake suggest a borrowing from one of the many tales of humans spending time in the Otherworld, if there is anything in the suggestion that Joyeuse Garde is a garbling of the Celtic name for the earliest fortress on the Bamburgh Castle site, Dinguardi, then it is perhaps possible to imagine his introduction to the Round Table group initially as being to fill a geographical gap - *ie* that someone was needed to "represent" the North-East.

On the question of the cart and "rides of shame", in Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* there's an intriguing description of how Childeric III, the last of the Merovingian kings of France, by then almost purely titular, travelled to the general assembly of the people, one of his few remaining functions, in a manner on the face of it totally unbefitting a king: "he went in a cart ... drawn in country style by yoked oxen, with a cowherd to drive them" (Book I, page 55 in the Penguin Classics *Two Lives of Charlemagne*). As the Merovingians had many aspects of "sacred kings", and this humble cart presumably therefore had originally some symbolic meaning, it makes me wonder if Lancelot's journey in a vehicle ostensibly one of inferiority also embeds some related ritual element behind the ostensible humiliation.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

A GRAIL OF TRUTH?

Further to the Grail debate contained in the previous letters page, when all is said and done it may be fair to state that the Grail, be it platter, cauldron, chalice or stone, is ultimately a symbol – and a religious symbol at that. All the earliest sources link it with the Christian sacrament.

Chrétien portrayed the Grail against the backdrop of Celtic symbolism (the *Phantom's Frenzy*), Robert de Boron with the Crucifixion, and Wolfram with the Templar-type knights.

It was the late R S Loomis, in *The Development of Arthurian Romance* (1963), who identified the *lapis exilis* in Wolfram's *Parzival* with the *lapis exilis* in the Latin work *Journey of Alexander the Great to Paradise* – it being a symbol of humility in both works (Trevrizent instructs Parzival, "You must with a meek will guard against pride ... Pride has always sunk and fallen ... Humility vanquishes pride").

But it is historical context that is paramount. Yet this basic element seems to be lacking from all researches on the subject matter. For example, there are no entries for Henry II or to Philip of Flanders in *The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (edited by Norris J Lacy, 1991) – yet important answers to questions may lie in the European politics and Royal intermarriages of the 12th to 13th centuries. In my opinion, isolating the Grail literature from its historical context is like removing the word "Rosebud" from the film *Citizen Kane*.

The existences of the cults of the Holy Blood at Bruges and at Fécamp, together with the "discovery" of (King) Arthur's remains at Glastonbury, were contemporary with the first appearances of Grail literature. Why did these things happen at the same time and could the answer lie in the mundane world of political events in the Royal Courts and Palaces? The Grail, a religious symbol, is depicted as being all-important to the secular nobility. Everything needs to be looked at again from scratch, I feel, and it is high time to consign the previous approach used by past authors on the Grail onto the scrap heap.

Paul Smith, Willington, Derbyshire

I must comment on your comment [*PenDragon*, last issue] on 'A Very Grail Area' – nice title! There is little doubt that later authors used Chrétien quite freely, but were they really baffled or just adapting the story for their own ends - their agenda, you might say? He was pretty specific about the grail but later writers converted it into numerous different things – I don't think it was down to being baffled. Of course, Chrétien also had his own agenda, but we may never find out what it truly was.

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

I was looking through Jessie Weston's *The Romance of Perlesvaus*, to refind her comments about the lady with the three coffins to hand, ready to house the three most famous knights (the ultimate in dangerously obsessed super-groupies!), in relation to C S Lewis' use of the story in a poem, and came across again her remarks about the castle of Chaus, originally belonging to Perceval's mother, and described as "the Key of Wales - gateway of the land" [on page 84 of the 1988 *Studies in Mediaevalism* posthumous edition].

In her note [p 86] she says "it would be interesting to know whether any Welsh castle ever went by this name." I don't know about the Key tag, but I was left wondering if she'd ever followed up the Chaus name itself.

There *is* a castle, just outside Wales proper, but within the Marches, with a remarkably similar name. Caus in Shropshire, a very large site of the early 12th century – completed around 50 years before the "best guess" date for *Perlesvaus* - which included a "new town" within its ramparts, was sited at the very edge of the Principality, overlooking from high ground the route which leads into the heart of Wales via Montgomery, *ie* could be seen as a key or gateway, and (QED?) Michael Jackson's *Castles of Shropshire* notes an alternative spelling of the name – as Chaus.

It all seems a bit too good to be true, somehow, but if the connection is genuine, *ie* that the writer had that actual, then relatively new, and strategically important, castle in mind, it would reinforce Weston's view that the author of *Perlesvaus* was either from Wales or at any rate knew the area.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

• *See Steve's article on Swinburne and C S Lewis this issue, and also featured journals in* ***The Board****.*

PLACES TO GO

Much as I admire Steve Sneyd's sense of place, I fear the melancholy truth about the Castle of the Four Stones in Malory is that Sir Thomas has here (as elsewhere) garbled his French source, which speaks of the castle of the four *perrieres* – stone-throwing catapults – rather than *pierres* – stones. There is thus no connexion with any place called 'Fourstones'.

I am more than happy to agree with Anne Lister that 'Gibaldur' in *Jaufré* respresents Gibraltar, but I can see no reason to follow her in identifying 'Gibaldar' and 'Gibel' as the same place. There seems no warrant for this in the text.

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

FIRE FROM HEAVEN

Re Phillip Clapham's article about Excalibur: my Welsh dictionary translates *caled* as 'hard, severe, harsh, dry'. Mention of the 1908 Tunguska incident reminds me that, way back in June 1990, I received a letter from my friend Arthur Clarke (now Sir – name-dropping!), from which I quote:

"Re the Tunguska explosion – there's now no mystery whatsoever about this. We know that many cometary nuclei do hit the Earth, and as they are composed of ices of various kinds, there will be no crater. What settled the matter, as far as I'm concerned, was my quite accidental discovery that Tunguska was exactly coincident with the daylight meteor swarm – the Beta Taurids – which could never have been observed in the days before radar. There's no need, therefore, to look for any further explanations."

Which makes me wonder why "Tunguska is currently being investigated by a team of western scientists ..."?

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

• *See* Old News *for details about yet another modern appropriation of Excalibur for symbolic purposes, spotted by Beryl.*

Phillip Clapham's "A bolt from the blue" (*Pendragon*, Spring 2000, 10-11) attracted my attention. I addressed some of his discussed points about comets and Judaeo-Christian meteor / "fire-from-the-heavens" imagery in two *3rd Stone* articles, "Comet Myths Ancient & Modern" (No 31, 1998, 20-23) and "Millennial Meteors" (No 38, 2000, 13-16). Comets as swords or other weapons can be found in various places certainly; Pliny (*Natural History II*: xxii-xxvi) lists a dozen comet types including "javelins" and "daggers", for example.

However, the concept of burning hot meteorites showering fire from the sky is a common misconception, which persists modernly among many non-specialists. Most ordinary meteorites that reach the Earth's surface arrive with a melted outer crust that may be warm or occasionally hot to the touch immediately after landing, but they are generally not hot enough to start a fire, barring exceptional circumstances (*eg* a meteorite might strike a spark if it hit something suitable, which might light any flammable material close-by if the spark landed there).

The confusion arises because the difference between being near a lightning strike (which can very easily start a fire) and a normal small meteorite impact is non-existent for the casual witness. Both involve a brilliant linear streak of light / "fire" that lights up the sky, after which a loud booming rumble is commonly heard. Hissing, swishing or whistling sounds may also be noted with a flash of light, though these are quite rare.

Subsequently, a stone may be found on or in the earth near the apparent impact point (either a normal earthly rock which just happened to be there, or a fused-earth fulgarite in the case of lightning; an earthly rock again or in very lucky circumstances the meteorite itself in the impact case), which may bear marks of burning (flash burns in a lightning strike, or a glassy fusion crust on a meteorite), and there may be a sulphurous smell in the immediate vicinity. For instance, at 3.15 pm on May 29, lightning struck a church tower in Belford, north Northumberland, shattering one of four stone spires on its top. Fragments of this spire were violently hurled up to 100m from the impact-point, damaging buildings in the vicinity, though luckily nobody was injured (*Berwick Advertiser*, 1 June, 2000). If no-one had seen the forked lightning, only a careful and thorough examination of all the stones recovered would have confirmed whether this had been a meteorite or a lightning strike.

In the case of airburst events such as the June 30, 1908 Tunguska one, where a cometary fragment most likely detonated in a blinding explosion around 5-10 km above the surface (judging by examination of microscopic spherules found in the 1908 peat layer from the vast Tunguska swamplands and those embedded in the appropriate tree-rings of surviving trees on the edge of the blast-devastated area), the blast and burning are created by the super-heated air in the shock waves which surround and precede the incoming body, not because of an actual impact. Chris Traynor published an excellent review, "The Tunguska event" in the *Journal of the British Astronomical Association* in 1997 (Vol 107, 117-130), which unlike almost all previous Western reviews, draws extensively on the large corpus of material published in Russian, based on numerous research expeditions since the first scientific investigations in 1927.

Regarding the Sennacherib event Phillip discusses, Georges Roux provides a useful, fully-referenced summary of this Assyrian ruler's life and exploits in his *Ancient Iraq* (3rd edition; Penguin 1992, 319-324), but notes on pp 320-321 that this episode is highly controversial and rejected by most scholars. Aside from Herodotus' mice or rats, a fragment of Berossus' *Babyloniaca* preserved by Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* X.i) refers to a pestilential sickness causing the damage to the Assyrians, not a blast of fire from heaven.

Despite numerous other Old Testament references to fiery arrows, hail, fire and brimstone or lightning cast down by Yahweh on

anyone he took a dislike to, none of the obvious Biblical references to the Sennacherib event I've traced (*2 Kings* 19:35, *2 Chronicles* 32:21-22, *Isiah* 37:36, *Ecclesiasticus/Ben Sira* 48:20-21) say anything other than that 185,000 Assyrians were struck down in one night by an angel of Yahweh. There is no mention of anything fiery causing the damage. Elsewhere, such angels do commonly appear as creatures of fire or storm, but note that in *2 Samuel* 24:15-17 for instance, Yahweh's angel brings plague by night to David's Israelites.

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

In Philip Clapham's "A bolt from the blue", the mention of *barak* as being lightning, and the magic horse that carried Mohammed as being called Borak, makes me wonder if the explanation for Wolfram von Eschenbach's curious term for the Caliph, *ie* the Baruc, in *Parzival* has its origins there, rather than in translator A T Hatto's suggestion of "Hebrew *baruk* – blessed", which seems perhaps unduly respectful on the poet's part towards the infidel leader.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

MYTHS AND MISSES

I have read with great interest Charles W Evans-Günther's article, 'King Arthur and Jesus Christ' [Part 1 last issue].

I know that with all the cross-referencing Charles Evans-Günther so ably does it is impossible for a not too erudite scholar like me to contradict his conclusions or invalidate his opinions. I am thinking about how myths and 'histories' – note the quote marks – get started. In particular, these days the demolition job on the stories of Jesus seems to be going on apace. Though I am a fan of Arthur, it is more important that a genuine historical figure such as very many people believe Jesus to be can be 'believed in' as a person whose case is reliable. Especially since the whole edifice of Christianity centres on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Scholars have painstakingly taken apart details about whether He had a physical body after death, although if He is Divine that should not present the problem so many make it out to be...
I am a Pagan, in that I accept the validity of many Gods and Goddesses, as Prototypes of a Cosmic Nature and also to some extent of human nature. Mr Evans-Günther suggests that religion is all in the human psyche. Undeniably it is there, but what makes us, and our ancestors, crave for something we can never have 'for real'?

When scholars dismiss every story in sacred literature as myth, it would be interesting to know what, if anything, strikes them as more likely to be factual and therefore to leave in ... The bottom line is: Whatever discoveries of historical documents and suchlike may suggest, people seldom base their strongly held ideas on nothing. The 'something' on which perception is based is often (or has been) evidence, not fantasy, whether we of today can recover that evidence - which we quite often can – or not... As Albert Einstein put it: Religion without Science is blind; Science without Religion is lame.

Arthur was a Sun-God to Pagans in our past; Jesus is regarded as a God by Asiatic peoples who also embrace other Gods in their creeds. Let's not do a demolition job on our psyche – give it a chance!

Pamela Harvey, Edmonton, London

• Extracted from a much longer letter. Pamela has contributed an article to this issue, and is co-author of ***The Wellspring*** *reviewed here too.*

One of the problems with Lord Raglan's score-chart for heroism is that it doesn't give any criteria for which sources can be laid under contribution. This affects the various subject's scores: Arthur drops one hero-point (No 9: 'we are told nothing of his childhood') if T H White's *The Sword in the Stone* is included. And why not include T H White? I can see no good reason to exclude him that does not also offer grounds for excluding, say, Sophocles and his idiosyncratic versions of the Oedipus story.

No matter how hard I try, I cannot make the various heroes meet the scores that Charles Evans-Günther propounds. Arthur scores only 10 (9 if you include T H White) rather than 19; Jesus Christ scores 8, rather than 17. Of course, a number of the points are baggy and ambiguous: what, for example, does it mean to say that (No 1) 'the hero's mother is a royal virgin'? Does 'royal' mean that she is a king's daughter? A king's aunt? A descendant in nine generations from a king? These are different propositions. In the case of No 20, 'His children, if any, do not succeed him', are we to mark this with a tick or a cross if the hero in question has no children? What is the force of 'often' in No 19? Or 'mysterious' in No 18?

I very much hope that C W E-G is not going to argue that, because His life in some ways resembles an arbitrary schema invented in 1936, Jesus was not the historical figure He appears ...

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

HALL ABOUT ARTHUR

Have you visited King Arthur's Great Halls in Tintagel? It really is a most impressive place, even though it is all based on the mediaeval versions of the legend. The stained glass is magnificent, and the corridor that runs round most of the Great Hall has over 70 small panels of it, depicting the coats of arms of the knights.

I once bought a book in the shop which fronts the Halls – *King Arthur, his symbolic story in verse* – by B D Vere (! guess who!). Published 1930, it's terribly corny, and was apparently designed to be performed as a verse-play by the Freemasons who now either own or lease the Halls.

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

• Beryl has kindly passed on a Living Cornwall supplement to the Western Morning News *of July 18 in which Douglas Williams' article "Arthurian halls are one man's homage to a king" looks at Frederick Thomas Glasscock's architectural creation in Tintagel. The former custard manufacturer built the Great Halls as a base for his Fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur one year before his death in 1934. The Halls are open to the public every day except Christmas Day.*

UNCROSSED FINGERS

May I please be allowed to comment on some points raised by my friend Beryl in the letters pages of the last journal?

1. Beryl, why don't you try reading the 'so-called classics' before judging them as costume drama on TV? After all, they are novels, the language is what makes them classics!

2. Most schoolteachers use dramatic approaches to Shakespearean texts with their pupils these days and have done so for years; combining these with theatre visits and workshops organised by local professional theatres. Caldwell Cook created a 'Mummery' at the Perse School for Boys at Cambridge before the First World War, where they could rehearse scenes from plays they were studying and perform them onstage with costumes. Marius Goring came from this stable.

3. Have you considered that Shakespeare may not have wished to write a play about King Arthur? He didn't write one about Richard I either. The London theatre was highly competitive and Thomas Hushes had already performed his *Misfortunes of Arthur* in 1587/8 – before Will had started his career around 1589. During the years 1596-98 there were three plays produced, all written by Richard Hathaway: *Valteger* (December 1596), *Uter Pendragon* (April 1597) and *King Artur* (April 1598) but, sadly, these plays are all lost. During those years Shakespeare was writing *Hamlet*, *King John*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *All's Well that Ends Well*. The idea was to storm the town with new plays, not repeat versions of things already done.

4. I'm sorry to have to tell you that it was Geoffrey of Monmouth who first came up with the idea that Caerleon was the prototype for Camelot – though he doesn't actually use that name for Arthur's court! He brings Caerleon into his *History* thirteen times. Chris Barber's article "Arthurian Caerleon in Literature and Legend" appeared in XXV/3-4 and his book *Journey to Avalon* (1993) locates a Welsh Arthur at Caerleon; I suspect Alan Gunter got the idea from him. Unfortunately Legend Court was refused planning permission.

Best wishes with your novel – I tried!

Fred Stedman-Jones, Cheshire

ART FOR ARTHUR'S SAKE

Our readers might not know that although the full scale Burne-Jones exhibition has closed now, a wealth of his paintings still remain permanently on view at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (as well as all the stained glass in Birmingham Cathedral close by).

His work is particularly pre-occupied with the awakening of beautiful women as well as the birth of the Christ-child and the vision of the Holy Grail. So much so that I wonder if any other artist has portrayed the cultivation and emergence of the feminine side of his own nature (Jung's *anima*) so successfully. He has done it with such artistry that he makes words like these seem crude and pretentious. It is a concept better expressed in myth and art – and to my knowledge, no one else has done it better. The best thing to do is go and see for yourself.

Despite the exponential technical stuff, the old ways never lose their appeal. I stood on a castle terrace overlooking Heidelberg in the evening and got talking to a German chap who'd had it all and lost it all and we got on to Tristan and he suddenly launched full throttle into the *Liebestod* which was so spontaneous it was stunning and lovely. And a crowd gathered and applauded as I stood there with the customary appreciative half-smile and feeling uncomfortably like Iseult or to be honest more like Hattie Jacques while Norman Wisdom was doing the Gestapo officer thing – pouring champagne into her toeless slippers.

Forrester Roberts, Gloucester

REVIEW RESPONSE

The last thing I sent you for inclusion in *Pendragon* was a review of a book by Nicholas Orme, professor of history at Exeter University - now here is another one! His collective works now form a really important source for study of

the post-Roman period in south-west England. Unfortunately the excessive price of this latest book will make it more suitable for consultation at a library rather than purchase. I look forward to the day when this kind of historical research can be available for free access to all via reputable web-sites!

Nick Grant, Reading, Berkshire

• *See* ***Reviews*** *this issue. Reviews are always welcome, whatever the length (no waffle, though!), however tangential or mainstream they may seem to Arthurian studies. You could even disagree with a review you first read here!*

You appealed for book reviewers in the latest (excellent, as usual) edition of *Pendragon*, so here is my attached review of *The Marian Conspiracy* by Graham Phillips. If you've already received a review of this new book, I quite understand if you won't want to publish my review of it!

Laurence Main, Machynlleth, Wales

• *Laurence's latest book,* ***The Spirit Paths of Wales****, has been recently published by Cicerone Press. Review, hopefully, next time, along with a number of others promised for this issue.*

I finally came across W A Cummins' *King Arthur's Place in Prehistory: The Great Age of Stonehenge*, and having read it looked back to Nick Grant's review in the Spring 1994 *Pendragon*, and found myself in full agreement – the Cummins book is intriguing, but the conclusions so totally speculative and unprovable as to be unconvincing.

It is certainly plausible that deeds of earlier heroes accrete to later ones – this is why I could see at least possibility in Eric Ratcliffe's theory in his *The Great Arthurian Timeslip* that garbled memories of the deeds of Caractacus/Caradog in his war against the Romans were misascribed to Arthur – but a reattribution of events across less than five hundred years within a single culture seems to me quite different from a thesis dependent on fairly detailed recall across a couple of millennia involving a wholesale change of population, culture and language.

The question of how the story arose that Stonehenge was the burial place of the post-Roman high kings is a very intriguing one, but I would have thought answers demanding less suspension of disbelief – for example that Dark Age royal bodies could have been displayed in state there, to associate them ritually with the powers of the stones, or simply as a staging post on the way to final burial at Glastonbury or wherever, could provide a simpler explanation.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

• *See* ***Old News*** *for details of an Anglo-Saxon beheading and burial at Stonehenge.*

BOOK SEARCH

Thank you so much for inserting my tentative request for Pen(Dragon) Pals – hope it bears fruit. I'm searching for some books as we speak – all the **Rosemary Sutcliff** ones, and **Persia Woolley** other than Book 1. Any chance a Pendragon member can help me out?

