pendragon

The Journal of the Pendragon Society

editorial

Vol XXIX No 3 Summer-Autumn 2001

The Lady of the Lake

There was, of course, never just one Lady, nor just one Lake. But this theme is as good an excuse as any to dive in and explore a number of motifs in this issue – water fairies, lakes, votive offerings, abductions, folktales, the magic of names and Lancelot for example – with in-depth studies, passing comments and all the other features that you have come to expect. Come on in, the water's lovely!

When you've had a good dip, remember those other themes that we've flagged up for the next two issues – **Avalon** and **Camelot** – and start planning what your contribution to these will be! And then ... it's some time since we've had an edition dedicated to pure invention and creativity (Fred Stedman-Jones' *Arthur in Wonderland* and *Arthur Centre Stage* issues spring to mind), so I propose an issue of **bardic entertainment**, with sagas, stanzas and sketches for the artists and artistes among you. An appropriate title, please! Be warned I shall be sending the boys round to some of you to persuade new contributors to cough up!

As this issue was being prepared for the printers Channel 4's Time Team were busy throwing light on the Dark Ages near the New Forest. Somewhere on the Hampshire Avon rich male and female burials (some of the latter with spears and shields) were brought to light, initiated by the recent discovery of an exquisite Byzantine drinking 'bucket'.

For security reasons the exact site wasn't divulged, but it seems to be somewhere near Charford, the presumed site of fighting between Britons and Cerdic and Cynric at *Cerdicesford* – in 519, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The dating of the cemetery was tentatively given as late 5th / early 6th century, with an occupation area provisionally identified nearby. More details may still be had from channel4.com/timeteamlive2001

Personnel

Some changes in roles and responsibilities are suggested by changes on the Contents page opposite. Simon and Anne Rouse have courageously taken on the duties of enquiries and subscriptions and the despatch of the journal, as most of you will have already noted. Fred Stedman-Jones will continue his active work for Pendragon, though at the moment his long-standing interest and research in the Nanteos Cup is at the forefront of his energies. And plans are afoot for an edition produced by a guest editor – we'll keep you posted.

Format

As part of *Pendragon*'s evolving appearance, some other changes will be evident in this edition. As noted elsewhere, font size has slightly enlarged in an attempt to improve legibility; and the Contents page has a new design from Simon Rouse – the last one has stood us in good stead for eight years or so!

As always, a cross [X] in the box above indicates that your subscription in now due.

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

PENDRAGON

Journal of the Pendragon Society

Established 1959 ISSN 0143 8379

Vol XXIX No 3 Summer 2001 Theme this issue **The Lady of the Lake**

CONTENTS

Illustrations *Simon Rouse* - cover, *Ian Brown* – 5 10 13 33 40
Anna-Marie Ferguson 7 42 Other illustrations and picture research *Editor*

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Advertisement rates £20.00 per page and *pro rata*, minimum quarter-page
Special rates for back cover and inserts – enquire for details
These rates are for camera-ready copy at A4 scale for reduction to A5 format
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Printed by Catford Print Centre, PO Box 563, Catford, London SE6 4PY
☎ 020 8695 0101 *E-mail* post@catfordprint.co.uk *Website* www.catfordprint.co.uk

PenDragon

A MESSAGE TO ALL MEMBERS

Ever since I became a member, I have had an increasingly high regard for the Society and its splendid – and splendidly edited – journal. So when I was invited to become your President, I was overwhelmed with pleasure, pride and gratitude. When the last issue of *Pendragon* came out, I had still more to be grateful for. I thank the Editor and Chairman for their very kind words about me: the Editor made my curriculum go like Ben Hur's! And I am also grateful for having three of my recent pieces decorated with two magnificent dragons and a castle, from the magic pencil (as the Victorians used to say) of Ian Brown.

As we all know, the subject of Arthur, his knights and his ladies is inexhaustible, one of the many reasons why we are all so deeply involved in this subject (or we wouldn't be members of the Society!). This shared concern, I feel, makes us a Round Table of good friends, whether or not we ever meet face to face. But when I read the articles, letters, *etc* in *Pendragon*, I am impressed by another matter. Although we all have this shared concern, we approach it from so many different angles and perspectives. This is excellent. It means, I think, that we are all combining to build up a kind of hologram of Arthur and the Matter of Britain, with their endless ramifications in the past, the present, and the future. In his *Areopagitica*, Milton referred to a fine thought by another writer: 'Mr Selden's volume proves that all opinions, known, read and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest'.