Caroline Plant, 38A Fieldhouse Road, Balham, London SW12 0HJ

Library of Avalon Competition

The Library of Avalon in Glastonbury is again running a Short Story & Poetry Competition, on any theme. The first prize is £200 for short stories (upper limit of 5000 words) and £100 for poems (50 lines maximum).

Geoffrey Ashe will be a judge, with a special award for the story he considers to be the best on a mythological theme, along with Freda Warrington, author of *The Rainbow Gate*, *Dark Cathedral* and *The Amber Citadel*. Poetry judge is Dr Edmund Cusick, lecturer in Imaginative Writing at Liverpool John Moores University.

The closing date is Saturday 4th November 2000. For an entry form send a *stamped self-addressed envelope* to The Library of Avalon, 2–4 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9DU, or email staff@libraryofavalon.co.uk

The Library, with specialised collections on religious, esoteric, mythological, Arthurian and alternative subjects, runs entirely on donations and fundraising, and has no permanent paid staff, only volunteers. [Information taken from *The Rennes Observer* 27.]

The Tale of Caridwen and Gwion Bach

translated by Lady Charlotte Guest

In times past there lived in Penllyn a man of gentle lineage, named Tegid Voel, and his dwelling was in the midst of the lake Tegid, and his wife was called Caridwen.

And there was born to him of his wife a son named Morvran ab Tegid, and also a daughter named Creirwy, the fairest maiden in the world was she; and they had a brother, the most ill-favoured man in the world, Avagddu.

Now Caridwen his mother thought that he was not likely to be admitted among men of noble birth, by reason of his ugliness, unless he had some exalted merits or knowledge. For it was in the beginning of Arthur's time and of the Round Table.

So she resolved, according to the arts of the books of the Fferyllt, to boil a cauldron of Inspiration and Science for her son, that his reception might be favourable because of his knowledge of the mysteries of the future state of the world.

Then she began to boil the cauldron, which from the beginning of its boiling might not cease to boil for a year and a day, until three blessed drops were obtained of the grace of Inspiration.

And she put Gwion Bach the son of Gwreang of Llanfair in Caereinion, in Powys, to stir the cauldron, and a blind man named Morda to kindle the fire beneath it, and she charged them that they should not suffer it to cease boiling for the space of a year and a day. And she herself, according to the books of the astronomers, and in planetary hours, gathered every day of all charm-bearing herbs.

And one day, towards the end of the year, as Caridwen was culling plants and making incantations, it chanced that three drops of the charmed liquor flew out of the cauldron and fell upon the finger of Gwion Bach. And by reason of their great heat he put his finger to his mouth, and the instant he put those marvel-working drops into his mouth, he foresaw everything that was to come, and perceived that his chief care must be to guard against the wiles of Caridwen, for vast was her skill. And in very great fear he fled towards his own land.

And the cauldron burst in two, because all the liquor within it except the three charm-bearing drops was poisonous, so that the horses of Gwyddno Garanhir were poisoned by the water of the stream into which the liquor of the cauldron ran, and the confluence of that stream was called the Poison of the Horses of Gwyddno from that time forth.

Thereupon came in Caridwen and saw all the toil of the whole year lost. And she seized a billet of wood and struck the blind Morda on the head until one of his eyes fell out upon his cheek.

And he said, "Wrongfully hast thou disfigured me, for I am innocent. They loss was not because of me."

"Thou speakest truth," said Caridwen, "it was Gwion Bach who robbed me."

And she went forth after him, running.

And he saw her, and changed himself into a hare and fled. But she changed herself into a greyhound and turned him. And he ran towards a river, and became a fish. And she in the form of an otter-bitch chased him under the water, until he was fain to turn himself into a bird of the air. She, as a hawk, followed him and gave him no rest in the sky.

And just as she was about to stoop upon him, and he was in fear of death, he espied a heap of winnowed wheat on the floor of a barn, and he dropped among the wheat, and turned himself into one of the grains.

Then she transformed herself into a high-crested black hen, and went to the wheat and scratched it with her feet, and found him out and swallowed him.

And, as the story says, she bore him nine months, and when she was delivered of him, she could not find it in her heart to kill him, by reason of his beauty. So she wrapped him in a leathem bag, and cast him into the sea to the mercy of God, on the twenty-ninth day of April...

• The excerpt above comes from Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of a composite tale of the Dark Age poet Taliesin, which she included in her mid-19th century version of *The Mabinogion*.

The historical Taliesin is mentioned in Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* as one of five famous poets in the late sixth century. A dozen works have been identified as genuinely his by Sir Ifor Williams, many in a thirteenth-century manuscript called *The Book of Taliesin*. There are however a number of "litanies of metamorphoses sometimes called trans-formational poems" which are more problematical (Ford 1977, 17ff). Several of these occur in later manuscripts, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, together with over two dozen versions of the *Tale of Taliesin*. It is from one of the eighteenth-century retellings that Lady Guest mostly took her folktale of Gwion Bach who, reborn near May Eve, became known as Taliesin and took on the mantle of a genuine Dark Age poet.

A mid-sixteenth-century version by Elis Gruffydd, supplemented by a seventeenth-century copy, is the basis of Patrick Ford's translation, and there are some differences. No daughter Creirwy (Dear One) is mentioned. Caridwen and Tegid Foel (Tacitus the Bald) have just one son, Morfran (Great or Sea Crow). It is Morfran (and not another son) who is so ugly that they call him Afagddu or Y Fagddu (Utter Darkness). From *Culhwch and Olwen* we learn that "no one struck him in the battle of Camlann by reason of his ugliness; all thought he was an auxiliary devil. Hair had he upon him like the hair of a stag".

Gwion Bach kindles the fire, while an unnamed blind old man stirs the cauldron (not the other way round). Gwion is more proactive in Gruffydd's text - he shoves Morfran Afagddu out of the way before the three marvellous drops spring from the cauldron.

Both versions agree on the setting – Llyn Tegid or Lake Bala, on the north-eastern edge of the Snowdonia National Park. And, whether the lake was called after Tegid Foel or the other way round, there is little doubt about Caridwen's association with that body of water. In Gruffydd's text "she had the prince put into a coracle or hide-covered basket, which she had fitted snugly all around him; then she caused it to be cast into the lake – according to some books, but some say he was put into a river, others that she had him put into the sea - where he was found a long time afterwards" (Ford 1977, 164).

Caridwen was learned in "the three arts: magic, enchantment, and divination". To give her son status she consults "the books of the Fferyllt" to transform him into a prognosticator. Now *fferyllydd* means a chemist or pharmacist, but perhaps this is here related to Vergil who in medieval times was rated as a great magician for allegedly prophesying the birth of Christ (see also Russell 2000), or to another Vergil from medieval Toledo (Graves 1961, 27). Caridwen is no Disney witch however – she is incandescent with rage when her year-long experiment backfires (who wouldn't be?) but she also shows genuine concern about Morfran's future prospects, and takes pity on Gwion enough to expose him rather than kill him at birth.

And this is all we may essentially know about Caridwen, though comparative mythologists and poets have speculated further (*eg* Matthews 1991, MacKillop 1998). Inspiration, trans-formation, speculation – some of these themes then find their way into a few of the contributions in this issue.

Chris Lovegrove

References and further reading

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James MacKillop (1998) *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* [Oxford University Press, Oxford] *see entry* "Koadalan" 254f
John Matthews (1991) *Taliesin: shamanism and the bardic mysteries in Britain and Ireland* [The Aquarian Press, London]
W M S Russell (2000) "A Tale of Two Wizards: Merlin and Virgil" *below*
Sir Ifor Williams and J E Caerwyn Williams *eds* (1968) *The Poems of Taliesin* [Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Oxford]

Cailleach

we close the door
& your skin blooms
& folds drop away like water
from fruit-plump breasts
naked beneath a black shawl
fair as a lily till dawn

Geoff Sawers

Dancing with a Giant

The illustration of Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur

Anna-Marie Ferguson

September 2000 marked the release of the new unabridged, illustrated edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. This deluxe hardcover is introduced and edited by John Matthews and includes thirty-two new watercolour paintings and thirty-one full page black and white drawings. As Malory's latest artist I appreciate *Pendragon*'s invitation to shine a light into the hidden realm of the illustrator, moving through the challenges, approach, and creation of the art itself. Predictably, it has been an experience in the extreme – from the power and beauty of Malory's world and the inspiring depth and breadth of the work, to the harrowing task of safely navigating such a book through the business world of the twentieth century.

It is an increasingly rare opportunity to illustrate a classic, and a heavy responsibility. Malory carries an added weight in the legend being a cornerstone of Britain's cultural identity and the distinguished legacy of *Le Morte d'Arthur* in art. The list of Malorian illustrators alone includes such great names as Aubrey Beardsley and Sir William R Flint, to Arthur Rackham, Walter Crane, Howard Pyle and N C Wythe in its adaptations.

The responsibilities of the illustrator go beyond one's artistic contribution. In brief, their task is to work alongside the author, also fulfilling a role as storyteller: expanding, clarifying, and enriching the scene to say what the author has not. There are some additional challenges in illustrating Malory. One lies in breathing new life into the worn traditional scenes while remaining within the bounds of text and wider tradition. Another lies in ensuring that the different branches of Arthurian tradition that culminate in Malory, such as legend, romance and the Grail Quest, are adequately represented. Another practical consideration is the publisher's design and format of the book, which in this case affected the choice of black and white illustrations. All this surveying of the restrictions and demands can be tedious but essential with a book such as this, where the artist is easily led astray by the many tempting sights.

While I have written a short piece on the art of Malory to be included in the book, I imagine *Pendragon* readers would be comfortable in following the illustrator a little deeper into the medieval forests, and appreciate what has to be a personal approach to the courtship between legend and art. Here the illustrator leaves off studying Malory to live it, and have it breathe through the art. It was for this experience of possession by the drama and intimacy with the characters that I chose to illustrate Malory. The Arthurian tradition is my home ground as an artist and author. It was my love of this old enchanted world that led me to paint as a teenager, and while I find inspiration in other realms, times and characters, few rival the intoxicating effect I feel amidst the fertile Arthurian landscape. There is a danger in my use of the words 'enchanted' and 'intoxicating' as they may serve to perpetuate the dismissive stereotype of the mad artist. While there may be some truth to the madness – it is a temporary release. In my experience, the brief ecstasy felt in moments of high inspiration is soon tempered with the very real difficulty of painting the vision seen in the throes of madness / insight.

Illustrating Malory was perhaps too intense to be enjoyable. It is not a gentle story, but a giant in carrying the archetypal force of mythology which can pulse or tear through the sympathetic illustrator. Visionary art, which Malory calls for on occasion, has its own moods and symbolic language especially suited to conveying the same mysteries and collective wisdom contained within the great dramas of mythology. A particularly potent magic can come where art and mythology intersect.

The art does not always chase the text as often assumed, rather it is a dance between the two, and sometimes they meet head on. The 'Enchanted Ship of Twelve Maidens' is an example of an image just seen in a flash rather than created in my head or built by the text. It was a scene which stayed in my mind to be recognized months later in Malory's text. There were differences between the ships – Malory's draped with fabric, mine with ivy, but light, mood, and setting are the same. Given its popularity at exhibitions, I like to think it has retained some of the flavour of its mysterious origins despite being appropriately dressed for Malory.

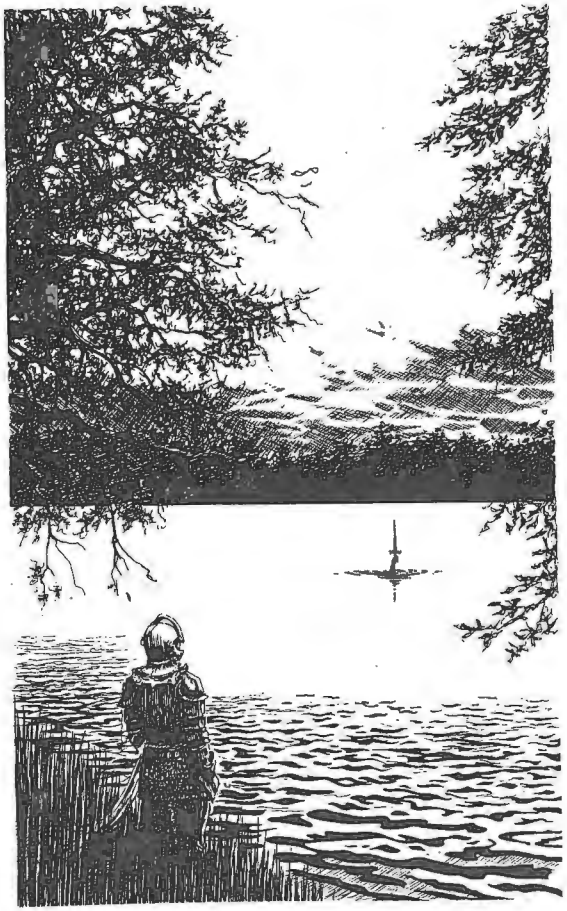
The 'visions' were often the result of a mind rubbed raw by the demands of work. I had no life or sleep schedule, rarely ventured outside or answered my phone. Like the knights on the

Grail Quest I lived the agony of failed attempts, my studio floor a graveyard of ill-fated paintings – some stillborn, others with weeks of work before meeting disaster. Perhaps most telling was the feeling of being blistered by the demands of the work. The sensation began six months into the book and persisted until completion two years later. (I suppose one should expect blisters when living with a dragon.) I had help along the way. In this world I had the support of John Matthews who proposed this long overdue edition, and chose me as its illustrator. In the slippery realm of the artist, I had support in the friendship of fellow illustrator Alan Lee, whose compassionate voice of experience would always find me no matter how deep or entangled I became in Malory's dark forests.

The rewards of illustrating Malory are worth the blisters. The story is so diverse and provocative that one rarely loses inspiration. After a month spent with the intense charge of Morgan le Fay, the following would be spent in the silence of the Wasteland. In this way I retained a balance both in mind and palette and an appetite for the next painting. One of the most appealing qualities of illustration is its diversity in subject and mood. The artist is licensed, in fact required, to travel to forbidden places and paint scenes which some may consider too disturbing in any other context. The illustrator is free to create the noise and heat of battle and conjure the cool menacing air of Chapel Perilious.

There has been humour, heartbreak and breathtaking visions, and the continuous excitement of trying to capture the beauty of Malory's scenes in watercolour. In the quietest moments, I liked to imagine ghosts roosting in my studio – from distant figures who may have existed and inspired the legend, to the storytellers, artists and their creations that have served it. There are rewards in such good company and I feel most privileged to have contributed to a tradition so close to my heart. It is a living legend and to illustrate Malory is to be gripped in the downpour of a great symphony.

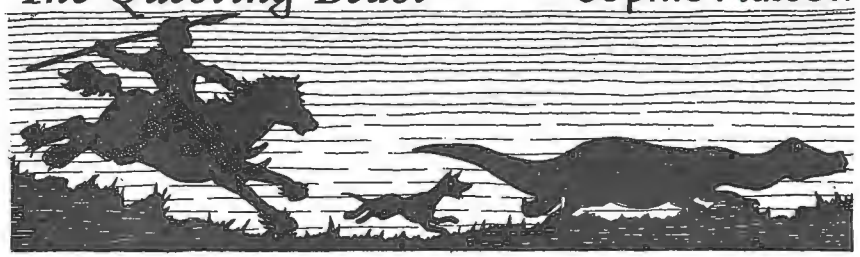
• John Matthews ed – *Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur* illustrated by Anna-Marie Ferguson [Cassell hardback ISBN 0 304 35367 1]



"... and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water."
Book Twenty One Chapter V

The Questing Beast

Sophie Masson



May it was, a beautiful Pentecost dusk, when Galahad first came to Camelot. Oh, in a blaze of glory he came, streaking across our sunset sky like a fiery comet, lighting the brilliant way to the end of our world! We saw the brightness, but not the doom; we did not understand that he brought both death and life to the tired land. And we did not pity him. We did not see anything in him to pity ...

It was the springtime of the year he came, but the autumn of Camelot. For the great deeds of the past, the vigour and magic of the youth of our world, had dwindled. All the paths, it seemed, had been taken; all the monsters vanquished. We lived in a peace and prosperity unknown to any before us. No wars disturbed our peaceful borders; but the ideals of our past had grown old with our King, and soft with our living. For it is a strange thing that men long for peace when there is war; yet when there is peace, war reigns in their hearts. Melancholy now lived amongst us, where she had been unknown before; yes, and her sister regret, and her daughter despair, and her cousin indifference. The young spent their days in fruitless jousting, in never-ending tournaments of empty valour and foolish risk, in boasting and swaggering; the old in endless recounting of events of long ago: when, they claimed, not only were the deeds more valorous, but also the sun itself shone more brightly in the bluer-than-blue sky!

But there was more than this, something that was dangerous above all else. For the memory of the ways to the Otherworld had grown dim too. The path through the forest of dream had become overgrown and choked with the brambles and vines of our indifference. No longer did the graceful maidens or perilous knights visit us from the immortal realms; and we had almost grown to forget they had ever come at all. The doors and windows of our heart-fastnesses were shut to all marvels, all joy and wonderment, and darkness encroached steadily upon us. And so the Wasteland grew around us without our even becoming aware of it; and we lived in a desert without being able to name it.

Oh, there were a few did not forget, both of the old and the young. Mordred, for one. He had come to Camelot not long before, and had caused quite a stir. But memories had grown dim at Camelot along with so much else; and long shadows are easily hidden at dusk. Mordred did not remind the Court of any unpalatable things; he was always a smiling villain, and clever, and became quite a leader amongst the young men. But villain as he was, he understood what was lacking, what was missing in this autumnal Camelot. And in this understanding he saw his own chance. But he was also one of the few to understand Galahad for what he truly was: bright sun to his own night, yet kin to him in all but name, and necessary to each other. For if there was no sun, truly, the night would be bleak and overwhelming; but if there were no night, would the sun not seem merciless?

And Perceval, the one they called the Holy Fool. He knew. He had been to the castle of Corbenic, he had seen the maimed piteousness of the Fisher King. He had failed twice to ask the questions that would heal the land. But, alone of those there, he knew it was the questions that must be asked, not the answers sought. He and his sister Dindraine, they were amongst the best of the young ones there; bright with enthusiasm and kindness, both, though hotheaded and impulsive, at times, and in a fair way to losing their brightness, in the enervating atmosphere that was now our world ...

Arthur should have known. But melancholy had settled over him like a well-worn cloak; his heart was in mourning, his mind wounded, enshrouded in fog. The anger and coldness that was in Mordred had come from him, after all: the son was a mirror of the father, a demon's bitter glass, to be sure, but nevertheless reflective. The memory of his ancient double sin - the sin of incest, the sin of then attempting to kill his own son - might have faded from the Court's ken, but it had never left Arthur. In his earlier years, it had seemed to him that the sum of his honourable deeds, his deep love for the Queen, his loving friendship with the knights, his care for his land

of Logres, might be set in the balance with his old sins, and tip it in his favour. But now, he was not so sure. The bewilderment of the past had returned to him in full force, and he had none of the defences of youth to hold up against the darkness any more. And every evening, now, he was reminded. Every evening, Mordred sat at the table, and led the young knights in boasting, and swaggering. Every evening, he toasted the Queen, and the First Knight. And every evening, his mouth smiled and smiled like summer, and his eyes were cold as winter.

But Arthur did not look at his son if he could help it; his mouth never formed the name 'Mordred'. It was his only protest, his only defence. And it availed him little, in people's minds; for many there were that spoke, not so secretly, of Arthur's unfairness and coldness towards his only son, who had always behaved with the utmost respect towards him.

And I? What of I? In that autumn of our world, the power had left me. I was weak with the onset of my nature's own winter, and sad with the onset of my years' end. True I had been, in my way; but with the years had come an understanding as draining as Arthur's; that never would the glory and careless pride of our youth return.

It was on such an evening that Galahad came. He came not unknown and unheralded, like the King himself had done, long ago; but blazing out of the darkness, out of the palace shut in on itself for so long. Handsome as the day, with a skin touched with a golden bloom and hair as black as a raven's wing, he was clad in red armour, with a golden scabbard by his side. He came not orphaned and humbled, as did Perceval the Fool; but indeed to claim his rightful place at the table. Yet he did not come in fuss and fight and defensive jealousy, as did Mordred. For Galahad there was no test of valour necessary: his very name was enough, for the Siege Perilous glowed in letters of gold at his approach. Young, assured and strong and bright as a lick of Pentecost flame, he stood before us, not arrogant in his pride, but straight, as someone who knows his true worth, who has always known it. Neither he nor the white-clad old man with him, his guide, needed to ask for our silence. Their very presence was enough. The Otherworld had returned to us; summer and winter were one.

Oh, how I remember now the looks on the faces turned towards him! The young ones felt the fire of their loins rushing up instantly into their minds; the older ones knew a bittersweet rising up to overwhelm them. In all the manly hearts was a longing, all the deeper for being sudden: that it was they, standing straight and proud and tall like that, gazing calmly into all of the waiting faces! And the women - ah, the women knew a longing that they might stand by his side, might share in all he was to ask of them, as mothers, or sisters, or lovers ... Sweet Dindraine, with her wide eyes fixed on the young knight, was already his: her heart was already lost, her soul already promised, her body already aflame! Before long, it would burn with a fire all the greater for being denied, a flame tall and straight and white and consuming.

'Peace be with you, fair lords,' said the old man. His voice was soft, yet somehow it made us all tremble. He turned to the King. 'Sir, I bring you a young knight who is of king's lineage, and of the kindred of Joseph of Arimathea.' He paused a while, and his voice dropped to a whisper. But still we heard it, low and thrilling. 'And through him, all the marvels of this court and of all strong realms shall be accomplished.'

I saw Lancelot's face then. It was transfigured. His plain, beautiful face: it was suffused with a joy I had never seen there before, as he gazed on his only son. I remembered what his castle had been called, when he had lived with the Princess Elaine, mother of Galahad: Joyous Gard. It was this joy for which he had been waiting all his life. Oh, there was nothing selfishly proud, nothing of

fatherly swagger about him: of all the men there, Lancelot could see the truest of all. Not with the sharp eyes of hate, like Mordred, or the clear eyes of innocence, like Perceval: but the true eyes of a loving man. Indeed, his son was a shining child to him, and I liked him well enough, though, never, never as dear and deep as his father, and lacking ... lacking something, though I did not know it yet. And seeing Galahad through Lancelot's eyes, I felt as if a great burden had gone from me. But there was Arthur. Arthur, gazing hungrily, wildly, on Lancelot's son, as if he would devour him with his eyes. And the pain of it was like a lance in my heart, a frost-tipped lance of endless sorrow ...

The King nodded at the old man. 'Sir, you are right welcome here, and the young knight with you.' Lancelot looked at him then; for Arthur was not warm, in his voice, and the First Knight always was a man frank and bold in his own reactions. But I could see the King was holding in check some great leap of the heart; some terrible yearning; and I longed to help him, but could not.

Galahad bowed, and smiled: not discreetly, but with a grave golden dignity.

'Sir, I thank you for your courtesy.'

Then the old man brought him around the table, towards the Siege Perilous. And there was another great silence in the hall, a silence that was like fear.

The old man lifted the cloth that had always covered the seat; and he read out in a loud voice the words that had appeared there, in letters of gold:

This is the Siege of Galahad the High Prince.

There was a great sigh then, and a rustle, as everyone got to their feet, craning to see as Galahad slowly sat down on the seat that had always been meant for him. There was no surprise in his face, just that golden smile. And suddenly, I looked across the hall, and saw Mordred. And he was smiling, too ... Smiling and smiling, with his mouth and eyes bleak as winter. And for a moment, the deepest pity of all filled me. For Mordred did not have his father's love, his father's blessing: nothing but his lineage, and the memory of an ancient sin that must be expiated. His place here at Camelot had been forced on Arthur. But here he was, the High Prince; Arthur's heir; yet it was *Lancelot's* son who sat thus enthroned.

Mordred caught my eye. He did not stop smiling; but in his eyes something leapt then, something like a dark, questing beast, blind and wild in its fury.

Galahad was speaking. 'Go in peace, old man. You have done what was needed of you. Give my respects to my grandfather King Pelles and my mother Princess Elaine. Tell them that my father has greeted me.'

So young, to be so commanding! Yet none of us wondered at it, for in his radiance, half-human, half-Otherworldly, he reminded us of our old contract with the Otherworld, and it gladdened all hearts, the young and the old.

And so the die was cast. The coming of Galahad was truly a great wonder, and many marvels he accomplished as well, after it, but what I remember most of all is the way in which he transformed the court in his short time there. I never saw him again after he left Camelot, but he left an indelible impression on me, as he did on everyone who knew him. Whilst he was there, there were no foolish quarrels, no hasty words, no witless swaggering. Young and old mingled more easily, men and women seemed to drop their hostilities and see each other with new eyes, and Mordred's poisonous whispers went unheard. Lancelot went about in a happy daze, so happy that all our old joy was restored. And most of all, the fog seemed to leave Arthur's eyes, and he seemed not so much reborn as refreshed. Not that he forgot his sins; but that, like so many others, in Galahad's presence, he felt that truly the balance was there. That he had truly atoned, and that though Galahad was not his son, his very presence at Court was a sign of forgiveness. Arthur even looked more gently on his son Mordred then, and spoke his name, and attempted kindness where tenderness did not yet come naturally. Mordred was becoming uncertain: the dark unhappiness and desperate anger of his heart trembling under the new way of things. Even in the bitterest soil, a loving miracle can make a beautiful flower grow ... Oh, dear God ... If it had all lasted longer, if You had allowed Galahad to stay amongst us, what is to know what might have happened?

But that was never Galahad's aim. Never his destiny. He was the blazing comet, the last brilliance of our wounded land, and not its healer. Earthly harmony held little music for him, for he was of the Grail Family, keepers of the secret flame, the Holy Blood. Kind he was indeed to Dindraine, but never did he love her as a man loves a woman: for Lancelot's son though he was, he did not have Lancelot's soul of darkness and light. For Galahad's being was of light, and had no share in darkness at all. And a man must have both within him if he is to know love, and love is to know him ...

When the knights came to Arthur and begged to be allowed to go on the Quest for the Holy Grail, Galahad's name was on all their lips. Galahad was the shining light. He was the one for whom the Grail had waited, and now he was here, it would be found. The King gave his

consent – of course. How could he not? Was it not what they had all been waiting for? At that time, this is what they thought: this would be the healing to end all healings; Camelot would be purified and made whole, forever. They did not think that light blinds and burns as much as it illuminates. None of us remembered. We had been living in the twilight for too long to remember that morning's fresh gilt is followed by midday's burning, and that the setting sun burns brightest of all.

Watching, I could hardly fault them their fervour and worship of the young Grail knight, not when I myself had known such peace when Galahad was there. But he was going; and now I began to see that he had always meant to go. And I began to wonder. What did Camelot mean to him? What did it mean, for one so young, to know one's conception had not been made in earthly love, but in otherworldly deceit, sweet and good as that deceit might have been? And I could find no answers. Questions, only. I thought, like Perceval, I should be content to know the questions and not seek the answers — but oh, I am too much a part of this unstable world to be able to do so ...

And so, the knights would be going, all of them, even Lancelot, only Arthur remaining behind. Only Mordred had not declared for the Quest; the tough vine of his jealousy had sprung up again, and he wanted to make quite sure it was not all a plot to distance him from Camelot, and from Arthur's favour. But no, perhaps that's not the full story; perhaps it was truly because he knew. Because as I said, he understood Galahad. As I did not. As I still do not, not completely.

Dindraine came to me on the day before they left, to bid me goodbye, for she was going on the Quest, with her brother Perceval, and good Sir Bors, and Galahad her love. She was aflame still, sweet Dindraine: and in her voice and manner was the fervour of one who would lay down their life for their love, for the glory of a deed to impress her name on him forever.

'Good lady, I ask for your blessing,' she said, 'for you have always been kind to me, and I have admired you, always.'

'I give you my blessing joyously,' I said, 'for I see that it is in joy you go, and not grim destiny.'

'Oh, yes,' she said, and turned wide eyes to me; 'with Sir Galahad, there is no grim destiny, but only the surprise of joy, always!'

I did not show in my eyes or my mouth that I had any doubts. I blessed her, and hoped that God would smile upon her, and that Galahad might see her one day, and love her as much as she loved him. But as I fastened on her cloak the gilt brooch that was my gift to her, I felt such a tremor of fear that I could barely murmur words of farewell. In any case, she hardly heard me; her spirit was already a sacrifice, and a joyous, willing one. And what right did I have to think I knew any better than she? Perhaps it was mere jealousy that made me doubt; for I would not quest. I must stay here, as must Arthur.

On the morning they left, then, we made a merry occasion of it, and the air was bright with trumpet and gay with green and blue and red favours. The Questers rode out of the court with a tumult of hooves and a flourishing of mailed hands, and hope and glory and courage rode with them. And at their head, a figure beautiful as the dawn: Galahad himself.

For a moment it was as if we were looking on the morning of our own world, and not just on day's beginning: and I felt the tears start in my eyes, and thanked God for granting us this sight. I looked at Arthur, and saw that his eyes were full of it too, and we reached out to each other, and our hands clasped, and held firm, and warmth surged through each of us, and renewal.

But then came Mordred's slow, thoughtful voice behind us, making us spring apart, as if by instinct.

'My Lord Arthur, my Lady Guinevere — is it not a strange sight indeed?'

Arthur turned. 'Strange sight, my son? Whatever can you mean?' His voice held a strain, but he was striving to be fair. For Mordred had decided at the last moment that he would not go, and Arthur had made him see, most plainly indeed, just what he thought of that. Cowardice was a thing he never could stand, and he had accused Mordred roundly of it. But I did not know these things till later, when it was far too late: or I would have told him that cowardice was not a thing Mordred knew. Many other things, yes, but not that one ...

Mordred smiled. And horror rose in me at the sight, for there was winter again in his gaze, the white harshness of frost in his features.

'Why, great King and Queen, would you not say that yonder line of men looks most uncommonly like a great beast? A great questing beast bright in colour and sinuous in movement, with many and many baying tongues: and its head like a flame?

We could not help looking, and to our horrified eyes, now that Mordred had spoken and unlocked forbidden things in our minds, the long line of knights did indeed look like some terrible thing, some devouring dragon eating up the land. Some ravaging, wild and wicked thing. And at its head, a flame, pitiless as fire, blind as the sun.

'Why,' said Mordred, watching our faces. '"Why, great Queen, great King, I am sorry if my thoughtless question has caused you pain. I have too lively an imagination, it seems.'

'Thoughtless ...' said Arthur, and his voice was choked. 'You never did anything *except* by great thought, Mordred. But imagination — that you do *not* have. That you cannot take, as well.' And without another word, he turned on his heel, and was gone from my side.

Mordred raised an eyebrow at me. For a moment, the fear of him was great in me. He was growing strong, and would soon be stronger.

'My lady Guinevere,' he said, 'Forgive me if I have offended you. I meant to be merely amusing: the knights, questing off on the hunt, quivering, like some great eager beast.'

He waited for my reaction; but I hardly heard him. For in that terrible moment, Galahad had turned in his saddle and was looking back *towards* Camelot. From this distance, I thought I saw uncertainty in his bearing. No longer was he the flame-head of some hideous questing beast, but a young man, still beardless, and alone in all his perfect glory, in our imperfect world. And the sight of him filled my lungs with power, my mind with the question I should have asked him, so that I cried it our loud:

'Oh, my friends, why do you quest far away for the Grail, when it might live bright within you?'

But they were too far away. They did not check in their march, for they did not hear. There was only Mordred to catch the words, and only his wintry smile in answer, as he turned away from me, and followed his father into Camelot.

O Arthur, unde venis? Beryl Mercer

Man or myth? Historical or legendary? Dream or reality? Unless someone comes up with a workable method of time-travel, we shall probably never know.

However, this uncertainty means that anyone can write more or less anything he/she likes about Arthur, with as much likelihood of being right as anyone else. A few claims can safely be discounted, notably that of his being King of England, since England did not exist as a geographical entity in Arthur's time. *The Mabinogion* refers to 'the Island of Britain', and it has also been described as 'the Island of the Mighty'. Not until the Saxons (Angles, Jutes) overran the south of the Island, and Egbert, King of Wessex, became the first overlord of all the Anglic petty kings in 829, did England emerge as a nation.

Most of the early literature about Arthur was not written down until mediaeval times; Geoffrey of Monmouth's (mainly fictional) *History of the Kings of Britain* appeared in written form in the 12th century, and the much older *Mabinogion* not until the 14th century. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* probably owes much to Geoffrey, and entered this literary genre in the 15th century. Various other writers, such as Chrétien de Troyes, Wace and Layamon *etc* all 'jumped on the Arthurian band-wagon', as it were, in mediaeval times.

The point I am making is that virtually all of the relevant work of this period was contributed by Christian scribes who, having no attested historical references on which to base their tales, embroidered and invented as they wished. Among these inventions was the love-affair between Lancelot and Guinevere - which has been described by Professor Jean Markale thus: "The story of Lancelot and Guinevere's love, which a horrifyingly naïve Arthur is always ready to help along, must be one of the silliest tales that mediaeval literature has given us."[1]

Arthur, whence comest thou? Several areas lay claim to his origins, notably Wales and Cornwall, and Cumbria, Northumberland, Scotland and Brittany have sites attesting to his legend. For the purposes of this article I intend to concentrate on the first two, which form the ancient and modern backgrounds to my 20th century fantasy, *Merlin's Quest*. Like most writers of Arthurian fiction, I have created my own framework for this story. As I wrote earlier, my version has as much claim to validity as Mary Stewart's or Rosemary Sutcliff's ... Or as little!

Dux bellorum

Firstly, I don't think Arthur was a king. He is not referred to as such in *The Mabinogion*, and although this work dubs him 'Emperor', the Roman *Imperator* sometimes translates as 'General'.

I agree with those scholars who describe Arthur as *Dux Bellorum* or *Comes Britanniarum*. Since 'my' Arthur was not a king, it follows that he was not the son of a king, *viz* Uther Pendragon. I have made him – Arthur – a descendant of a Roman legate who petitioned to remain in Britain with his high-born Welsh wife and Romano-Celtic children, when the Legions pulled out of the Province in the early 5th century. I have named him Lucius Caius Olivianus, and his first-born son Lucius Valerian Aquileius. This Lucius went one better than his father by marrying Princess Ursula of Gwent. Their first-born was Artorius Lucius – otherwise Arthur. His mother, an educated woman, knew that her own name derived from the Latin for 'bear', and she referred to her child as her 'bear-cub'. Thus he grew up as Artos the Bear, while his Welsh contemporaries named him Arth Vawr, Great Bear, which gradually contracted to Arthyr or Arthur.

Companion

Secondly, since 'my' Arthur was not the son of Uther and Igraine, he was not born at Tintagel. I have set his birthplace in Caerleon, with his growing-up taking place in Caerwent ("in the *colonia* around Venta Silurum ..."). His father, when young, had gathered about him a band of high-spirited young men who "practised military skills, based themselves on the 2nd Augustan Legion, and gradually became known as reliable mercenaries, willing to support British kings and chieftains against their enemies." Arthur, born 430 AD, elected to become one of these Caerleon Companions in his mid-teens. When Lucius died, the men unanimously chose his son to be their new leader.

Gwenhwyfar, daughter of King Leodegrance of Cameliard (which I have identified with Cheshire), lives with her father, three brothers and a companion, Edrys, in Caer Dhu, which I have located on Alderley Edge. When Gwenhwyfar is sixteen, the Caer is besieged by Leodegrance's old enemy, King Ryence of North Wales.[2] Leodegrance manages to send word to Caerleon, and Arthur and the Companions succeed in routing the men of Gwynedd, and

lifting the siege. At the victory banquet which follows in the Caer, Gwenhwyfar is appalled when Arthur claims her to be his wife as 'payment' for his share in the rescue and relief of Caer Dhu and its inhabitants. Her shock and hurt are intensified when her father reluctantly agrees to this, in the age-old ritual of bride-bestowal: "I send my daughter from my hearth to yours ..."

As Arthur and Gwenhwyfar begin the long ride back to Caerleon, she is determined "to use every means in my power to make Arthur Pendragon regret having claimed Gwenhwyfar of Cameliard as spoils of war." However, despite having red hair and the fiery temperament which proverbially accompanies it, Gwenhwyfar is gradually won over to acceptance of her new rôle by Arthur's patience, courtesy and undemanding friendliness.

Merlin designs and oversees the building of Camelot – not at Cadbury, but on an island (factual) in a Welsh lake (also factual) – where he trains Gwenhwyfar to become a High Priestess of the Great Goddess.

Although 'my' Arthur was born to a Christian mother, who had him baptised, he preferred to follow his father in the rites of the Soldiers' God, Mithras. So my story has no Knights (simply the Caerleon Companions), no Round Table with its Siege Perilous, no Quest for the Holy Grail, no great banquets at the times of Christian festivals. 'My' Arthur is a war chieftain, brilliant in strategy, tactics and leadership.

To quote a passage of dialogue between Merlin and one of my 20th century characters:

"You see our difficulty, Merlin; so much has been grafted on to the life of this single charismatic figure over the centuries, that it is now virtually impossible to distinguish between fact and fantasy, or to decide what was reality and what was mythical embroidery, added later. The task of the ancient story-teller was to offer a gripping tale which would hold the interest of his listeners, and which featured familiar characters to whom they could relate. They were concerned with entertainment; exciting additions to the kernel of truth, or occasional departures from it, didn't trouble their consciences, any more than present-day authors worry about historical accuracy when dealing with half-legendary figures like Arthur - and yourself, for that matter. If the story-teller's audience, or the author's readership, decide to believe every word of it, that's their choice. After all, there are no Dark Age documents, no Druidic writings, to attest to the truth of one person's version of Dark Ages history, as against those of all the others."

"And yet," said Merlin gently, "without all these different versions, and the bestowal of kingship, it is possible that the scores of legends that have proliferated, both here and overseas, would never have existed."

Halwin said, "Well, yes – I see what you mean. As a king he is known virtually world-wide. As a war chieftain, a dux bellorum, his influence might not have reached so far. There's something deeply compelling about kingship. Even in republics, like America."

The Return

Thirdly, I belong to the school of thought which believes that Arthur does indeed return in the hour of his country's need – in the form of a hero of the time concerned, probably beginning with the (historically attested!) King Alfred. One section of my book – *Welsh Interim, 15th century* – delves into one of these 'incarnations' in detail – that of the Welsh hero Owain Glyndwr. After the collapse of his rebellion and his flight into the Welsh hills, Owain is granted a vision of the Celtic goddess Arianrhod, who lays a Quest upon him. He and two of the men who have followed him into hiding are to travel to Tenby (S Wales) where they are to hire a boat to take them, at night, to Boscastle in Cornwall. Horses will be waiting there to take them to Vellan Druchar (Valley Truckle):

"This is where Arthur fought his last battle; this is that Camlann where he and Mordred fell, and this is where he was secretly buried, with no quoit, no marker-stone, not even a simple wooden cross to identify his grave. So that men down the ensuing centuries could always hope that he was not truly dead, and would come again ...