To be President of the Pendragon Society is for me a great honour and a great happiness. Unfortunately, I have chronic kidney failure and spend three days a week in hospital for dialysis. This restricts my activities, and I shall not be as energetic a President as I would have wished. But I will do my best to be worthy of the honour that has been done me. Meanwhile I send you all my *very* best wishes. May we long continue to follow in the footsteps (in Sir Walter's words) of

British bards that tuned their lyres
To Arthur's and Pendragon's praise.

W M S Russell, President

PENDRAGON PEOPLE

Well, as always, *Pendragon* has proved thoroughly absorbing and inspirational, with an excellent mixture of commentary, research and imagination.

May I offer my very best wishes to Professor Russell on becoming the Pendragon Society's first President? I'm sure it's an enormous responsibility to take on and, judging by the work of his I've seen so far in *Pendragon*, as well as his massive experience outlined in his biographical details in this issue, I'm sure that he'll do really well.

My commiserations to the family of Chris Turner. I know Chris will be sadly missed from *Pendragon*. Congratulations to Steve Sneyd on achieving the Eddie Tooke award! I'm delighted he was chosen: he has an excellent attitude, contributing in such imaginative ways to *Pendragon*.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

Many thanks for the new issue [*Dark Age People*] and the very pleasing news of the Eddie Tooke award, even if it's hard to convince myself it is deserved.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

HISTORY MATTERS

Congratulations on another issue of *Pendragon* full of interest and controversy.

I was intrigued by Professor Russell's letter about recent evidence for post-Roman occupation at Silchester. I suspect, however, that Geoffrey of Monmouth's association of Arthur with Silchester was all his own work, possibly based on the resemblance between "Calleva", the Roman name of Silchester, and "Celliwig", the name of Arthur's court in Welsh tradition. It seems unlikely that Geoffrey would be in possession of accurate historical information about the post-Roman occupation of the city.

This does, however, provide me with as good an excuse as any to mention that Green Knight, the American publishers of Arthurian fiction, are putting out this August a new anthology called *Legends of the Pendragon* edited by James Lowder. This will include a longish poem by me, entitled "The Enthronement of Arthur", set during Arthur's coronation at Silchester ...

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

• *See* The Board *for some info on another Green Knight publication, or view website* http://www.greenknight.com

In the very intriguing discussion of Ider and Brent Knoll [Nick Grant's article, last issue], there is passing mention of the Nudd / Nodens shrine at Lydney, Gloucs, and of the god's association with healing, and fishing.

I wonder it that shrine could lie somewhere at the back of the story of the Grail Castle. The events of *Peredur* place the hero in and around Gloucestershire, and, of direct relevance, the Lydney temple's site was that of an Iron Age hillfort, one that, as Mortimer Wheeler's 1932 excavation showed, had its prehistoric ramparts repaired after the temple was built in late Roman times "giving a substantial defensive system some 35 metres wide overall. This work is not precisely dated ... almost certainly late or post-Roman" (A H A Hogg *A Guide to the Hill-Forts of Britain*, Paladin 1984 edition, page 243).

Taken in conjunction with the masonry wall enclosing the temple itself, you have a defensible place of healing in use "well into the fifth century" (Hogg again). Even if no cultists of Nodens, or others in search of a defended home, lingered on still later, that is certainly late enough, I would have thought, to provide a candidate location for whatever stories provided the substratum that much later emerged as the full-blown Grail "Mythos".

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

FEEDBACK

Steve Sneyd's review of Frederick Turner's *New World* epic provides plenty of reasons for me to give it a wide berth! It sounds utterly appalling – sorry, Steve! – particularly the remarks about 'religious fanatics' and 'a sacrificial religion ... drawn from a melange of earlier religions.' The thought that, after nearly 400 years, humanity will still be enslaved by the shackles of religion fills me with despair!

The "Name of the Hero" article was of course of great interest to me, in view of my 'pursuit' of The Bear, and the Notes led me to a re-reading of Charles Evans-Günther's report of Anne Ross's lecture on "Arthur the Bear" (*24/3* August 1994).