"For more than nine hundred years he has lain beside the River Camel, in Kernow, while his mighty legend built itself into glory across the length and breadth of Britain. And now I, Owain Glyndwr, his spiritual descendant, am charged to lift his bones from Kernow's soil and bring them home to Cymru. I am to re-bury them in a secret place, known only to myself, where, many years hence, they will provide a sacred Quest for another man, whose name I was not told."

This man is Merlin, and this is his 20th century Quest.

Secret

This, then, is 'my' Arthur: not a king or the son of a king, and not the illegitimate result of adultery. A Welshman, born in the City of the Legions. Sorry Cornwall! – but it is likely, to my mind, that he maintained strongholds in the Duchy, like Kelliwic and Dimilioc. And Excalibur's final resting-place, tossed from Bedwyr's hand, is also in Cornwall. No, not Dozmary Pool, or Loe Bar ... I think I'll keep that one a secret, or there will be no surprises left for my potential readers ... if *Merlin's Quest* ever gets published ...

Notes

1. Jean Markale (1994) *King of the Celts* [*trans* Christine Hauch, Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont] 85
2. "Arthur is fighting to defend the lands of his ally King Leodegrance against King Ryence of North Wales." Elizabeth Jenkins (1975) *The Mystery of King Arthur* [Michael Joseph, London] 117

Arthur

Origins and Future?

Pamela Harvey

The name 'Arthur' derives from the Celtic word for bear: *Arth* or *Arthe*, latinised as *Artos*. King Arthur was known as the Bear of Britain. Among some peoples bears are referred to as The Chief's Son, the Elder Brother and other human-sounding names. The Cornish title Pendragon means Chief, and perhaps refers to dragons as race memories of prehistoric animals – descended from dinosaurs, perhaps? Both bears and dragons stand, in traditions around the world, for strength and wisdom. Bear cults are the oldest known in the world. Neanderthal Man had shrines to the cave bear containing skulls, red ochre – symbolising blood and life, hearths and fossils. Bears are also traditionally connected to the spirit realm and immortality.

Arthur of the Britons was apparently a sixth century tribal leader and warlord of the Celts, but his associations in Celtic lore with the Sun-God and Avalon – the Otherwold – are significant. His titles suggest he inherited a mantle of wisdom, strength and magical power older than the Celts. The bear is the oldest of magical cults, going back into the far distant past.

It is strange, too that the King who drove back the Saxons should have been associated with so many different places in Britain, from the mythical Lyonesse (from which emerged the Isles of Scilly, in Roman times still only one island) to Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and other places. If Arthur was Ambrosius Aurelianus, a Romano-Celtic leader, that could make more sense. He could command Southern Britain, by that time perhaps Wales, and certainly London, where in mediaeval times his cult was well established. That still does not explain Scotland and Cornwall and most parts of Wales, all territories the Romans never conquered. The Cornish castle of Tintagel is known as Arthur's birthplace – or was he found on the rocks nearby? It does not explain Glastonbury either, his venerated shrine, sacred to both Pagans and Christians.

In the West Country Arthur was once revered as a God, and until fairly recent times children were not given his name. Such an attitude of respect seems rather too much if he was just a local hero, however powerful and popular.

Origins?

Archaeology will probably piece together – as it already has – some aspects of the story of the 6th century hero who saved Celtic Britain for some time, at least 50 years, from the marauding Saxons and other sea peoples, when the last Romans left to try to rescue the crumbling Empire.

But these facts do not satisfactorily explain the body of myth and ancient ambience around Arthur and his associates. Will we ever learn the real identities of Uther Pendragon, Merlin, Morgan-le-Faye? Morgan is derived from the Morrigan, or Morgana, the Otherworld Goddess. Merlin is said to be a son of the world of Faery. He has associations with Wales and the Tylwyth Teg. We know much of the myth was first put into story form in the Middle Ages, but it is probable that Celtic legend enshrined quite a lot of it well before that.

Avalon is the Celtic realm of the dead and of regeneration, where Arthur goes to be healed of his wounds, not just to die. Usually only gods return from thence, and the myths say he will return – to Britain, the 'Holy Isle' of the Druids, and to the world. Perhaps even to London, Roman Londinium, after Lludd, the British God, the son of Gwyn-ap-Nudd, the Welsh Faery King. The Cult of Arthur may have been a bridge between the persistently Pagan Londoners of Romano-British origin and the Christian Church, an attempt to syncretise them, or perhaps point out their similarities and reconcile their differences.

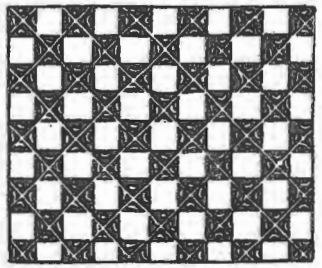
Back to bears and dragons. Yule was called Alban Arthur or 'Arthur's Time' by the Celts. It was the time when the Sun, renewed in the cave of Winter, rose again in strength after the Solstice, reminding them of the cave bear who emerged after his hibernation with regained powers. Legend says King Arthur is sleeping in an underground cave until Britain needs him. Such caves also mean to the shaman places of meditation and visualization. Places perhaps beyond Space-time. The hub of the Universe, not necessarily for hibernation, but for gaining wisdom, insight and psychic power.

The constellation of the Great Bear is known in Wales as 'Arthur's Wain'. It, together with Ursa Minor, revolves around the Pole Star, the axis mundi of the heavens. This further associates Arthur with the Universe, and perhaps its mysterious Centre.

Caves have always been a symbol of that centre, a meeting point of more than one world or dimension, and the womb of Mother Earth where from earliest times people sought Divine revelations. Special caves, that is – places sacred for generations. Which brings us to Dragons, also said to lurk in caverns. In earliest times perhaps men and women found lost descendants of the dinosaurs in some of these! (Green Dragon Lane – a London hillside – may refer to them, too.) The term 'Dragons of Wisdom' is very ancient, and was thought in the East to refer to beings who came from other worlds to instruct and help the first human beings.

Future?

In Gaelic tradition the Kean Mathon (head of the Bear) is one of the seven signs or names of star clusters engraved on the shield of Arthur. Is this possibly indicative of the elctromagnetic waves of power that drive the Cosmos? In future times when humankind are freed from some of their mortal constraints might we discover or rediscover a civilization nearer to the Centre, whose peoples have visited us since our race's beginning? These days there is speculation about Gods and beings of greater evolution visiting Earth, and having been connected to legends around the world. Heroes of all lands have been associated with them. UFOs and fairies – is there a common link? Personally, I believe so. Merlin and Arthur may still be 'out there' as well as having access here, as will possibly be so in the future. In the coming century humans will probably go back to the Moon. Let us profoundly hope they will respect the territory of Arianrhod, or Artemis, Selene, or perhaps her other name, Morgana. If not, all legend speaks of more powerful beings than human, whose help we may well need, and whose disapproval we would prefer not to have. The future – as all our world knows – does not belong to one nation or group of nations; it belongs to the planet Earth.



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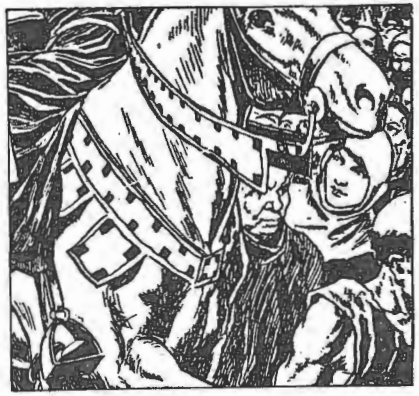
The Women in Lancelot's Eye

Two little-known poems

Steve Sneyd



Swinburne in the 19th century, C S Lewis in the 20th, each wrote a long poem of Lancelot, the two works sharing the characteristic of being as much a portrait of a woman through the knight's eyes as of the knight himself.

Launcelot

C S Lewis, best-known for his Narnia books, but whose involvement with Arthurian matters included writing an extensive exegesis of Charles-Williams' densely symbolic book-length Arthurian poems *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, set his own only Arthurian poem, the uncompleted narrative "Launcelot", in the knight's unsuccessful participation in the Grail quest. It was unpublished in Lewis' lifetime, like all but "Dymer" of the four *Narrative Poems* reprinted in 1994.

The piece, probably written, says Hooper, in the early 1930s, survived Lewis' habit of destroying his poems because the same notebook held notes for his Oxford lectures. Ending abruptly, mid-event, in the "fragment poem" tradition, the 8½ page poem, undivided into stanzas, its form rhymed couplets of hexameter lines, begins in an Arthur's Court enduring the long wait for the Grail quest knights to return. After a year, Gawain returns in winter, evasive of questions, wishing only to leave again to return to his own estates. With spring, others trickle back, changed, defeated-seeming; in a telling touch, "Now they do not understand / Our speech. They talk to one another in a tongue / We do not know", and have "strange sorrows and new jests" among themselves. Finally, in a gloomy time of rain, Guinever hears sentries say that Launcelot had returned three days before. She sends a terse message of summons; he comes to her, as one "to whom they bring bad news she will not understand."

He begins to tell of his quest; he tells of riding into and through beautiful springtime country; next, on beyond into the Waste Land. There, a hermit, having told of Perceval's failure to ask the healing question, dies as he finishes speaking. Further on his way, Launcelot reaches a beautiful valley, an oasis in the desolation, which lifts his heart and causes him to sing. He finds a shrine raised on pillars; beneath, three beds of lilies; beside this is a vividly imaged "damosel ... / Pale airy clothes, and all her countenance filled with light"; in a subtle echoing of how he himself had but now sung "The

breezes here have passed my lady's mouth ... / All gentle hearts should worship her", this maiden had "parted lips as though she had just ceased to sing".

She tells him the lily plots are to be tombs where "when the Wasted Country is no longer dry, / The three best knights of Christendom shall come to lie." When he, eyes "cast down, half-ashamed," asks who they are, a disembodied voice names Bors, Percevale, and Galahad, adding that there shall be none for the "recreant" Launcelot. When he raises his eyes again, the damosel has vanished: "No lady there, an empty shrine," and, in an evocatively mysterious image, "No print of foot, where in grey dew the blackbirds pass". He is mocked by "clear laughter jingling in the air like bells".

He travels on through swamplands, finding a manor house of Roman aspect on an island in "the steaming land"; its owner, richly dressed "golden, like a dragon back, her clothing gleamed", introduces herself as the Queen of Castle Mortal, and offers hospitality without asking his name. She reminds him of other women he knows: "Somewhat like Morgan the enchantress, and somewhat / Like Guinever, her countenance and talking". After feasting, she takes him to a chapel containing three empty stone coffins.

"Her body is shaking like a girl who loves too young" as she tells him these are for the three best knights; she challenges him to name the three, but, head down, he replies "I dare not say", whereupon "she laughed aloud"; naming Launcelot du Lake along with Sir Lamorake and Tristram she adds "They shall all be living when they lie / Within these beds", before revealing a concealed guillotine-like device which can sever the necks of anyone who lies in the coffins.

It is worth noting the changes Lewis has made to the original story, as given in the *Perlesvaus* — there, the Proud Maiden or Lady of Chastel Orgeulleus (Proud Castle) is the possessor of the three waiting coffins (and, a minor technical change, the head of her victim will be severed when he looks through a portal into the chapel, not when he lies down in one of the coffins, although the concealed blade device is the same).

The bravest she seeks to possess as corpses, and be buried beside, are in the *Perlesvaus* named to Gawain, not Perceval; he survives only because it is part of her pride that she does not deign to ask guests their names; if asked, his honour would have made him give it.

(As an aside, although Jessie Weston regards the maiden's behaviour as ludicrous - "no sane woman would have behaved in such a manner!" — it would be more realistic to consider, in the light of the extremes of obsessive collector-like celebrity stalker behaviour with which we are familiar, that neither the nameless *Perlesvaus* author nor Lewis stray beyond the boundaries of human possibility in their portrayals.)

Moreover, in the *Perlesvaus*, Chastel Mortel has, not a Queen, but a King, Perceval's wicked uncle, who besieges and takes his goodly brother's Grail Castle; Weston took the name Mortal Castle as a metaphor for the human body - by giving it a Queen, Lewis moves beyond motivating the lady with pride expressed in a mania to collect the best / most famous, to giving her an overarching sense of mastery, however illusory, of the living: whether self-deluded or genuinely powerful as Other, she seems to represent a face of death at once half in love with its destined victims, half in love with itself.

After all, in Lewis' poem, when Launcelot, still without revealing his identity, calls her plan "the murder of good knights", she ripostes that this action will be "for endless love of them"; she will make "Their sweetness mine beyond recovery", displacing Morgan, Guinever, Nimue *etc* as a lover; then in an image both darkly, Gothically, erotic and a distilled essence of Celtic head cultism, the poem ends with her promise to "here / Keep those bright heads and comb their hair and make them lie / Between my breasts and worship them until I die". The doubleness of possible meaning in the final line gives great intensity, whether or not the ambiguity as to whether the heads should worship her breasts as well as the Queen worship the heads was intended by Lewis at a conscious level; the image is a terrifying one of fatally possessive passion; and, if the Queen herself represent death, as her title would seem to imply, how is that she too can die?

It is possible to speculate that Lewis ended the poem here, fearing anticlimax, because he could see no way to maintain this level of intensity, so effectively expressing that deadly perversion of desire into a lust for ownership of surface externals which also feature in the Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur triangle itself insofar as the obsession is with role as much as personhood.

Lancelot

Algernon Charles Swinburne's eleven page "Lancelot" (in Carley 1990) was written between 1858 and 1869; like the Lewis poem it is an uncompleted "fragment", and again depicts Lancelot on the Grail quest.

Aware that he is failing, he seeks refuge from awareness of that failure in sleep. In a dream vision, a merciful angel brings an opportunity to see the Grail. But Lancelot is unable to prevent

himself from superimposing Guinevere's face onto the Grail-bearer maiden's. Thus unable to see the Grail itself clearly because of the image of Guinevere, worse still he finds her image bringing sorrow rather than joy, her face first sad, then ageing; it is a vivid reminder of her remote dismissiveness of his longing, even when, safe in his castle by the sea, she could, should, have willingly been his.

Intriguingly, he sees her face, even before it ages and greys, as "thin"; in Swinburne's short (1½ pp) "The Day Before The Trial", Arthur, meditating on Guinevere, also sees her face as "thin"; his feeling of rejection by her closely parallels Lancelot's so that, despite very different lengths, these two Arthurian poems form a diptych, both males feeling rejection along with unadmitted guilt: their love has brought each only frustration and the shared love object only unhappiness.

The Waste Land of the Lancelot poem, created by the seasonal excess of a drought summer, means all seems brown-dead as winter vegetation, though brought to that state by sun not frost, and the poem's slumbrous form, stanzas of varying length built round a triply repeated rhyme, then a shorter line rhyming with another shorter line after another triplet, has a summer night insectility of sound; here is captured that time of excess heat enervating thought into dazed half-sleep, when obsessive, cyclical, recollections of past frustration so readily heighten awareness of present unfulfillment.

The mournfulness of sunset, images of the soul ship nowhere bound, Guinevere's bitter song, combine in the memory vision to sour backstory as much as present; the power of memory, trapping rather than liberating, has at one and the same time destroyed the future, the hope of moving on implicit had Lancelot been able to fully see, and meaningfully grasp, a Guinevere-free Grail vision. Despite the way that dialogue with the angel heard or imagined by Lancelot acts as a distraction, taken as a whole this is a poem of great emotional power; again it can be speculated that it remained unfinished because the poet could see no way to move beyond this level of intensity without anticlimax or loss of conviction.

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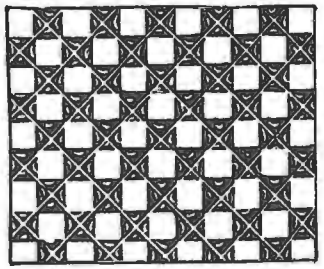
A Tale of Two Wizards: Merlin and Virgil

W M S Russell



In twelfth-century Naples, a cycle of legends appeared about Virgil, not as a poet but as a mighty magician. The legends were transmitted to the rest of Europe by a number of writers, including Konrad of Querfurth (Chancellor of the Emperor Henry VI), Gervase of Tilbury, and Alexander Neckam;[1] in the sixteenth century, the tales were collected together in a French book, *Les Faicts Merveilleux de Virgille*.[2] They are conveniently available in English in a delightful little book published in 1893 by the famous folklore publisher David Nutt.[3] The magician appears in a frontispiece that is not attributed, but which looks to me very much like Beardsley, who had his first great success that year in an illustrated edition of the *Morte d'Arthur*: as it happens, in 1895, David Nutt rejected this artist's frontispiece for another book as pornographic.[4]

In one of these Virgil tales Merlin appears, in the character, rather surprising for Arthurians, of a sorcerer's apprentice. Virgil constructed, by magic, the city of Naples. (The real Naples was founded by the Rhodians in the seventh century BC, about six centuries before the birth of the real Virgil,[5] but this didn't bother the legend-makers.) When he had finished magically building his new city, Virgil decided to moved there from Rome. But after transferring most of his possessions, he found he had left his magical Black Book in Rome. He sent his pupil Merlin to fetch it, warning him not to open the book himself. Merlin collected it, but needless to say, on his way to Naples, he started to read the Black Book. At once a host of demons appeared, asking fiercely what he wanted them to do. The flustered Merlin could only think of asking them to strew the road from Rome to Naples with salt and keep it clean. Luckily the demons did not enjoy this job, and left Merlin alone afterwards.

There is another link between Merlin and Virgil, and here the British magician appears in all his grandeur as of equal status to the other great medieval wizard. In the thirteenth century there was a report of the discovery of Virgil's underground tomb at Naples: here the magician sat among his magic books *'under an ever-burning lamp'*.[6] Now the place of Merlin's entombment, either by Viviane's trickery or by his own decision, is described in a bewildering variety of ways in the various sources - a rock, a hollow tree, an invisible palace, a glass castle, *etc*.[7] But one tradition makes it an underground vault that is permanently lit up.

This is the version used by Ariosto. In Cantos 2 and 3 of *Orlando Furioso*, the traitor Pinabello lures Bradamante to an underground cavern, and treacherously drops her into it. He goes off with her horse, leaving her for dead. Bradamante survives her fall, and enters an inner part of the cavern, where she finds Merlin in suspended animation in a tomb that is *permanently illuminated as bright as day*. The magician welcomes her, predicting great things for her, and the good sorceress Melissa, who is present, amplifies his prophecy, describing the glories of Bradamante's descendants, the Este family (Ariosto's patrons), after which she shows the heroine the way out of the cavern.

Stuart Piggott has shown that this part of Ariosto's poem stimulated a crop of alleged discoveries of underground tombs with ever-burning lamps, some of which lamps were even preserved in museums![8] But here I wish only to note that the illuminated tomb is common to the two supreme medieval magicians, Merlin and Virgil.