Chris Lovegrove's quotation from Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* – "... Al was this land fulfild of fayerie" – reminds me that the word 'merry' or 'merrie' in the term 'Merrie England' is actually a contraction of 'gramarye' or 'gramarie'. I can't recall when or from what source I learned this, but it would seem to make good sense, *vide* Kipling's *Puck's Song*:

She is not any common earth,
Water or Wood or Air,
But Merlin's Isle of Gramarye
Where you and I will fare

(*Puck of Pook's Hill*, Pan 1975, 3).

Also, Susan Cooper's young protagonist, Will Stanton, is given "The Book of Gramarye ... there are no words to describe how precious it is. The book of hidden things, of the real magic" (*The Dark is Rising*, Chatto & Windus 1973, 88).

I'm already mulling over a possible article on 'Avalon'; four months gives plenty of scope!

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

• *Your 'merry' explanation is new to me, Beryl! I have always associated 'gramarye' with the word 'grammar' (from Old French* gramaire, *Greek* gramma *'letter') and* grimoires, *medieval books of spells.*

And we're told that 'glamour' is derived via a Scottish corruption of the same word, meaning a charm or enchantment cast by an attractive person. 'Enchantment' of course is from the French, meaning the use of spells which are sung ... This could go on indefinitely!

Beryl Mercer is right to say that although the Romans were "sticklers for accuracy in keeping records", no record has ever been found relating to Jesus's trial and execution. However, though the Romans may have been

"sticklers", their successors were not, and very few legal records remain. If we had an otherwise unbroken series of records from which Jesus's trial was missing, only then would its absence be of any significance. As it is, with the four Gospel narratives (at least one of which seems to be by an eye-witness), Jesus's is one of the best documented trials of the period.

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

Thanks to Forrester Roberts, for his kind and generous comments on my illustrations. His own work is an inspiration, so his feedback is really appreciated. I was having a good chuckle, as I read his letter [last issue]. Actually, I didn't realise it was from him, until I reached the end (I should have guessed: I know what his sense of humour is like!). He makes a very valid point [...] calling for more clarity and and less obscurity. (However, I really should add that I'm talking in general terms, and not about anyone in particular.)

The poetry in this edition is enchanting and, again, inspirational; in particular, Helen Thompson's "Absent Grace" and "They Return The Body of Galahad".

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

The faults of John Whitehead's *Guardian of the Grail* (best summed up as "incoherent rubbish") are too numerous to squeeze into a single letter, so I will confine myself to the point raised in Chris Street's letter about Arthur's being "said to have travelled to Rome" and Caractacus being "the only ancient British King known to have done so". (This would scarcely of itself make them the same person, even if it held water.)

But who says Arthur went to Rome? Whitehead's only authority for this is Malory, who is here drawing on the 14th-century alliterative poem *Morte Arthure* which, in a tradition that goes back to Geoffrey of Monmouth, has Arthur break off his triumpant march on Rome when the news reaches him of Mordred's usurpation of his throne and wife. This, incidentally, explains why Arthur never appears on lists of Roman emperors.

Malory, however, having decided to put the Roman campaign early in Arthur's reign and keep Mordred's treachery to the end of it, cannot end his version thus, and so (picking up on Arthur's expressed intentions in the poem) has Arthur actually going to Rome and being crowned emperor by the Pope on Christmas Day. Arthur's "travelling to Rome" is thus a 15th-century fictional construct bearing no relation to history. There is certainly no connexion with the historical Caractacus being taken in chains to die in Rome.

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

• *Andrew also points out that John Hardyng's* Chronicle, *slightly earlier than Malory and influenced by romances, is "the only other" text detailing Arthur's coronation at Rome, "but since Whitehead doesn't know of Hardyng's existence, he is irrelevant to this argument."*

Early "Dark Age" kings definitely known to have travelled to Rome are Caedwalla (685–689) and Ine of Wessex (689–726), both of whom retired to the Eternal City. Here, between Constantine's basilica of St Peter and Hadrian's mausoleum (now the Castel Sant'Angelo), Ine founded a schola Saxonum *consisting of a church and a hospice to house English pilgrims. The present Renaissance church of Santo Spirito in Sassia – that is, in "Saxonia" – is on the site of the original Saxon building dedicated to the Virgin, its foundation due to an annual penny tax levied on every Wessex household; for details see, for example, Mary Sharp's* A Traveller's Guide to the Churches of Rome *(London 1967).*