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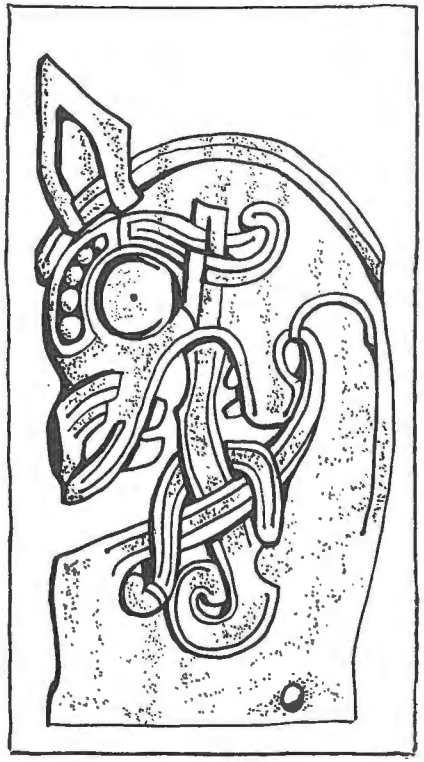
Arthur & Alfred

Tim Porter



Everyone knows Glastonbury Tor, that steep, solitary hill, with its tower to which the eye is irresistibly led. Fewer people know Burrow Mump. It too is a solitary hill; it too has a ruined tower, and dominates the surrounding flat lands, drawing the eye in just the same manner. But the intervening Polden Hills preclude any direct line of sight between and Glastonbury. If there is a hill which the Tor faces, that hill is Cadbury; Avalon and Camelot are the poles of the Arthurian landscape, clearly associated one with another. This is the much-examined, much-discussed landscape of Avalon, the Abbey, the Holy Thorn, the Zodiac. But beyond the Polden Hills is Alfred's landscape, lesser known and quite separate, and presided over by Burrow Mump, one-time beacon hill to the Isle of Athelney.

It was to this place that King Alfred withdrew at Easter in the year 878, to emerge seven weeks later and fight an astonishing battle which decisively turned the tide of history.

The preceding decades had brought mounting terror. The light of Christian civilisation had been all but extinguished by the "Great Army" or the Host, a vast and locust-like swarm of heathen fighting men which was ravaging western Europe virtually unchecked. England had watched its approach with trepidation. In 865 the Host landed on the east coast. One by one, the Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, East Anglia and Mercia succumbed and were destroyed. Wessex alone put up any sort of fight.

The best army any Saxon kingdom could put into the field was an amateur one, composed mainly of farmers and peasants taking time off from their work; the Host was a body of hardened men who did nothing but fight - totally ruthless, totally professional, living entirely off plunder, so totally destructive as well. However, when this fearsome and hitherto undefeated horde descended on Wessex for the first time, the Saxon amateurs handled it roughly.

During this hard-fought and inconclusive campaign of 871, King Alfred came to the throne. He had not been trained for the kingship. He had four elder brothers but all had died in turn, three of them as kings. Alfred was not much more than twenty. He was the only adult male left of the direct line of Cerdic. It was a very precarious moment for the kingdom of Wessex.

Defeat

The Host had received a bloody nose, and there were richer pickings elsewhere. So Wessex was left alone for some years, though the Host was always hovering, awaiting its chance. At the end of 877 the moment arrived, at Christmas, when the Saxon levies were dispersed. The surprise attack took Alfred completely unawares. It was at this juncture that he was forced to take refuge in the Somerset lowlands.

This part of England was at that time covered by marsh and dense alder forest. Athelney could be approached only by secret paths. At Easter, Alfred established himself there, and sent word to all parts of Wessex that the levies were to assemble at Egbert's Stone (a little to the east of Mere in Wiltshire) on a certain day in May. In a supreme act of faith he made his way there on the appointed day with his own small contingent. Fortunately the other contingents showed up as

well. Two days later, at the Battle of Ethandun (thought to have been fought on the downs between Westbury and Warminster) the heathen Host were utterly defeated.

Patterns

It is strange how actual history seems to shape itself into a mythic pattern. It is no surprise to find that Alfred's defeat and disappearance occur at Midwinter; he is in the wilderness during Lent, suffering the shame of humiliation (this latter illustrated by the hackneyed but by no means irrelevant fable of the cakes); his reappearance on Athelney is at Easter, and his full return in glory before all the people at Whitsuntide. So, though all was apparently lost, the anointed king who had seemed to die in the winter returned to life with the summer. It is a story as old as human thought.

Alfred put himself forward as the champion of Britain, not just of Wessex. The princes of Wales voluntarily submitted to him, and when he and his descendants reconquered the rest of England from the Danes there was no question of re-establishing the old separate kingdoms; the House of Wessex had won the right to provide the kings of all England. His court welcomed men from all over the island (two of his chief advisers were a Mercian and a Welshman).

One is tempted to wonder whether Alfred was, up to a point, acting out a part. He must have known of Arthur, that earlier champion of Britain, who had organised the Celtic resistance when the Saxons had been the heathen invaders. The climactic battle of those times, Badon Hill, was as distant to Alfred as the Gunpowder Plot is to us, but the very survival of the tradition shows that the Saxons must have honoured the memory of their valiant opponent (a recognisable English characteristic).

The end of the Dark Ages

The parallels between Arthur and Alfred are remarkable, even if most of them seem at first glance to be coincidental. Even the sites of two famous victories, Arthur's at Badon and Alfred's at Ashdown, seem to be within a few miles of one another on the Ridgeway. As far as one can tell, there seem to be striking tactical similarities between Badon and Ethandun also.

The parallels persist even if we examine the more apocryphal Arthurian traditions. Both kings came to the throne unexpectedly, both fought beneath the dragon standard, both had rebellious nephews who tried to seize the throne (although the revolt of Alfred's nephew Ethelwold was crushed before it could do much damage).

But the most crucial parallel of all concerns the disappearance of the king. After the catastrophe, Arthur was taken to Avalon, there to be healed of his wounds, with the promise that one day he would return and save his people. Alfred also vanished to his own similar, though separate, place. But he became the king in the greenwood. Not surprisingly, this is the part of his career which has inspired folklore. The fable of the cakes, and the tale of how he went into the Host's encampment disguised as a minstrel, both have a definite flavour of Robin Hood. It is also significant that Alfred's disappearance was into that part of Britain which seems to have been a great centre not only of Christianity but also of the old religion. The one known historical event from those months seems to have a bearing on this. A Saxon skirmishing party captured the Host's raven standard and carried it back to the alder-woods -surely the symbol of the Old Faith may be read into this!

Whatever happened to Alfred in these months, he returned like a man reborn.

Was he perhaps saying in his own way, "When this happened before, Celt stood alone and lost; this time Celt and Saxon stand together and win. Christianity and the Old Faith also stand together and win. Arthur went away but never returned. I have put another ending on that unhappy event 400 years ago, and so brought it out right."

I'm not, of course, suggesting that Alfred set the situation up; it set itself up, as situations do. But I *am* suggesting that he may have seen what was happening, and perceived what his own role had to be, and that this may have given him strength and shown him what to do. At all events, Ethandun marked the end of the Dark Age as decisively as Camlann marked its beginning.

The complete hero

The tales of Arthur appeal particularly to the Celt in us; the down-to-earth Saxon responds more to Robin Hood. King Alfred suffers by comparison for the simple reason that we know too much about him. From the *Chronicles* and from Bishop Asser's *Life* we know that he suffered constant ill-health, that he instituted legal and educational reforms, that he invented a candle clock, that he did not win all his battles. His actual voice speaks to us through the books he translated. Arthur and Robin Hood, though doubtless originally just as real, are shrouded in the romance of Celtic mist and greenwood leaves.

Yet Alfred, when seen as a mythic figure, combines their attributes; he is the divine King, the man in the woods, the Champion of Britain, the friend of the poor, all in one - a very complete British hero.

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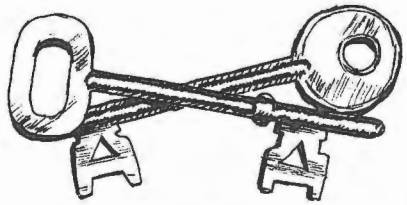
Unlocking Secrets?

Charles Evans-Günther



Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd, with John Baldock
The Keys to Avalon: the true location of Arthur's Kingdom revealed
Element Books 2000 £18.99
1 86204 735 9 hb 320pp

I would like to begin this review by stating that it is a difficult one for me. There are two reasons for this, firstly, but not so important, I am far from my own Arthurian library and from other reference sources; and secondly, but of considerable importance, I know both Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd, and consider Steve to be a good friend – a person who I both respect and admire. However, I feel that I may need to make some criticism of *The Keys to Avalon*. In a sense I am acting as devil's advocate. For the first time in many years of reviewing all kinds of Arthurian books I dearly hope that the comments I am about to make are wrong. I will have to leave it to the reader to make up his/her mind about whether what I have to say merits further discussion.

The Keys to Avalon consists of just over 300 pages, with 36 pages of appendices, a two-page select bibliography, copious notes (20 pages), two glossaries (personal names and Welsh placename elements) and a full index. The book ends with a *Stop Press* which, in my opinion, should not be ignored. It is well-designed with very good maps (thirty-four in all) and some lovely photographs, eleven in colour and fourteen in monochrome. And at nearly nineteen pounds it is unusually cheap for these days.

Having read *Keys* twice in its pre-publication form and now three more times, I have to say I am still undecided about what Steve and Scott are saying. The need to re-evaluate this period's geography is important, and the way the authors make use of rare, little-used and often ignored material is to their credit. However, I have to say the first part leaves me dry (I'll explain in due course) while I found the second half absorbing! To be candid I would have preferred Steve and Scott to have ignored Arthur completely and concentrated on Avalon.

Placenames

Keys concerns the search for two elusive places – the realms of Arthur, and Avalon. There is a vast amount of material in this book and to even touch a small part would take a lot of space. It is very much a book about geography and puts forward a theory, not completely new, that placenames have been misplaced. Using Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* as their main source, Steve and Scott try to discover the true locations.

Prydein, we are told, is not the Britain we know today but territories more or less within the present borders of Wales. Then Steve and Scott go ahead and position many places, which have been thought to be found elsewhere, within those boundaries. The main indicators are from the *Triads*, Early and Medieval Welsh poetry and various chronicles, including Bede and Nennius. They suggest Geoffrey and the *Triads* show Britain was divided into three parts. It is normally considered that these areas were England, Scotland and Wales, called by Geoffrey Logria, Albany and Cambria, after the sons of Brutus, who gave his name to Britain. These the authors say are actually parts of Wales.

It is true that the *Triads*, being a system of recording aspects of Welsh tradition in threes, divides Ynys Prydein in such a way, and that Gerald of Wales said Rhodri Mawr divided Wales between three of his sons. But there is little actual historical evidence to show Wales was ever divided in this fashion. The number three plays an important part in their culture, as for all Celts, but equally there are other numbers such as four, five, seven, eight and nine. Geography-wise the figure five is probably more important than three (see Alwyn and Brinley Rees's excellent *Celtic Heritage*). There was more to Wales than Gwynedd, Powys and Deheubarth. What of Gwent, Morgannwg and Brycheiniog and other smaller units? And Deheubarth is much later than the time discussed in this book, being earlier Dyfed, Ceredigion and Ystrad Tywi.

It is possible the dividing-up of Britain is based on Gildas, who said there were four peoples – British, Scots, Picts and Saxons. The Picts and Scots were from the North, while the Saxons were in the East, leaving the rest of the land to the British. But this is a simplification. Even in the time of Bede there were four peoples but also numerous kingdoms and no one overall king.

One other point worth mentioning is that the Cynfeirdd – the early Welsh bards – used a number of different names that could be interchanged. These were English, Saxons, men of Bimeich, the men of Deur and the Lloegrwys (People of Lloegr, Logria). They were certainly

seen as the enemy in the poems of Taliesin and *The Gododdin*. If Saxon, English and Lloegrwys are the same then it hardly suits South Wales. In the period when Saxon and Welsh rivalled each other, before the coming of the Normans, Flintshire probably had a greater settlement of English than the South. Calling the English Lloegrwys was used by Welsh bards long before Geoffrey's formula of three divisions of Britain.

Steve and Scott show that various cities, rivers and seas have been misunderstood by Geoffrey, but the geography used by him seems to have already been in place long before the 12th century. To be fair to the authors, they say Geoffrey made use of an ancient book given to him by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, who had brought it "out of Britannia". They suggest that existing Welsh versions of Geoffrey's work, usually called *Brut y Brenhinedd*, may well be older and based on the original 'ancient book'. This needs discussion and should not be disregarded!

When it comes to placenames I found myself unconvinced by their suggestions. That the River Teme and Ludlow are originals of the Temys and Caerlud are difficult to accept. Descriptions of the Temys or Tamesis indicate a large estuary – Gildas called it a splendid river and Nennius calls it an arm of Britain, hardly the Teme! The elements of Tamesis are definitely Celtic and the first part is still found in a good number of rivers including the Taff on which Cardiff is located. Caerlud could have been somewhere else but I cannot see it being Ludlow despite superficial similarities in its name. Welsh pronunciation of the name Ludd sounds more like *Lith* than Lud, and Ludlow is, seemingly, made up of Early English elements, based on the river Lude. Geoffrey's London was called New Troy or Trinovantum, and Ludlow was connected with the Roman town of Beroniacum.

I was rather surprised to find that York has moved to the Humber Estuary rather than being on the River Ouse! The Dee and the Usk having a similar meaning related to water is not too surprising since mixtures of Brythonic and Goedelic are not unknown in Wales; take for example Pistell Rhaeder — both meaning waterfall.

Also to find similar names in various parts of once Celtic-speaking Britain isn't at all unusual. Efrog on the banks of the Hafren doesn't mean Caer Efrog since the root of Efrog and Eboracum is the Celtic word for yew, and the yew is a common tree.

Placing Kernyw in North Wales on or near the Lleyn Peninsula doesn't bother me so much, apart from North Wales getting rather crowded, but the explanation for making Cornwall Brittany or Llydaw is rather weak.

The Wall

So, now to move to the Wall of Severus. It is suggested by the authors that there is a third wall in Britain apart from that of Hadrian and Antoninus, and that this third wall, said to have been built by the Emperor Severus, is the earthworks that we now know as Offa's Dyke. It is part of Steve and Scott's theory that, since the wall divided Deira and Albany, those two places must be on the present Welsh-English border. To add to this they report in a *Stop Press*, at the back of the book, that another earthwork called Wat's Dyke, also found in North-East Wales, can now be dated to a period much earlier than accepted. However, this does not prove that Offa' Dyke is Severus's Wall.

Steve and Scott begin by using a fourth century Roman document called the *Scriptores Historia Augustae*, which states Severus built a wall "across the island [realm] from both ends of the Ocean boundary". No location is given but they go on to use evidence from Bede and Nennius to put flesh on these bones.

The oldest reference to walls in Britain after the above-mentioned document must be Gildas. We are told by him that some time after the death of Maximus the Romans advised the Britons "to construct across the island a wall linking the two seas ... But it was the work of a leaderless and irrational mob, and made of turf rather than stone: so it was no good." After a gap of some years the Romans returned and built a second wall "quite different from the first ... employing the normal method of construction". Gildas says, "This ran straight from sea to sea, linking towns that happened to have been sited there out of fear of the enemy." It is presumed that "the normal method of construction" means built with stone.

No further mention is made of walls but Gildas must be one of the sources for Bede, who also talks of two walls, but in much greater detail. He names the builder of the first two walls as the Emperor Severus. In Book 1, chapter 5, he describes Severus's wall as being "a rampart and ditch" from "sea to sea" and fortified with "a series of towers". Like Gildas's first wall it was not made of stone but of "sods cut from the earth". Is this Offa's Dyke?

Later, Bede goes on to describe a second wall in Book 1, chapter 12. The Romans returned to Britannia and advised the British to "construct a protective wall across the island from sea to sea". So they built a wall, "but having no engineers capable of so great an undertaking, they built it of turf not stone, so that it was of small value". He goes on to tell us this wall began near the monastery of Aebbercurnig at a place called Peanfahel by the Picts and Penneltun by the English, and ran westwards

until it reached "the vicinity of the city of Alcluith". The latter, we have already been informed by Bede, is situated on an estuary on the western side of the country opposite another estuary. This is not the wall Bede earlier told us was built by Severus, but is remarkably similar to Gildas's first wall.

Later, in the same chapter, Bede records the return of the Romans, once again, and the construction of a "strong wall of stone directly from sea to sea in a straight line between the towns that had been built as strong-points, where Severus had built his earthwork". He continues, saying it is "eight feet in breadth and twelve in height, and as can be clearly seen to this day, ran from east to west". Bede, therefore, states that not only does Severus's Wall run east to west but is now a stone wall, no longer an earthwork! This doesn't sound like Offa's Dyke, which runs from north to south and is made of earth.

If we now move to Nennius's *The History of the Britons* we find he makes two references to a construction which the Welsh call Guaul. He says Severus built a "wall rampart ... from sea to sea across the width of Britain, that is 132 miles from Penguaul, a place which is called Cenail in Irish, Penneltun, in English, to the estuary of the Cluth and Cair Pentaloch, where it finishes." Then he tells us that the "Emperor Carausius rebuilt it later, and fortified it with seven forts, between the two estuaries, and a Round House of polished stone, on the banks of the river Carun". Later, Nennius says the Saxon warriors Octha and Ebissa were given land "in the north about the Wall that is called Guaul".

What are we to make of this? This Round House mentioned can only be Arthur's O'on, once found not far from Falkirk near the Antonine Wall. I suggest that Nennius had mixed up the walls mentioned by Bede and linked the Antonine with Severus's Wall. This could also give rise to the connecting of the River Clwyd, hardly an estuary, with the River Clyde, the Cluity. Steve and Scott, using the reference in Geoffrey concerning one Eledenius being made bishop of Alclud and the placename Llanedidan, make Alclud a hillfort near Melin y Wig. However, while Bede describes Alcluith as being on the side of an estuary, the hillfort is situated deep in Denbighshire, tens of kilometres from the mouth of the Clwyd.

Some further references exist about walls in Britain in Bede's writings and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Bede mentions a battle fought at Hefenfelth lying "on the northern side of the wall the Romans built from sea to sea, as I have already related," and that the East Saxons were converted to Christianity, being baptised at the village of At-Wall, "so named because it stands near the wall that the Romans built to protect Britain, about twelve miles from the eastern coast." The *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* mentions Severus building "a wall of sods and a palisade from sea to sea", and one manuscript, the *Canterbury Epitome* (writing shortly after the Norman Conquest), states the wall was 122 miles long.

I suggest that a confusion has arisen, mixing up two walls. Nennius is talking about the Antonine, as mentioned above, and since that does end at the Clyde near the Dark Age for t of Dumbarton, there is no connection with Offa's Dyke. Bede is specific that Severus's earthwork was rebuilt as a stone wall, and there was another wall running from Penneltun to the Clyde. Two different walls but neither are Offa's Dyke, which runs from north to south and is an earthwork, not a stone wall! In my opinion, Steve and Scott extend this confusion.

Chronicles

A further point that troubles me is that, having taken most of Geoffrey's work on board, or at least the Welsh versions, they ignore older chronicles. Take the quote about the death of Oswald. The Saxons are pursued to "the wall that Severus emperor of Rome had in former times made between Deifyr and Bryneich", and Cadwallon sent Penda, whose army surrounded Oswald at a place called "Hevyn Felt", Maes Nefawl in Welsh. (According to Geoffrey, Cadwallon and Penda defeated and killed Oswald at Burne.) Steve and Scott then say: "Many scholars have located this battle near Hexham [on Hadrian's Wall] because of the reference to 'the wall', despite the fact no evidence exists to back this claim."

This is incorrect. Nennius, the *Welsh Annals*, Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* support a different story. According to Nennius, the *Welsh Annals* and Bede, it was Cadwallon who was killed near Hexham, not Oswald. The two Welsh chronicles state that Cadwallon was killed at Cantscaul, in 631, and the *Annals* have Oswald being killed at Cogfrey in 644. Bede also tells a similar story but places the death of Cadwallon at Denisebum, though Oswald and his army prayed at Hefenfelth. Bede says, "It lies on the northern side of the wall which the Romans built from sea to sea", and the church of Hexham "lies not far away". Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* state that Oswald was killed by Penda at Maserfeld on the fifth of August, 641. Maserfeld is considered to be near Oswestry. Geoffrey has Cadwallon living long after Oswald's death near the Wall and being crowned king of Britain. Which version is correct?

Avalon

Now I want to move to the second part of the book, which seems to work much better than the first. Here we have the search for Avalon and, apart from a few points, I tend to agree with their ideas. That Avalon has become connected to the Celtic concept of Annwn (or Annwfn) – the Otherworld – is without doubt correct! That it can be pinpointed to a particular place is worth discussing. Annwn, in Celtic tradition, is a place that is superimposed over the land. It is here but not here, and seems to be like another dimension – a dimension where human concepts are often turned upside down. (It also reminds of Japan. Here there are many shrines dedicated to Kami - gods or spirits who inhabit both our world and their own at the same time.) But it is possible that certain real places have become linked with the concept and the suggestions made by Steve and Scott are interesting.

However, I have to disagree on one location – Caerfallwch. I particularly feel I must talk about this because they mention one of my articles as reference. I wrote some years back a number of articles linking Caerfallwch with Ynys Afallwch but on further meditation have come to disagree with this. The confusion was, I believe, create by Ellis Davies.

A look at placenames using *caer* will show the reader that the second element of the placename mutates. Mutation isn't common to the English tongue but is found in other languages including Welsh and Japanese. The *caer*, which is a feminine noun, changes the second part, so when you see Caerloyw is *Caer Gloyw – the *g* mutates. Equally, such places as Caerwrangon – *Caer Gwrangonn, or Caergybi – *Caer Cybi (being Gwrangon's Fort and St Cybi's Fort respectively). Thus Caerfallwch (which is found in *Minister's Accounts* of 1303/4 already mutated but in an Anglicised form as Caruathok) should be *Caer Mallwch – Mallwch's Fort. Afallwch as far as I am aware doesn't mutate and so would have read as Caerafallwch, not Caerfallwch. *Ynys* is also a feminine noun yet it is Ynys Afallwch, not Ynys Fallwch. I would be happy to be proven wrong!

Linking Avalon with the area around Llangollen is far more acceptable to me, that of its being the hillfort on Halkyn Mountain. Events and tales that have been superimposed on Glastonbury being connected with this part of Northeast Wales is intriguing. Every year for eighteen years I would visit Llangollen as part of my job to put up exhibitions for Clwyd County Council at the International Music Eisteddfod. I came to love the Vale of Llangollen and took every opportunity to explore the area. It is a primordial place with a mystique that deserves to be discussed in much more detail and, in my opinion, overshadows the town of Glastonbury any day!

In general the second section of this book is worth pursuing, especially the investigation of Glaestingburgh and the confused links between St Collen and Glastonbury. There are, however, a number of possible mistakes, but I don't know whether they belong to the authors or have crept in during editing. Gildas, I am pretty sure, no matter where he was born, didn't die in 512! The *Welsh Annals* record his death as being in 570. Maybe the passage should read he was born in 512.

The other thing that seems to stand out is the way North Wales – especially the eastern part – has become a sort of Tardis (sorry if you don't remember Dr Who, but it was the time machine that on the outside was a 1960s police telephone box, but was many times larger inside). How many different realms can you fit into this area – the realm of Afallach, land ruled by Melwas, Dyfnaint, land ruled by Caw, Rheged and Manaw

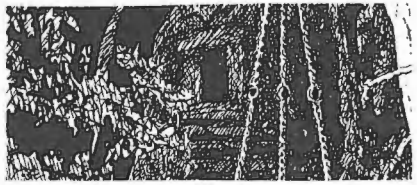
Gododdin, not to mention the traditional area of Powys. Steve and Scott have managed to get Albany, Rheged, Manaw Gododdin, Alclud and Strathclyde, as well as the Picts – all thought to be in the northern part of the British Isles – into North Wales. Of course, it is possible they are right and the chronicles are wrong!

Hands-on

I would have preferred to have seen a book exploring the myth of Avalon rather than yet another attempt to make sense of Geoffrey of Monmouth's medieval bestseller. Over the years I have known Steve we have spoken often and I very much miss the talks we used to have. During that time I learned to respect his knowledge and his ability to discover more about our shared love of the myth on the landscape. So often we had discussed Arthur and, I thought, saw eye to eye on the myth that surrounds the character. But a number of elements in *The Keys of Avalon* trouble me. I am not quite sure whether these keys are opening a door or locking us out from what continues, in my mind, to be an unresolved part of British history!

Keys has much that deserves discussion. I am far happier when Arthur disappears from the formula and a search begins to discover the meaning and location of legends that have come to be connected with Avalon. This book comes alive at times when a truly hands-on approach takes place. Many stories connected with Arthur I would suggest are unrelated to any Dark Age warrior leader but to a more distant set of stories passed down through generations from more ancient times. Here and there my heart skipped a beat as places came alive, and I could believe that a particular tale could have really happened in those hills and vales that I so love.

I wish Steve and Scott lots of luck with this book. They have much more *hutzpah* than I'll ever have — I applaud their courage — but I feel I have had to point out what I consider to be faults in this book. What appears in *The Keys to Avalon* may not be the full story, and the theory that Arthur should be looked for on a smaller scale should be given consideration. I dearly hope that the foundations on which this book is built upon don't suffer from the same problems Vortigern had with Dinas Emrys.



Reviews

• In this issue's packed Reviews section there is, as predicted last issue, a terrifying number of Arthurian and related titles to cover. A number of you responded to the call for more reviews, but also included are two very lengthy critiques of titles already gone over with fine-toothed combs – no apology as both are major publications.

Graham Phillips
The Marian Conspiracy:
the hidden truth about the Holy Grail, the real father of Christ and the tomb of the Virgin Mary
Sidgwick & Jackson 2000 £18.99
0 282 06341 6 hb 353pp

There is nothing new about linking Mary the mother of Jesus with Gwynedd. I know of Hafod-y-lynn near Llanfair, south of Harlech, for instance. Graham Phillips seems unaware of the legend that Mary bathed in this lake, knelt and drank from a stream. Marks were left where she knelt and a miraculous healing spring arose from its side. Gwynedd is where this co-author of *King Arthur - the true story* (1992) is led by a trail of detection that starts in the Vatican and hops over to Israel and Turkey.

It began when Father Rinsonelli of the Vatican Library contacted Graham Phillips after the Italian publication of his book *The Search for the Grail* (1996). Mention was made of Giovanni Benedetti, an archaeologist attached to the Vatican Museum. His search for the tomb of Mary was stifled by Pope Pius XII declaring the Assumption dogma in 1950.

It ends with the discovery that a 'GB' wrote *Veni Vidi* ["I came, I saw"] in the visitors' book of St Mary's Church, Llanerchymedd, Isle of Anglesey, on 4th October 1950. A nearby well is found to be accompanied by what a geophysics survey suggests to be a grave. An accompanying stone is marked with the Virgo glyph, a symbol of Mary. This is near a crosstracks leading from Parys Mountain, once the biggest copper mine in the world.

Graham Phillips both infuriates and inspires. He infuriated me in 1992 by seemingly so plausibly identifying Owain Ddantgwyn with King Arthur. Yet he managed to hit the nail on the head by locating Camlan at Dinas Mawddwy.

Here he has wielded his pen like a sword to cut through the vested interests of Roman Catholicism and expose the obvious. Is it all just a house of cards? I think not. This book is well worth its cover price.

Laurence Main

Peter McKenzie
Camelot's Frontier: Arthurian Legend in the Border Lands of Scotland and England
Longhirst Press 1999 £8.99
0 946978 02 6 pb 80pp colour photo illus

This book makes a good first impression, despite its slimness and price. Its text has been printed on high-quality textured paper of light card weight, while the 24 colour photos are printed on very fine glossy paper, for a superb finish. The photos (all taken by the author) are uniformly very attractive, capturing a variety of moods at a sprinkling of selected sites possibly associated with Arthurian legends in the modern Anglo-Scottish border area.

The text very briefly sketches the growth of Arthurian material from its potential historical sources, through to near modern times, before examining Arthur and his links to sites in the book's chosen region in somewhat more detail. We return to brevity for the last two chapters on Merlin (dwelling predominantly on his Lailoken incarnation from the borders) and the Grail respectively, though the latter's connections to the region are scarcely discernible. Lists of sources and OS site map references, a map and an index round off the work.

Given the sources quoted, there will be few surprises here for *Pendragon* readers I suspect, though I did wonder at the omission of some, such as John S Stuart Glennie's book *Arthurian Localities* (*eg* the 1994 Llanerch reprint of the 1869 original), which could have broadened some of the legendary comments at least. The text comes across as pleasantly lightweight, and is non-scholarly to the point of taking a single interpretation of the locations for Nennius' list of Arthurian battles as definitive, for instance. Even so, I was left with a comfortable feeling that the author was simply suggesting many of these ideas as possibilities, much as one might do sitting quietly in the pub after an enjoyable stroll through some of the wonderful countryside captured in the evocative photographs.

My one criticism is the unhelpful map, which really needed more than the coastline and Hadrian's Wall to give some meaning and sense of place to the sites discussed and pictured.

Overall, a delightful book as a tonic to help combat the endless tourist brochures claiming Arthur for south-west England alone.

Alastair McBeath

Nicholas Orme
The Saints of Cornwall
Oxford University Press 2000 £55.00
0 19 820765 4 hb 302pp

The Saints of Cornwall is Nicholas Orme's third major study of the religious history of the West Country in the early Christian and mediaeval periods, following his translation of Nicholas Roscarrock's *Lives of the Saints: Cornwall And Devon* (1992, reviewed in *Pendragon* 24/3) and his *English Church Dedications With A Survey Of Devon And Cornwall* (1996, reviewed in *Pendragon* 28/3).

Cornwall was host to the cults of an unusual variety of saints, but a particular feature is the large number of churches dedicated to Celtic saints from Cornwall, Wales, Brittany and Ireland. Most of these were probably founded in the period AD 500-900. The book provides a 55-page introductory study of the saints of Cornwall and their history, explaining how the cults came into existence and what they tell us about Christianity in the county, particularly during the vital and formative Early Christian period. The main part of the book, 200 pages, is devoted to a dictionary of all the saints' cults venerated in Cornwall. Each entry gives full details of every parish church, chapel, holy well, store and guild (funds to maintain images), and any other image or representation dedicated to or named for each saint. Each entry is fully referenced, with dates and sources of the references, mostly mediaeval administrative and church records. The dictionary also gives hagiographical details of the saints, from saints' lives, ecclesiastical documents, traditions, place-names, and mediaeval and later antiquarian scholars. Finally, each entry is provided with an editorial commentary.

Orme draws some interesting conclusions about the conversion of Cornwall to Christianity. Popularly, many of the founding saints were thought to be travellers from other Celtic lands, but Orme believes a much enhanced role should be assigned to saints of local origin. Brittany also seems to have been an important source of evangelising saints, but Wales much less so, and Ireland perhaps not at all. Although by the mediaeval period many of Cornwall's saints were thought to have emanated from Ireland, this seems to have been romantic speculation. Orme therefore prefers to use the term 'Brittonic' (that is, from Cornwall, Brittany and Wales) rather than 'Celtic' saints. Over half of the Brittonic saints were unique to Cornwall. Furthermore, four-fifths of the saints were venerated in only one location. The great vitality of the cults of these saints is worth noting. During the mediaeval period there was some assimilation of Brittonic saints to similarly-named but better-known cults (for example, a saint Entenin was replaced by St Anthony at St Anthony-in-Roseland). However, in general the cults retained their vigour throughout the mediaeval period up to their suppression at the Reformation. Their cults even lingered on in the popular tradition into the 18th century.

Any study of the saints of Cornwall must be measured against the endeavours of Canon G H Doble, whose studies of the Cornish saints, originally published between the 1920s and 1940s, form six volumes in their collected modern edition. Nicholas Orme's work is a very worthy successor. It is more comprehensive, covering the saints missed by Doble, and it provides the synthesis and overview that Doble never achieved. Because of the comprehensive nature of its references, moreover, it also represents the distillation of a vast amount of research, and is an essential reference work for others to follow up individual interests in this field. We can recover, through the appearance of Brittonic saints in later records, an important chapter in the religious history of the West Country, namely the establishment and spread of Christianity in Cornwall whilst it was an independent kingdom between AD 500-900. With this work, Nicholas Orme has provided a great service for future students of the saints of the Early Christian period.

Nick Grant

Richard Barber ed
Myths and Legends of the British Isles
The Boydell Press 1999 £30.00
0 85115 748 3 hb 572pp 12 colour plates

Kipling famously wrote (and I'm paraphrasing here!) "What do they of England know who *only* England know?" And, indeed, what do they know of Arthur who only Arthur know? Here is a splendid volume which collects together nearly forty different stories from Britain and Ireland, from the Roman period to the Middle Ages.

The first section includes origin tales of Scotland, Ireland and England built on a mythic history already developing long before Nennius was busily compiling away in the early 9th century. Then follows a section on the 'Early History of Britain' which includes the tales from Geoffrey of Monmouth plus *Lludd and Llefelys* and *The Dream of Maxen Wledig* (from *The Mabinogion*) and, not so oddly, Saxo Grammaticus' version of the story of Amleth or Hamlet (translated by Peter Fisher).

The 'Marvels and Magic' section includes bits from Nennius, the whole of *Culhwch and Olwen*, Neil Wright's translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Life of Merlin* and Guest's *Taliesin*. This is followed by 'Heroes and Saints' with a Breton version of Arthur's career, the whole of *Beowulf* in Kevin Crossley-Holland's translation, *The Deeds of Cuchulain* adapted from Lady Gregory's retelling, and all four branches of the *Mabinogi* proper, together with a selection of saints' lives (Brendan, Cadog, Joseph of Arimathea, George and Helena) from early and later medieval sources. Finally 'History and Romance' features less accessible tales of, for example, King Horn and Havelok the Dane as well as stories of more familiar figures such as Robin Hood, Macbeth and Lady Godiva.

I've given a fairly substantial list of the contents so as to illustrate the breadth and richness of this selection, so reminiscent of a medieval hall hung with detailed colourful tapestries – or even the cunning designs on Hamlet's shield! With Barber's own translations or adaptations, and with brief but authoritative introductions placing them in context, the whole volume is designed with the needs of the modern novel reader in mind – readability and stimulation – while awakening them to the wealth of material contained in the corpus of traditional national narratives.

Pendragon readers may well already have some of the key texts, but other tales – Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton and St Helena (taken from the *Acts of Saint Cyriacus*) for example – are not so readily available. I leave you with an image from Walter Map's *Courtiers' Trifles* which, taken from an account of the Wild Hunt, is so much like that portrait of King Arthur in the Otranto mosaic in Italy:

"The old stories tell us that Herla, the king of the very ancient Britons, entered into a pact with another king, who was like a pygmy he was so low in stature, being no taller than an ape. As the story has it, this dwarf first approached him sitting on a huge goat: he looked just like those portrayals of Pan, with glowing face, enormous head, a red beard so long that it touched his breast (which was brightly adorned with a dappled fawn skin), a hairy belly, and thighs which degenerated into cloven hooves ..."

Chris Lovegrove

Alan Lupack and Barbara Tepa Lupack
King Arthur in America
Arthurian Studies XIL
D S Brewer, Cambridge,
Boydell & Brewer imprint 1999 £45.00
0 85991 543 3 hb 382pp illus

The authors, both established Arthurian researchers, set out to solve a paradox: why should the Arthurian legends have such immense appeal in America, when the story is so at odds with the US ideal of success through merit, not inherited rank?

Following Arthurian themes from Nathaniel Hawthorne right through to current popular culture, the Lupacks tell the fascinating story of how the Matter of Britain has been democratised and Americanised by such strategies as downplaying the role of the king, reframing existing characters (turning Merlin into a homespun Yankee inventor type, for example), introducing outsider characters, including

contemporary American ones whose talent or virtue is rewarded, giving voices to those the traditional story leaves silent, particularly the women of Camelot, and refocusing the setting to make it more like, or even reset the stories in, the New World, a process culminating in an entwining of the Arthurian saga with the American Dream so intense that John F Kennedy's Presidency came to be posthumously seen as a new Camelot (a view promoted strongly by Jackie Kennedy herself, as the authors note).

(In the process of demonstrating this thesis, incidentally, there is an occasional tendency to claim as novel American approaches features which can be found much earlier: in the Malory version *etc*, for example, the king is often little more than a despatcher of knights on adventures; as a more specific instance, they suggest J Dunbar Hylton's introduction of a maiden knight into the Grail Quest – along with the Wandering Jew! – as a noteworthy American departure, yet the maiden knight Britomart is a key player in Spenser's Arthur-linked *Fairie Queene*, three centuries before.)

The book's discoveries of early instances of American Arthuriana include the oddity of an 1807 political pamphlet uttering a "prophecy of Merlin" against the British, an 1827 verse play, inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's said courtship, in which Merlin aids star-crossed lovers beside the Hudson, and an anonymous female poet in 1844 adapting the ballad of the garment that tested the fidelity of Camelot ladies: in her version, only a peasant's daughter could prove chastity.

There's intriguing discussion of the way writers linked Arthur and Excalibur with the US Civil War, and of how, from 1871, the now-forgotten Elizabeth Stuart Phelps reset Arthurian stories in New England textile towns to comment on the social problems of the poor at a time of raging industrialisation.

Parodies of Tennyson which pre-date Mark Twain's 1887 Connecticut Yankee are examined, including *Professor Baffin's Adventure* of five years earlier which may have inspired it. The ambiguities of Twain's book are carefully explored – as his central figure, Hank Morgan, moves from modernising reform to, in effect, mass slaughter by modern technology, is Twain's target the British Empire, or is it American capitalism masking greed and brutality under lip-service to traditional US ideals?

As a complete contrast to such dark satire, the Lupacks describe how the Knights of King Arthur, an organisation for boys, promoted the idea of "moral knighthood", achievable by anyone of purity and good deeds, from 1893 to the 1940s, creating its own pantheon of new Arthurian heroes – Edison, Knight of Electricity, Lindbergh, Knight of the Air (which the aviator then adopted as his own self-image) and so on.

How scholarly research began to affect Arthurian writing, beginning in 1898 with the first American historical novel to use Arthurian matter, William H Babcock's *Cian of the Chariots* (1898), leads towards discussion of that masterpiece of American writing on the Grail-centred theme, T S Eliot's *The Waste Land*, with its influences from Jessie Weston's research (and possibly, the Lupacks suggest, from another American, Madison Cawein's 1913 Arthurian poem "Waste Land" with its parallels in imagery). The way in which the disruption to civilisation caused by World War One and its aftermath also echoes through Eliot's fragmented epic poem leads the Lupacks on to examine Arthurian links in the lives and works of the three major Lost Generation novelists, F Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner; particularly how Waste Land and Fisher King motifs take central roles.

Here, as in later discussion of nearer contemporary novels and novelists, plot exegeses on occasion go into very considerable detail; with the 'Lost Generation' books perhaps explicably due to their centrality to that other great quest, for the grail of "the Great American Novel"; it may also be due to the fact, as the Preface notes, that this book incorporates published essays by the authors, presumably closely studying individual works.

Among modern novels considered are a number with contemporary settings exploring, with Arthurian echoes, such themes as sport as identity and survivor guilt (Holocaust and Vietnam), as well as two which are more directly Arthurian but boldly rework the original material: Thomas Berger's 1978 *Arthur Rex* - his Gawaine gives in to the sexual temptation of the Green Knight's "wife", said Knight being later revealed as female – and especially Donald Barthelme's 1991 *The King*, which moves the Arthurian figures, as themselves, not as contemporary namealikes, into a parallel universe World War II – Guinevere's adultery revealed by Lord Haw-Haw; Arthur destroying the equations for a nuclear bomb, as a dishonourable weapon (I found it intriguing that a novel which, as described, seems clearly in the science fiction genre is discussed here rather than in the subsequent Popular Culture section – presumably this is due to Barthelme's "mainstream" academic acceptability).