COVER ART

If Simon Rouse ever has the time, I'd be fascinated to know the thought processes that led [*last issue*] to his intriguing cover illustration (there seems to be a double threefold aspect to the figures represented, if that makes sense). I do like the way that stories seem to unfold, in a semi-abstract way, in Simon's artwork.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

I was most pleased to read the members' letters in response to my Ceridwen cover for *Pendragon*'s Summer 2000 issue. I would like to thank those who took the time to write; their comments are much appreciated.

As to the curiosity surrounding the origins of the drawing – it is not based on any particular version of Ceridwen's story. I was reluctant to re-read or lock myself into a text, having only recently finished years in such restrictive service illustrating Malory. Instead I took advantage of the freedom of *Pendragon*'s general Ceridwen direction and thought on the wider idea of the Celtic Otherworldly cauldron as source of knowledge and inspiration for the arts – poetic, mantic *etc* (and my art – making the drawing very personal). The scene is

essentially a favourite haunt – a place of old, damp green, magic where I imagine such a 'source' cauldron to lie, and a setting in which I wanted to bathe / rest after illustrating Malory. As a personal drawing, I was particularly pleased that it resonated with Pendragon members.

For those interested there are a number of Arthurian paintings to be seen on my website www.annamarieferguson.com – please note it is Anna and not Anne.

It may also interest members to know of the City of Edinburgh's upcoming Arthurian art exhibition "Quest for Camelot" at the City Arts Centre, November 3 2001 – January 26 2002. I understand it is to be an ambitious exhibition with "other Arthurian events" planned to coincide about the city.

Lastly, if I may quietly address those members with a Welsh interest. It seems I shall soon be (happily) in the service of the Welsh in compiling and illustrating old legends and otherworldly faery stories of Wales. While I have much material to draw from, I would welcome suggestions as to landscapes, sites and stories which members feel may have been neglected and deserving of the serious commitment of an illustrator. I value your thoughts, and may be reached via my previously noted website.

Anna-Marie Ferguson, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

• *Anna-Marie has very kindly offered a cover for the* Avalon *issue of* Pendragon. *Her Malory illustrations continue to draw praise from various quarters, for example the December 2000 newsletter of The Nomads of the Time Streams. Steve Sneyd says this mouthpiece of the Michael Moorcock Appreciation Society (Moorcock wrote the foreword to the recent edition) noted the "dozens of stunning colour and black-&-white plates by Anna-Marie Ferguson". See also* Reviews *and* The Board, this issue.

FORMAT

Morwen Tregudda makes some valid points in her criticism ("An Exile from Dumnonia"). That's not to say I agree with them all, from my own point of view; but the fact that someone is less than happy is always worth listening to.

Her comments on the subject matter in the journal: it's worth noting that the content does change, from one issue to another and, over the past few years, I've noticed quite an eclectic collection of matters being raised. For anyone new to, or returning to, *Pendragon*, I'd always recommend reading a few editions before making any assessment. As a suggestion, anyone wanting certain subjects covering could always write in, and then anyone reading the letters in *Pen*Dragon can respond with suitable subject matter. That's part of the beauty of *Pen*Dragon: it keeps the conversation and the debate going.

I've never found the format any problem; but again, Morwen may have a valid point when mentioning the size of the copy. I showed Forrester Roberts' letter to my father, who is in his mid-seventies (which is quite warm for this time of year!), and he had a bit of difficulty in reading the small print. Now, that's no problem for me, but I can see how it might be a problem for others.

Now, A5 works really well for *Pendragon*, and I certainly wouldn't suggest changing it; but to make the typeface larger would either mean excluding a lot of material, or making the journal thicker. The latter would naturally be the best solution, but I can well imagine that would greatly increase costs, especially as it would probably necessitate a different binding technique.