Lastly, in under fifty pages, the American Popular Culture chapter nets topics as diverse as Arthurian marketing, toys, board and video games, comics (there are even X-rated sex romp ones), art, architecture, and much more.

Extent of coverage varies with authorial interest (the window-by-window guide to Arthurian stained glass in Princeton University chapel left me suspecting a search for distraction during a tedious sermon!). In particular, genre novels, presumably reflecting traditional academic priorities, receive only terse notice - that includes the historical, among them one where the subject described, Arthur "downshifting" from king to bard, would on the face of it fit so intriguingly with the authors' thesis as to call for more comment.

The wealth of science fiction novels with Arthurian links are covered in just three pages, for example (those stained glass windows get nearly two). Among Fantasy titles, the powerful influence of the late Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1982 *The Mists of Avalon* with its feminist focus *is* noted (its additional adulation by some on the Goddess strand of neo-paganism goes unmentioned, but that may be a UK rather than US phenomenon). Arthurian fiction involving solutions to Camelot-located crime, and Arthurian artefacts as modern criminal targets, are also mentioned, although not the deeper Arthurian echoes, paralleling those the Lupacks elucidate in more literary novels, to be detected in the work of such masters of American crime writing as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hamnett.

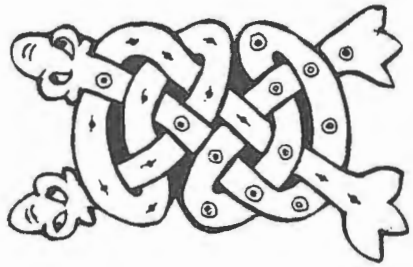
Of film, the account runs from a 1904 opera-based *Parsifal*, through Cold War-era material conflating Camelot's enemies with communism, to the clear Arthurian echoes in *Star Wars*.

More generally of the book, I found its treatment of American Arthurian poetry a little unsatisfactory; although prominent in earlier stages of the text, it becomes less so as the chronology proceeds, understandably, as poetry's popular impact diminished; but, where it *is*, occasionally, mentioned, it would have been helpful to have sufficient description or brief quotes to give some flavour of style and approach.

Lest all this sound deadly serious, mention must be made of the irresistibly picturesque discoveries enlivening this account of American Arthuriana: for example, unlikely stars of one or another film version of *A Connecticut Yankee* included Tennessee Erie Ford, a lariat-twirling Will Rogers, Bing Crosby, and even Boris Karloff - as Arthur, twice! My very favourite oddity here comes from an American academic's 1903 retelling of *Sir Gawayne and The Green Knight*; the latter has *crème de menthe* blood, and as the hero waits at the Green Chapel for nemesis he's offered - wonderful anachronism - a "coup of hot green tea".

To sum up, *King Arthur in America*, despite my minor reservations, is a ground-breaking book, clearly and accessibly written, and evidently based on immense research (the bibliography is thirty pages!) and direct contact with many authors discussed, as extracts from their replies to questions about their thinking and purposes make clear. It will be essential reading for anyone interested in the remarkable metamorphosis of the Matter of Britain, a central myth to one country, to suit another, very different, nation.

Steve Sneyd



Anna Franklin & Pamela Harvey
The Wellspring:
a Book of Seasonal Inspirations
Capall Bann 2000 £9.95
186163078 6 160pp illus

This new title, co-authored by member Pamela Harvey, has a cover based on a design by Helen Field and shows, appropriately for this issue, a cauldron bubbling away over a fire, tended by two women with their cat familiars. For the authors "a cauldron is essentially a cooking pot, a vessel which transforms the raw ingredients of life into something new". Further, the cauldrons of Celtic myth "represent the transformative womb of the Goddess ... in which seeds germinate and grow, and return to in death to grow once more".

Using the eight pagan festivals of the year to structure the text, this book includes rituals and invocations, tempting recipes and background commentary on each festival. Readers of *The Silver Wheel,* Journal of the Native Pagan Tradition, will find much of the text familiar. Inspirational in tone, *The Wellspring* should appeal then to practising pagans, though its syncretising approach may not be to everyone's taste. The format is clear and easy to read, but the pedant in me blanched at some details - for example Memnosyne (Memory, the mother of the Greek Muses, page 101) should really be Mnemosyne - and I was more put off than attracted by the character of Helen Field's otherwise competent drawings.

Chris Lovegrove

Matt Hawkins
Lady Pendragon *Vol 3 Issue 6*
Image Comics, Califomia October 1999
$2.50 US, $3.65 Canada

Forget terms such as *Graphic Novel* and think instead *Comic Book*. Suspend any kind of cynicism, pedantry and disbelief. Simply think of adventure and complete fantasy, without worrying too much about such mundane matters as historical accuracy. Look upon this work as simple fun, with one or two elements to spark the imagination; and, with such an attitude, enjoy the Comic Book that is *Lady Pendragon*.

As a comic book, this really is a very good production (I'm speaking as someone who was pretty much brought up on Marvel and DC Comics). The artwork is of good quality – my only slight problem is the usual minor complaint with some American works, in that it would have improved the images if the artists could have spent some time doing field studies in Britain; but then that's my own pedantry, and it doesn't really detract from the story.

The general idea of the story is of three female characters – Guinevere from the sixth century, novelist Jennifer Drake (a direct descendant of Guinevere) from the present day, and the Priestess Iseult from the twenty-third century – involved in a struggle against Morgana, who wishes to rule the world with her undead army. Most of the action takes place in the present day (thanks to a certain amount of time-travelling) and, bearing in mind the comic book premise of the story, it works well enough. Think *Xena, Warrior Princess* meets *The Mists of Avalon*, and that should give some idea of its scope.

There are a few interesting ideas involved, such as the Holy Grail being both the Cup of Christ and being the receptacle of the Bloodline of Christ, through a kind of Immaculate Conception caused by drinking from the Grail. The creator and writer Matt Hawkins has clearly done enough background reading to interweave a credible fantasy plot which, although not unpredictable, leads the reader through the story at a comfortably rapid pace.

If you are looking for a serious work of scholarly study and total originality, then this work is very unlikely to be your cup of tea. If, however, you enjoy graphic novels or comic books, and are looking for a brief distraction from everyday life, the *Lady Pendragon* might well be for you. As comic books go, I can easily see this series becoming something of a cult amongst collectors and, from that point of view, I would happily give this work the thumbs-up. As a comic book, *Lady Pendragon* has every chance of becoming a winner.

Ian Brown (review copy from Paul Smith)

The Secret Arthur *The Road to Avalon*
Transmitted Monday July 3rd 2000, HTV West
Blue Pajama Production for HTV
Producer Gerry Dawson

In the last of a TV series "seeking the truth about King Arthur", *The Road to Avalon* allegedly uncovered "new evidence about his existence". It began in the *Black Horse Inn* in Clapton-in-Gordano, North Somerset, with presenter Andrew Hambly-Smith inconclusively resurrecting S G Wildman's theory that pubs of this name were connected with Arthur's military border with the Saxons.

As might be expected, the programme came down in favour of the West Country as Arthur's stamping ground. Stephen Knight and Juliette Wood in Cardiff, Charles Thomas at Tintagel and Geoffrey Ashe in Glastonbury supplied the expert soundbites and re-enactment group Regia Anglorum provided the mandatory slow-mo fight sequences. The usual suspects were trotted out – South Cadbury, Tintagel, Glastonbury – plus Liddington Castle as Mount Badon.

The whole was an undigested mishmash. The "new" evidence appeared to consist of the now not-so-new re-evaluation of Tintagel as a high-status, seasonally-occupied secular site, with large quantities of Mediterranean goods found "only at one other site" – Cadbury, with its "two" Dark Age halls. Badon was "the first" and greatest victory against the Saxons. St Gildas had a hermitage in Glastonbury "at the foot of the hill". Err ... and that was about it. Except for mutterings about *ambiguity* and *metamorphosis*. What a wasted opportunity but, depressingly, not unexpected.

Chris Lovegrove

Ian Hemming
The Pumpsaint Zodiac:
reality lost and fantasy found
Mindwarp Press, Lampeter 2000
pb 24pp £1.50 illus

This attractive booklet was written to accompany an exhibition on the Pumpsaint terrestrial zodiac at the Drovers Arts Festival, Lampeter from 9th-11th July. Some twenty years after Mrs Maltwood's description of the Glastonbury Zodiac Lewis Edwards claimed to have discovered another of similar area centred on the village of Pumpsaint (Five Saints) near Lampeter in north Carmarthenshire – his Welsh Temple of the Stars.

Edwards was a member of the Avalon Society and he published three articles describing his discovery in their journal *Atlantean Research* between 1948 and 1952. These are reprinted in this booklet, together with the author's shrewd introduction to Tzs and his own summary of the Pumpsaint landscape figures.

Edwards allocated a squirrel to Aquarius; the author sees it as a beaver but he also tells us that the Pendragon Society nominated it a buzzard. Notes for Leo and Taurus mention Pnedragon again when the bovine features of the bull are described as well as pictured in the aerial photographs 'thanks to the work of the Pendragon Society'.

This is serious stuff which set me hunting through old files and *Pendragons*; I was reminded that in the summer of 1972 Jess Foster joined forces with RILKO and organised an expedition to Carmarthenshire to check out Mr Edward's claims. In 1973 a smaller group of Pnedragons continued the investigation using large scale maps and aerial photographs and found a falcon at *Falcondale*. Their findings and an extended description of the zodiac by Lewis Edwards were printed in *Pendragon*.

You can obtain this fascinating booklet from Adam Stout at Glan Denys, Lampeter SA48 8LX; please enclose an A5 SAE (33p).

By the way, did you know that Giraldus Cambrensis tells us there *were* beavers in Wales? If Tzs are not your bag then at least consider the author's plea: If we haven't really got a terrestrial zodiac can we have one?

Fred Stedman-Jones

FICTION

First, some info on DIY Arthurian fiction. From Brian Stableford via W M S Russell comes news of ***The Doom of Camelot***, a US anthology magazine dedicated solely to Arthurian fiction. Green Knight Publishing seek submissions of 3k to 7k words, paying 3 to 5 cents a word to those who are successful. Further details from

http://www.greenknight.com

or email James Lowder at gawain@execpc.com All hardcopy to James Lowder, Executive Editor, Books, Green Knight Publishing, 15120 West Mayflower Court, New Berlin, WI 53151, USA.

From the same source are details of ***MZB's Fantasy Magazine***, a fiction quarterly with "some preference for strong, female protagonists" in the fantasy / sword & sorcery genres, in keeping with Marion Zimmer Bradley's forte. Send envelope and IRC for guidelines from PO Box 249, Berkeley CA 94701 0249.

Brian Stableford has also provided details of an incomplete epic poem by the late Sydney Fowler Wright called ***Song of Arthur***. "The whole work is at least 900 pages long" but is available (along with all his works) on

http://www.sfw.org.uk

According to a foreword, S Fowler Wright re-wrote the 332,500 words of this "new rendering of the Arthurian Legends in verse" after it was destroyed in the Blitz.

Linda Gowans has published ***Am Bron Binn: an Arthurian balled in Scottish Gaelic*** with a translation, commentary and notes; the 126-page paperback costs £9.50 and is available from Excalibur Books [tel 028 91458579 or email excalibur@bangor.fsbusiness.co.uk] – postage is extra.

Ronan Coghlan of Excalibur Books describes Craig Weatherhill's ***The Lyonesse Stone*** [176-page paperback from Tabb House, £4.95] as a "fantasy based on Celtic Cornish folklore in which children oppose the forces of evil"; a sequel, ***Seat of Storms***, is also available. And now, a curiosity: Barrie Roberts has penned ***Sherlock Holmes and the Devil's Grail*** [Allison and Busby 190-page paperback] "in which the Great Detective is involved with what is referred to as 'the Glastonbury Fragment'".

Patrick McCormack's sequel to *Albion: the Last Companion* is entitled ***Albion: the White Phantom*** [Robinson £7.99, 454pp] - no Arthur, as it is post-Camlann, but with Guinevere, Bedwyr and a grail-like chalice. Donna Fletcher Crow's huge ***Glastonbury*** [Crossway paperback £14.99, 859pp] is a novel spanning centuries, from Joseph of Arimathea through to Arthur.

Finally, Beryl Mercer's book-in-waiting, ***Merlin's Quest***, regrettably "did not achieve a placing in the Carlton TV 'Write a Novel' competition - [it] wasn't even short-listed". Commiserations to Beryl. Those opening lines?

"But it's ridiculous!" Jenny burst out, staring at her husband as he leaned on the steering wheel.

"Here, let me have another look at the map."

FACTUAL

A number of established authors in the field of Arthurian studies continue to publish and re-issue. First, from Garland Publishing comes ***The Lancelot-Grail Reader***, edited by Norris J Lacy [0 8153 34192]. This paperback includes extracts in English from the relevant parts of this mammoth medieval opus, and is good value at £12.99. Jennifer Laing's ***Warriors of the Dark Ages*** looks at first glance to be a winner; this hardback from Sutton [0 7509 1920 5] costs £20.00, as does W A Cummins' ***The Picts & their Symbols*** [also from Sutton: 0 7509 2207 9 but published last year].

Geoffrey Ashe's wide-ranging 1982 study ***Kings and Queens of Early Britain*** has been re-issued in a revised paperback edition by Methuen, also at £12.99 [0 413 74580 5]. Not exactly Arthurian but relevant to Dark Age studies is a re-issue of A S Esmonde Cleary's ***The Ending of Roman Britain*** by Routledge [£16.99 pb 0 415 238 984] - review by Steve Sneyd next issue. And Phoenix have re-issued the 1967 classic by Myles Dillon and Nora Chadwick, ***The Celtic Realms*** [£16.99, 355pp].

If you are interested in the geographical context of Dark Age Britain, Della Hooke's ***The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*** [£22.85 paperback] was first published by Leicester University Press in 1998, and is likely to be complemented by Petra Dark's recent ***The Environment of Britain in the First Millennium AD*** [Duckworth paperback £14.95, 0 7156 2909 3].

Less orthodox is J D Wakefield's ***Legendary Landscapes*** – according to Ronan Coghlan it argues that Wiltshire was a sacred British metropolis involving "the cult of the Great Goddess, Arthurian connections, the bards, rural customs and local folklore" and claims to publish for the first time secret carvings at Avebury linked to "an ancient universal mystery religion" [Nod Press 120-page paperback, £8.95 plus postage from Excalibur Books]. And fantasy author Robert Silverberg has brought out a study of a peripheral character in medieval Grail stories, ***The Realm of Prester John*** [Ohio UP paperback £16.99, 344pp]. Details on the curious ***Celtic Mysteries in New England*** next issue.

Finally, Joan Carroll Cruz's ***Relics*** [£9.95] is a 308-page encyclopaedia published by Our Sunday Visitor and includes entries on the Turin Shroud, the True Cross, the Holy Grail, the Holy Lance and other alleged saintly relics. Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew D'Ancona's ***The Quest for the True Cross*** [Weidenfeld & Nicolson 0 297 84229 5 £18.99, 205pp] also has Arthurian interest, including discussion of St Helena, Constantine as an ancestor of Arthur, the use of the cross symbol on the Tintagel Artognou slate, and examination of the authenticity of the INRI *titulus* which could perhaps be compared with the Glastonbury Cross allegedly found above Arthur's grave .

FEATURED PUBLISHER

Boydell & Brewer have been publishing Arthurian-interest books for some time now, and continue to add new titles of interest to Pendragons, so little excuse is needed to draw your attention to some significant new publications and a mouth-watering back catalogue.

First, ***King Arthur's Round Table***, edited by Martin Biddle, is due out in October, and is the culmination of nearly a quarter-century's investigation. The strange-looking dartboard in the Great Hall of Winchester Castle was examined by a team of historians, archaeologists, art historians and scientists in 1976 and their conclusion is that it was the centrepiece of a feast held in 1290 for Edward I, then hung in the Hall by Edward III in 1348, and finally painted for Henry VIII's own political purposes. The fully illustrated hardback has 288 pages and will cost about £30.00 [0 85115 626 6]. This looks a really exciting piece of detective work.

Also recently published is ***A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes***, edited by Willem P Gerritsen and Anthony G Van Melle [£16.99 pb 344pp, 0 85115 780 7]; Arthur, Tristan and Isolde, Charlemagne, Alexander the Great, Aeneas and Reynard the Fox (!) all feature.

E A Thomson's ***Who was Saint Patrick?*** [248pp pb £14.99, 0 85115 717 3] and David Dumville's ***Saint Patrick*** [344pp pb £19.99, 0 85115 733 5] examine a Dark Age Briton whose life is known principally through his writings - both volumes were issued in 1999.

P J C Field's 1999 study ***The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*** [230pp pb £16.99, 0 85991 566 2] purports to identify the real *Morte Darthur* Malory. Also out last year was ***A Companion to the Gawain-Poet***, edited by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson [456pp pb £19.99, 0 85991 529 8], a collection of essays on the anonymous author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Enough has been mentioned to show the range of titles essential for the shelves of any Arthurian: Pelagius, early Atlantic voyages, Anglo-Saxon swords, Sutton Hoo, the Dark Age comitatus, English runes, plus Muriel Whitaker's 408-page ***The Legends of King Arthur in Art*** (now available at the reduced price of £14.99, 0 85991 486 0). View them all at

http://www.boydell.co.uk

or write to PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK or to Boydell & Brewer Inc, PO Box 41026, Rochester, NY 14604-4126, USA.

old news

NO ARTHUR HERE

The bones of a man excavated just outside **Stonehenge** in 1923 have been radiocarbon-dated to between AD 650 and 690. The Saxon, who was in his thirties, was beheaded "in a ritual execution" after being killed with "a blow to the back of the neck from a sharp iron sword" (reported *The Daily Telegraph*).

The skeleton, one of just four found at the site, were thought to have been destroyed in 1941 during the Blitz, and were only rediscovered last year by archaeologist Mike Pitts in the Natural History Museum.

As Stonehenge was probably ruinous in the seventh century, the choice of the site for burial (and probably the execution before that) raises intriguing questions. Some of these were examined in "Murder at Stonehenge", the first of a new series of *Secrets of the Dead* on Channel 4 (9.00 pm on Monday 17th July, directed by Jeremy Freeston, produced by Mark McMullen).

Of course Geoffrey of Monmouth linked the monument with Merlin and the burial of murdered British notables by perfidious Saxons in his 12th century *History of the Kings of Britain*, but did you know that a certain Wystan Peach thought the bones were of Arthur? He even paid to have the bones carbon-dated several years ago, when "provisional" dates of first 150 AD and then 760 AD eventually put paid to *that* theory (Pitts 2000). As a result the *Secrets of the Dead* programme first reconstructed the killing as Roman and then only as Saxon when the most recent dating became available.

- David Derbyshire "Saxon rivalry 'led to killing at Stonehenge'" in *The Daily Telegraph* (Friday July 14 2000).
- Mike Pitts (2000) *Hengeworld* [Century £17.99 0 7126 7954 5]

DARK AGE CONTINUITY

More evidence that Dark Age Britain was a society in transition and not the detritus of the Roman Empire comes from **Cefn Cwmwd** in Anglesey.

Engraved with a scorpion, a garnet stone from a signet ring (used to seal official documents) shows that local adminstration continued, maintaining links with the Eastern Mediterranean in the 6th or 7th century. A penannular brooch, dated to the 5th to 7th centuries, also testifies to post-Roman occupation on a high-status site with a history stretching back through the Roman period and late Iron Age. There was even a substantial timber circle, settlement and cremation cemetery of the late Neolithic / early Bronze Age underlying the later occupation.

- Mike Haigh's Archaeology Round-up in ***Northern Earth 82***, 7, quoting a report in *British Archaeology 52*, 4, April 2000.

ARTHNOU'S CASTLE

The Artognou slate from **Tintagel**, the so-called "Arthur" Stone, features in *Coast Lines 2000*. Roger Irving Little is still plugging away at his theory that the *AXE* of the primary inscription not only represents the name Maxentius (which seems plausible) but refers to the the fourth century co-emperor Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maxentius Augustus (which, on the basis of letter forms, is less likely).

Also in *Coast Lines*, Chris Morris' article "Tintagel Castle" gives an update on archaeological excavations up to 1999 and gives a context to the Dark Age finds.

The Site C Lower Terrace was established as an artificial platform created at the end of the Roman period as a focus of settlement and activity in the 5th and 6th centuries. The Site C Middle Terrace was also 5th-6th century in date and had more substantial sub-rectangular stone structures utilising slate quarried from the immediate area, preceded by an earlier phase of timber structures and carbonised seed mostly of barley and oats.

The inscribed slate from Site C, we now learn, is reconstructed as including three names: Paternus or Pateminus, Coliavus and Artognou (Arthnou). "This inscription demonstrates a Romanised way of life on this site, with the continuing use through writing and reading of Latin in a meaningful manner, into the post-Roman period of the 5th and 6th centuries AD – and most likely within the entourage of the Dumnonian rulers."

The 1999 excavations examined an extension of the terrace to the south of the building. Part of another 5th or 6th century building, on a different alignment, was excavated. Also, on the 'Mainland', the 'Great Ditch' was investigated, and primary deposits in the ditch dated to the same Dark Age period, showing that the ditch marked "the landward perimeter of what we can now see to be the largest enclosed promontory site of its period in western Britain".

"The amount of ... imported pottery from Tintagel is more than those dicovered from all other British and Irish sites of the period put together! ... Tintagel is acknowledged as a site of international economic significance."

- *Coast Lines & Countryside News 2000*, North Cornwall Heritage Coast & Countryside Service

the board

EXHIBITIONS AND EDUCATION

Member Simon Rouse had an **Exhibition of Celtic Art** at Oswestry Heritage and Exhibition Centre in Shropshire (May 31 – July 1st), while Forrester Roberts' ***Land of Arthur*** exhibition, due to be featured this summer at "Cornwall's Camlann" by The Arthurian Centre at Slaughter-bridge, will now be ready for the autumn. For further details contact Joe or Sam Parsons on email camlann@btinternet.com or phone 01840 212450 or visit

www.kingarthur.co.uk

As part of Lampeter's Drovers Arts Festival in Ceredigion (June 9 - 11), an exhibition on ***The Pumpsaint Zodiac (Y Sidydd Pumpsaint)*** was set up in "Our Style" in the High Street. Pendragons were involved with investigations into the Pumpsaint Terrestrial Zodiac in the early 1970s, one of several alleged TZs located around Britain, the most famous of which is that of Glastonbury – giant effigies in outline, delineated by roads, rivers and other landscape features.. For further festival information visit

www.lamp.ac.uk/festival

or phone 01974 298868. Thanks to Geoff Sawers for this information.

Worlds of Arthur authors Fran and Geoff Doel repeat their **Summer Academy Study Holiday** course at the University of Exeter for the week commencing Saturday July 21, 2001. *The Once and Future King: the Evolution of the Arthurian Legends* costs £480.00 for the residential course [ref 36/EX/06]. A 24 hour brochure service is available on 01227 470402, and a £50 deposit is required per person per course. Email: summeracademy@ukc.ac.uk and website

www.ukc.ac.uk/sa/

Arthurian-interest courses at the **University of Bristol** Public Programmes Office include

- The Dark Age Kings of Britain: from Arthur to Alfred
- The Anglo-Saxons I: Beginnings to King Alfred
- The Return to Camelot: Victorian art and architecture
- The Celtic Church in the Dark Age period

Further details of the 2000-2001 programme from Public Programmes Office, Office of the Registrar, 8-10 Berkeley Square, Bristol BS8 1HH. Tel: 0117 928 7172; fax: 0117 925 4975; email: cont-ed@bris.ac.uk and website

www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/PPO

STAGE AND SCREEN

The Minack is Cornwall's famous and unique cliffside theatre, created by Rowena Cade (1893–1983). Each summer a range of seventeen productions is offered, with up to 750 theatregoers seated in the open air every night. The National Youth Music Theatre presented Allwood, Horton, Taylor & Whatley's ***Pendragon*** from August 21st – 25th. This "fantastical, barnstorming exploration of the Arthurian legend" won The Scotsman Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1994 before moving on to the Hammersmith Lyric Theatre, and also won Critic's Choice on Broadway.

Disasters met the Royal Opera House's revival of Harrison Birtwistle's opera ***Gawain*** in January. The opening night was cancelled when the orchestra walked out over health and safety issues during rehearsals, and then, on January 13th – auspicious date – the "thunder of horses' hooves and a heavy rap on the door of Camelot" was met with silence. A trapdoor cable had snapped just as the Green Knight was about to enter (Fiachra Gibbons "Stubborn trapdoor adds to opera woes" *Guardian* January 14th, from Steve Sneyd).

Nevertheless, the remainder of the production was, as Tim Ashley's review in *The Guardian* put it, a "triumph over adversity". Despite his own qualms about the work, he found himself "warming to it much more than in 1991 when the opera was new - and that is the highest compliment I can pay it."

Member Colin Thomas of Teliesyn, who made the *Excalibur* programmes with the late Professor Gwyn Alf Williams, has secured financial backing from S4C to make a TV programme on **the Grail** which will include the Nanteos Cup. Fred Stedman-Jones has been taken on board as consultant to the programme. The response to an article earlier this year on the Nanteos Cup by journalist Bryon Rogers in *Saga* magazine (which has been spotted already by one or two members) has led to new information and Fred making some interesting contacts.

The last in a TV series "seeking the truth about King Arthur" was aired on HTV on Monday July 3rd. ***The Secret Arthur*** allegedly uncovered "new evidence about his existence". See *Reviews*.

Finally, a screen with a difference. John Mappin, *The Daily Telegraph*'s Peterborough column reports, "is planning to project a green and red 700-metre long **dragon** on to King Arthur's supposed birthplace" in September. This, "the most important art event since Christo wrapped the Reichstag" according to Mappin, is to celebrate the opening of an exhibition at **Tintagel** of the work of fantasy artist Peter Pracownik. "Mythology is the greatest aphro-

disiac known to man," Mappin is quoted as claiming ["Breathless over dragon project" *Telegraph* August 14].

ARTHUR DOWN UNDER

The recently-formed **Arthurian Association of Australia** has the twin aims of promoting Arthurian studies and celebrating the Arthurian legend.

A non-profit organisation, its declared objectives are to

- promote the development of Arthurian studies in Australia;
- provide Arthurphiles in Australia with the opportunity to network and share information and ideas and organise events;
- promote easier access to information about Arthur in Australia;
- liaise with international Arthurian organisations.

Their website is www.qmtech.com/grail, and is regularly updated.

They have a programme of events up and running, and this includes *King Arthur: a man for all seasons* which took place on April 29th at Macquarie University, North Ryde, New South Wales, with talks for example on Arthurian landscape, lost spirituality and the sacred marriage; while *Arthurian legend: fact and fiction* is the title of a talk by the Association's president, Sophie Masson, and this talks place on November 15th in the State Library of NSW. Sophie, incidentally, has written over 20 fiction titles in different genres, and has kindly contributed a piece for this issue.

An innovation of the Association is the institution of a **Camelot Day**, which falls on **November 14th**, the feast day of St Dyfrig "whom many believe to have been one of the prototypes for Merlin, and whom Geoffrey of Monmouth mentions as having crowned Arthur". The date was suggested by Kim Headlee, author of *Dawnflight: the Legend of Guinevere*. However, the following day, **November 15th**, is actually kept as Arthur's name day in Brittany. This surely would be a more appropriate day to commemorate?

WORMWIDE

If you haven't yet logged on to ***Arthur's Ring*** you'll find that this is one of a number of themed websites which usually are accessible from their menu. In the case of Arthur's Ring itself you can access it at

www.geocities.com/~gkingdom/saxonshore/ringmembers.html

The following are just a selection of Arthurian sites to get you started!

Britannia bills itself as "America's Gateway to the British Isles" and has much of general as well as Arthurian historical interest on

www.britannia.com/history/h12.html

Courtesy of Enfield Archaeological Society is a link to the background story of Derek Mahoney's replica Glastonbury cross of the eighties:

www.britannia.com/history/crosshoax.html

Of more than academic interest is **Thomas Green's** research which was originally published in 1995 in the *Durham University Journal 87.2* (July) 385-392. Entitled "The historicity and historicisation of Arthur" you can peruse his no-frills text on

www.globalnet.co.uk/~tomgreen/arthur.htm

Llys Arthur is dedicated to the Arthur of the Welsh, and though last updated in August 1998 still has much to recommend it. There is background on the Age of Arthur, a reference section, including genealogies, and source texts.

www.webexcel.ndirect.co.uk/gwarnant/arthur/arthur.htm

Gwarnant itself is a "web resource for medieval Welsh poetry" which includes not only *Llys Arthur* but also *hanes cymru*. Both are also part of the ***Celtic Culture Webring***.

I had some difficulties accessing the next site in English, but if you can manage French there is some sparse, late medieval material on Arthurian legends in Brittany on

www.bretagne.com/annuaire/Annuaire.cfm

Finally, the ***Mythic Crossroads*** site has some Arthurian material on

http://members.xoom.com/DBlanchard/british.htm

Happy browsing!

MERLIN'S MART

In Cornwall the Arthurian name which seems to have the most resonances, especially for tourist attractions, is of course Merlin, so here is a selection of venues.

First, a riddle: "What on *earth* have the Yugoslav royals got to do with Excalibur and Camelot?" asks Beryl Mercer. A news item provides information but no real answers. On Easter Sunday "King Arthur's famous sword excalibur [*sic*] was raised high above Camelot Castle in Cornwall by royalty," we are intrigued to learn. "The excalibur, which was featured on a new flag, was hoisted over Tintagel's Camelot Castle Hotel." Ah, the former King Arthur's Castle Hotel, bought by John Mappin and Ted Stourton, featured in *The Board* last issue. But where do Yugoslav royals come in?

In the article ("Excalibur returns to Camelot" in the *Western Morning News*, April 28, 2000) a picture is captioned "**Merlin's flag**: Princess Linda and butler Dave Searle inspect the flag". This flag features the sword in blue and gold on a white background. Made by royal flagmakers Porter and Sons, it was designed to be the "brand new colours of Camelot Castle".

Yes, but what about those royals? Well, all we are told is that "HRH Princess Linda, Prince George and Prince Michael of Yugoslavia performed the standard-raising ceremony at 11am on Sunday to celebrate the Easter Bank Holiday weekend" and that "scores of costumed youngsters mingled with crowds of visitors at the weekend, all keen to see the royal guests of honour at the 19th century hotel". So, there you are, then. It's all perfectly clear.

Meanwhile, at Newquay's **Holywell Bay Fun Park** you can "get lost, puzzled and quizzed" in ***Merlin's Maze***, a large open air structure of colourful wooden screens. Admission to the park is free, and you "pay as you play". The season is from April to October, but phone 01637 830095 for precise times of opening; the park is between Newquay and Redruth, just off the A3075.

In Newquay itself are the **Tunnels Through Time**, which recreate "many of the popular characters and events for which the county is famous". Life-size figures, "authentic" costumes and settings feature ***Merlin***, ***King Arthur***, ***Bolster the Giant*** and the undersea city of ***Lyonesse***, as well as other characters from folklore and more recent history. Find them all in the Big Pink Building, St Michaels Road, tel 01637 873379.

When I went past in May of this year, **Merlin's Magic Land** (sited at Lelant just off the A3074 between Hayle and St Ives) looked decidedly closed. Among all the activities allegedly on offer were ***Merlin's Magic Castle*** ("telling the story of The Sword in the Stone") and ***Merlin's Diner***. Check it's open before you go - or give it a miss.

Away from Cornwall, **Merlin's** is an over-21s weekend nightclub in Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire and its range of popular music - all the decades from the 60s to the early 90s - reflects this, with karaoke featured on Sunday nights.

The nightclub is next door to **The Grail Court Hotel**, a Grade II listed building. Established in Burton for 200 years, the Midland Hotel had been in financial trouble for some years but was recently renamed due its proprietors' "love of all things Arthurian". Both the **Lancelot Room** and the **Guinevere Room** are available for £69.50 a night, while **Arthur's Bar & Restaurant** offers a range of appropriate dishes.

For starters you can have Knights in Armour (shell-on prawns served in a goblet), Dragons Wings (hot and spicy chicken wings) or Black Knight (pan-fried black pudding). Main courses include Gammon Excalibur, Guinevere's Heart (poached chicken breast flamed with brandy), Avalon Pork, La Moete de Arthure (fillet steak and rice), Sword in the Stone (swordfish steak in puff pastry) or Arthur's Catch (salmon steak). Vegetarians are offered Peasants Feast or Celtic Mushrooms.

After a choice of twelve Knights of the Round Table Sauces, you can have Merlin's Mist (cream, grapes and dark chocolate), The Round Table (pineapple rings flamed with rum) or Pendragon's Ice. Liqueurs feature Celtic Coffee (with whiskey), Avalon Coffee (with brandy) or Prince of Darkness (dark rum). Full marks for inventiveness and for a menu with sections on Arthurian legend as well as medieval feasts and entertainment, and thanks to Paul Smith for supplying the details.

Oh, and look out for those royals.

BONS MOTS

T S Eliot's Arthurian-inspired poem *The Wasteland* received a mention during the recent media feeding-frenzy of the Queen Mother's 100th birthday celebrations. Apparently Ma'am had not been overly impressed by a reading of the opus, freshly composed, by (presumably) the man himself, thought it dreary, and recalled it as *The Desert* ...

Veteran *Pendragon* readers may remember Deirdre of Chipping Sodbury, sometime thorn in the flesh of former editor, the late Eddie Tooke, famous for her malapropisms and *bons mots*. Well, another Chipping Sodbury native has become rather more successful with her tales of an orphaned youngster, fostered out to an unsympathetic family and continually made to prove his worth and destiny. I am referring of course to that modern Ceridwen J **K Rowling**

and her Harry Potter books, which need little introduction here except to say that there are in them continual echoes of Arthurian legend if you think hard about it. The latest title is *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Gold*. (Remember when the FA Cup was one year marketed as the Holy Grail?) Try

www.okukbooks.com/harry/rowling.htma

for an interview; your search engine will already have discovered lots of other sites under *harrypotter*, I'm sure.

FEATURED JOURNALS

"Fifteen years of unparalleled splendour" proclaims the spring issue of ***Ceridwen's Cauldron***, the magazine of the Oxford Arthurian Society. This commemorative anthology celebrates contributions from society members since the magazine's first incarnation as *Pendragon* ("a subtle and witty conjoining of both 'pen' and 'dragon'"), swiftly retitled for obvious reasons, and includes representative reports, articles, poems and artwork. A fascinating Arthurian journal, of more than local interest.

"The King Who Never Was" is the provocative title of an article in the second issue of the new ***BBC History Magazine***. Mike Ibeji is "a late Roman historian" (presumably writing posthumously) and, we are told, one of the team making Simon Schama's forthcoming BBC TV series *History of Britain*. He believes Arthur did not exist. "Shocking though that statement might be to romantics, it is surely born [*sic*] out by the weight of modern scholarship."

He believes "the 'no smoke without fire' argument concerning Arthur's historical reality has evolved only because some time between the sixth and ninth century his name became mixed into the British resistance legend." After some more mangled spellings ("Gwarwrddurr" from *The Gododdin*, and Arthur's son "Arwr"), Ibeji then concedes, "If there was a historical Arthur (and it's a very big 'if'), he was probably some kind of warlord" who *may* have been associated with Badon. Though we don't know where Badon was, Ibeji thinks it "most likely to be Little Salisbury [*sic*] near Bath".

Letters in response to Mike Ibeji's article appeared in issue 4, the first from a Northampton supporter of Geoffrey Ashe's Riothamus theory, and the second from a Constance Burgess of Loughborough, a supporter of Breton origins, who only said that "according to the chronicle of Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, the Arthurian legends were brought from Brittany by Walter of Constances [*sic*], archdeacon of Oxford". In the same issue re-enactment societies are investigated by Tim Newark, editor of *Military Illustrated*, with Dan Shadrake of Arthurian Living History group Britannia featured in "It's fun, but is it history?"

BBC History Magazine can be bought from stationers, cover price £2.95, or subscribed to (£28.32 *pa*, 20% off) by phoning free on 0800 169 4407 or by emailing

bbchistory@galleon.co.uk

or write to BBC History Magazine, FREEPOST LON 16059, Sittingbourne ME9 8BR.

Interested in castles, forts and all that? Then ***Postern***, the magazine of Castle Studies & Travels is the one for you. Edited by Peter E Presford, issues 9 and 10 feature castles in Spain, France, Italy, Wales, Scotland and England, with monchrome photos, plans, news and reviews as well as articles by enthusiasts. The Arthurian connection is there too in Gil Dowdall-Brown's descriptions of Montségur (though without any mention of grails, real or imagined) and the languedoc castle of Puivert and the art of courtly love, not forgetting our own Steve Sneyd's first part of "The Search for the Green Knight's Castle". Good value for £1.25 (later issues will be £1.50, including p&p), this A5 occasional magazine is available from the editor at Malfunction Press (!), Rose Cottage, 3 Tram Lane, Buckley, Flintshire, Wales CH7 3JB, or email rosecot@presford.freeserve.co.uk.

Northern Earth claims that it is "now the world's oldest earth mysteries journal!" with *The Ley Hunter* now defunct.This quarterly calls itself a "neo-antiquarian" magazine dealing with sacred landscapes, traditions and folk cultures in Northern Britain and elsewhere "in everyday language". Issue 82 touches on Ilkley's swastika stone, stone circles and Seahenge, for example. This is a well-written unhysterical exchange journal which, like many small-press publications, deserves support.

The summer issue of ***Dalriada*** includes details of a possible Druid burial near Colchester, a Gaelic folktale of Fionn mac Cumhal or Fingal and informed articles on Celtic interlace and bagpipes. News and reports from Celtic realms mentions three unique platters made for the three Gorseths of Brittany, Wales and Cornwall: "the design has leaves and berries of mistletoe around the rim and in the middle an oak tree with a stoat in ermine, a red dragon and a chough on the rocks at its foot." The three mottoes are *Kentoc'h Mervel* (Sooner Death), *Y Ddraig Goch Ddyry Cychwyn* (The Red Dragon gives a beginning) and *Nyns Yu Marow Myghtern Arthur* (King Arthur is not dead).

Finally, ***Celtic Connections*** summer issue is a special on modern Celtic Art, featuring several talented artists from Britain and mainland Europe and intricate examples of their work, mainly two-dimensional.

Exchange journals

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

• **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 **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* £1.50 *Cheques* Oxford Arthurian Society *website* http://users.ox.ac.uk/~arthsoc

• **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 *Annual subscription* £15.00 *website*
http://www.dalriada.co.uk

• **THE DRAGON CHRONICLE** Dragon-related and -inspired myth, magick, folklore, fantasy *Editor* Kevin Matthews *Sample* £2.00/$5 *Four issues* £7.00/$15 *Cheques* Dragon's Head Press, PO Box 3369, London SW6 6JN *website* 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 Cam 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* The Round Table, Box 18673, Rochester, New York NY 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
Editors Please check details are correct