In response to Morwen's comments, you asked what people thought about *Pendragon* on the Internet. Definitely, that's something we need. Not instead of our usual format, but in addition to it. Any positive way of reaching and interacting with people is always a good idea; but never at the expense of leaving anyone behind. Morwen is right: not everyone has a computer. At the same time, though, we need to reach those who do.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

I have to say that I'm in full agreement with the 'exile from Dumnonia', Morwen Tregudda (what a lovely Cornish name!), re the need for larger print. I now have to read *Pendragon* with Archie's powerful magnifying glass, otherwise I, like Morwen, get headaches!

I realise that larger print will probably mean more pages and therefore higher postage, but I for one would not mind in the least paying an extra 50p or so on my sub. (I also have to use the magnifier on my Saturday copy of the *Western Morning News*.)

I also echo Morwen's remark *re* the Internet: "I am no 'on line' and hope I will never have to be ..."

Beryl Mercer, Truro, Cornwall

I read Morwen Tregudda's letter with mixed feelings. I don't find the printing a problem (then again, I am distinctly short-sighted) and I think there should be more not less on mediaeval literature, which is, after all, Arthur's definitive locus. On the other hand, I agree that a higher profile and wider publicity are desirable, though how these are to be achieved and who is going to have the time and money to do it is another question entirely.

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

• *This issue's font size has been slightly enlarged, from 10 to 10.5, before reduction from A4 to A5. This should make it comparable with the size of newsprint in your usual paper. If this doesn't do the trick, of course we'll think again!*

As a longterm technophobe I appreciate Morwen and Beryl's concerns, but there are I think two issues here. One is that, like it or not, our lives are directly or indirectly affected by information and communication technology (this journal is after all produced on a computer using a word-processing package, and printed using scanning, reduction and other chip-based technologies). Secondly, saying no to ICT is a bit like Canute trying to control the tide, or Tudor readers refusing to read Malory in Caxton's new-fangled printed version. The revolution is not only here, it has moved on!

THE DRAGON KING AND HIS NARTS

I read *Arthur the Dragon King* by Howard Reid just a few weeks ago, and was really hoping that someone else would have written a review [review last issue]. Frankly, I prefer only to say positive things about anyone's work (not that I'm such an expert myself!), and I really couldn't find much in this book's favour. It does tend to ring warning bells with me, whenever someone says, "Arthur was this," or "Arthur's story came from that." It seems that the Arthurian legends developed by attracting and coalescing stories from all kinds of sources, some of them ancient, and others more contemporary to the time they were told; and to say that Arthur definitely came only from one time and place would seem to be a bit wide of the mark (all right, I tend to agree with the general consensus that a kind of 'real' Arthur might have lived during the fifth century, or thereabouts, but that's not to say that there aren't many elements of the legends which any 'true' Arthur might not have attracted to him, both during and after his lifetime).

Perhaps Howard Reid meant well with his ideas, and was not jumping on the bandwagon, but it's clear that he hasn't taken the time to truly study the legends. Even his brief précis of the main corpus of the legends (mainly based on Malory, it seems), is often inaccurate. One would have expected, if he really wanted to solidify his thesis, that he would have delved much deeper into the legends to back up his arguments, if nothing else. I was really rather disappointed with the whole "Dragon King" thing.

I suppose it should be some reassurance that Arthurian books are so popular at the moment, even it there is a lot of bandwagoning going on. At least there whould be plenty of new ideas and discussions being aired, as long as we don't end up with too much chaff amongst the wheat. We needn't start worrying until we get titles like *Charlie Dimmock's Guide to the Lady of the Lake* and *Big Brother Goes to Camelot*. As long as there are enough good titles out there, then King Arthur is essentially alive and well, and living in the popular imagination.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

I detect sinister implications behind your point about "Robert de Barron" at the end of your review of Reid's book. May not this caption error be shared by Reid and Castleden because both books' publishers used the Bridgeman Art Library as a source? Given that the books appeared only a year apart, there may not have been time for Reid to assimilate Castleden's book (in any case only tangential to his argument) and it would have been very naughty of him to list it unread in his bibliography.

This is not of course to say that I countenance "the Sarmatian connexion" for one instant. The notion that the Sarmatians and Alans introduced all the salient features of Arthurian story into western Europe relies mainly upon the evidence of the Nart Sagas current in modern Ossetia, which are touted as

representing ancient folk-traditions which the Alans and Sarmatians would have taken west with them.

There seems no reason to grant this. The Nart Sagas were first noted down in the nineteenth century, and scarcely represent uncontaminated ancient material (the use of cannon is frequent, for example). The 14th-century Byzantine Greek poem known as "The Old Knight" and the presence of the Serbo-Russian *Tristan* in 16th-century Belorus attest to the eastward spread of Arthurian matter at the end of the Middle Ages, providing an altogether simpler and more credible reason for any resemblances between Arthurian romance and the Sagas of the Narts. The influences run West to East, not *vice versa*. This seems to be borne out by the fact that the Narts' analogue of the Holy Grail, the "Nartamongae", resembles the later form of the Grail (a self-propelled hovering cup) rather than the earlier (a broad dish that has to be carried).

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

• *I take your first point, Andrew – perhaps not a conspiracy then, only a cock-up! However, Howard Reid does quote the equally tangential Alistair Moffat Lost Kingdoms book, published during the same year as Castleden's (October 1999, despite the latter's 2000 copyright notice) while including in his biblio a couple of titles definitely appearing in 2000. Incidentally, Reid's* Arthur the Dragon King *is apparently now out in paperback and linked in with a forthcoming TV documentary.*

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY

In the very interesting review of Kaeuper's *Chivalry and Violence* [last issue], on page 35 a comment is made about the way estates in England post-Conquest were scattered across the country. It's certainly true that William, when assigning land to his followers after his victory, deliberately did this to try to prevent the situation of France and elsewhere of large contiguous areas built up by local lords thus well positioned to defy the king.

But in the frontier areas of William's new kingdom, the need to have unified local defense overrode the fear of over-mighty subjects, and there were massive solid block landholdings created, in the Welsh Marches, and right through the North, from the Peak upward to Northumberland. So the distinction isn't quite as clear-cut as stated.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

Professor Russell's assertion that "the glaring contrast between [Malory's] life and his book shows how little all these works improved behaviour" (p 36) ignores the chronology of the matter. All Malory's supposed criminal activities took place *before* he wrote his book. Though it would be stretching things to claim this as evidence that writing romances reformed him (he was, after all, in jug), it is possible to see the *Morte* as an act of contrition or atonement (see Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade's *The Two Versions of Malory's Morte Darthur* 1995 pp 115, 117).

But is it necessary to credit the charges made against Malory at all? Professor Russell apparently does so because they are "so numerous and circumstantial it is hard to believe they were all trumped up" ("An Ill-Made Knight" p 15). Yet accounts of sightings of sea-serpents, abductions by aliens and trips to fairyland are all more numerous and more circumstantial than the charges against Malory. Does Professor Russell then believe in them? Since it would be in the interests of people faking criminal charges to make them as numerous and circumstantial as possible, these criteria are useless for determining whether or not the charges are true. At this distance, we cannot tell whether Malory was an innocent man maligned or guilty as all get-out.

Andrew H W Smith, Oxford

ANOTHER VICTORY

I understand from Mr Daniel Nastali of Kansas City, USA, that a few years ago, when we brought out the first edition of our booklet *Badon Hill: is this year the 1500th anniversary of King Arthur's greatest battle?* your magazine *Pendragon* carried some mention of it. We are now in the process of bringing out a second edition, provisionally entitled *King Arthur's greatest battle: is 2003 the 1500th anniversary?*

By the way, I got your address from a letter you wrote to *The Guardian* about the alleged rediscovery of King Arthur's cross at Enfield in the early eighties ... I remember you speaking on the "Inside London" Radio London programme at that time.

Dr Richard White, Proprietor,
King Arthur Publications
Woodford Green, Essex

• *For further details of this and other King Arthur Publications see* BookWorm. *Dr White wrote a series of booklets on the Enfield*

Arthur's Cross and its 'keeper' the late Derek Mahoney, whose activities we have charted over the years.

LLANERCH LIVES ON

Would you kindly reassure your readers that Llanerch continues on, albeit under a slightly different guise as **Llanerch Press**. Llanerch Publishers' list is being continued through Llanerch Press, following the retirement of Derek Bryce, who created Llanerch. A new booklist will be ready in the autumn which will include some new and forthcoming titles.

Lindsay Thomas, Llanerch Press,
Penbryn Lodge, Pandy, Cribyn, Lampeter,
Ceredigion SA48 7QH

• *Further contact details for Llanerch can be found in this issue's* BookWorm.

OF THE BALANCING OF NEEDS

other than being
other than being timeless
other than being fear–beautiful
what have i done to them
what have i ever done to them

that they must come time
and time hurl sharp blade
swords ever and ever into
my lake at me why do they
feel such need to pierce
into through me of course
they always miss water
deceives my white swift
flesh is never where they
throw but all the same is
time has come to turn their
little game on them go one
in shape of breeze of sunmote
take cradlemeat replace with
babe–aping slashmouth log
spell–masked of fern will
fool just long enough and
i will raise their child
in good time in eyeblink by
my timeless time will send
my fostered manthing weapon–
skilled beyond all to take
their war–pride downbeat
their very best to cut down
best of all their other
prowess–greed of women–sating
take their highest's bride
ah now when THAT one send
from death–ledge lost shamed
HIS sword to give my lake

then THAT blade i'll gladcatch
THEN my palms grip–grasping edge
cut'll bleed only joysmoke, hurt
unfelt, bloodfire triumph swirling
THIS woman–banner right through
all atoms of my lake's chillwater
murk enough to rust dissolve each
every blade sunk deep into its silt

Steve Sneyd

The Water Women

Named and Nameless

Beryl Mercer

Named

In *The White Goddess* Robert Graves writes, "Spencer's White Goddess is the Arthurian 'Lady of the Lake', also called the 'White Serpent', 'Nimue', and 'Vivien', whom Professor Rhys in his *Arthurian Legend* identifies with Rhiannon. She is mistress of Merlin (Merddin) ..."

Dr Brewer, in his *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, also identifies her as "Vivien, an enchantress of Arthurian romance, the Lady of the Lake ... mistress of Merlin. She lived in the midst of a lake surrounded by knights and damsels." Another entry states, "Lancelot du Lac, son of King Ban of Brittany, (was) stolen in infancy by the Lady of the Lake. She plunged with the baby into the lake, and when her protégé was grown to manhood, presented him to King Arthur ..." (Dr Brewer does not explain how a human baby could be reared to manhood under water ... a spell cast upon him by Vivien, perhaps?)

Alan Garner gives her another identity: "This is the Isle of Angharad Goldenhand, Lady of the Lake, and it is one of the Two Floating Islands of Logris ... She sat between the children, dressed in a robe of white linen. She was tall and slender and fair; her long, plaited hair like red gold; and on her brow a band of gold." Alan Garner is the only writer I could find who gives names to both Lady and Lake: Angharad and Redesmere. I have done the same in my *Merlin* novel, borrowing 'Angharad' from Mr Garner, but placing her in the Welsh lake featured in the legend of the Physicians of Myddfai, which gives the Lady no name.

Nameless

John Pughe's translation of *The Physicians of Myddfai* carries this note on the back cover of the recent facsimile edition: "a reprint of the English text first published in *The Physicians of Myddfai*, Llandovery, 1861, including the introduction, the legend of the Lady of the Lake, and translations from the Welsh of two of the ancient texts of remedies purporting to have come down from the original Physicians of the twelfth century" (published for The Welsh MSS Society in 1993 by Llanerch).

The lake which is the home of the unnamed Lady in this fascinating legend is Llyn-y-Fan-Fach, situated to the south of Myddfai, which in turn lies to the south of Llandovery, where much of my story is set. (At the age of thirteen, 'my' Arthur is taken by Merlin to Llyn-y-Fan-Fach, where he is given Excalibur by Angharad – though the sword is returned to a different watery depth by Bedwyr after Camlann.)

In *Pendragon 28/1*, Summer 1999, I reviewed Channel 4's two-part presentation of *Merlin*, starring Sam Neill and Miranda Richardson. The latter played the double role of the evil Queen Mab *and* her gentle sister – the Lady of the Lake. Once again, the latter was not named, though she was the bestower and receiver of Excalibur. Near the end of the story, as Arthur and Mordred lie dead on the battle-field, Merlin does Arthur's bidding, taking Excalibur to the nearby lake shore. He hurls the sword high into the air; as it turns over and over in slow motion, it 'sings' a melancholy lament. "Take it back, Lady!" cries Merlin. Later he advises the failing, fading Mab to "go join your sister in the lake and be forgotten."

Why does Mab have a name, while her sister does not? Is it because, as she herself tells Mab, "You forget, I'm the Lady of the Lake ... I'm made of water ... now everything's flowing away from us and I accept it"?

Yet the unnamed fairy woman of Llyn-y-Fan-Fach couldn't have been made of water; she married a mortal man and bore him three sons (some versions of the legend say five). And apparently mermaids can live out of water, even if only for a short time. (There's a perfectly lovely story about mermaids and 'all the Old Things of the Sea' in Keith Roberts's grand collection *Anita* – fifteen stories about a sexy young witch and her formidable Granny.)

Anne Ross, in *Pagan Celtic Britain*, mentions "the Celtic custom of naming rivers after goddesses", also the Roman name of the Severn, Sabrina. She also mentions a serpent legend attached to the Well of the Maidens in Aberdeenshire. However, wells and springs appear to be in a different league. The ones in Cornwall (and probably elsewhere) are mainly designated either 'holy' or 'healing' or both, and most have the names of saints – usually feminine – while Glastonbury's Chalice Well has an obvious Christian connection.

In a Foreword to *The King's Grey Mare*, Rosemary Hawley Jarman makes acknowledgement "to the Reverend S Baring-Gould's book, *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, in which he touches briefly upon the legend of Melusine, the water-witch from whom the Woodvilles claimed descent." In the novel itself, Jacquetta, Duchess of Bedford, tells her eldest daughter, Elizabeth Woodville, this legend, claiming, "I am of the blood of a water-fay, who ensnared Raymond of Poitou ... She obtained an oath from her husband that she would be left alone each Saturday in strictest privacy ... He kept his word for a long time, but finally weakened and sought her out, deep in the heart of a lonely lake. There he saw that her nether parts were changed into the tail of a monstrous fish or serpent."

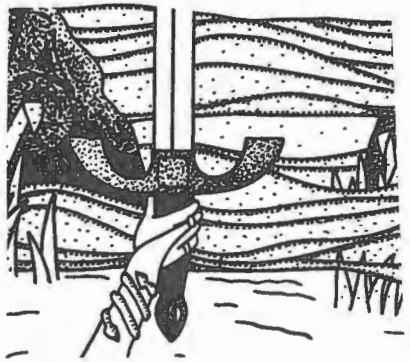
When strife arose in the family, he banished her - "Away, odious serpent!" – to which Melusine replied, "Farewell. I go, but I shall come again as a doom. Whenever one of us is to die, I shall weep most dolorously over the ramparts of Lusignan; whenever tragedy strikes a Royal house, I shall do likewise" (*cf* the Ban Sidhe – Banshee – of Irish legend). And on the night of Edward IV's death, Elizabeth his Queen hears Melusine on the battlements ...

In the encyclopaedic *Man, Myth & Magic* there is an article by Richard Cavendish entitled "Landscape Symbolism" in which he writes,

"Lakes are mysterious, and frequently sinister because the water or life-current in them is still instead of flowing – 'the sedge has withered from the Lake, and no birds sing' in Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

Deep in the water of a lake there may be a magic palace of diamond and crystal, of shimmering jewels, the home of fairies, nymphs, seductive and dangerous enchantresses.

This palace can be interpreted as an illusory paradise, which shatters at the touch of reality as the images on the surfaces of the water waver and break on contact with anything solid, and it can stand for the inspired but illusory creations of the imagination."



The magic of names

Vivien, Melusine, Angharad. Two from ancient legend, one from modern fiction; the rest unnamed – Cavendish's "fairies, nymphs, seductive and dangerous enchantresses." Was there, perhaps, some ancient superstition which considered it unlucky to identify them with names? As Cavendish says in another *Man, Myth & Magic* article ("Names"), "The magic of names is part of the magic of language in general, the belief that words encapsulate reality ... If the name of the thing *is* the thing, then the name can be used to capture it, to control it, and even to create it."

Finally, a slightly hair-raising item from the Department of Coincidence (which I prefere to call Synchronicity): *Pendragon 27/1* (Spring 1998) featured an extract from a letter which I had written to Fred Stedman-Jones. To save you the bother of scrabbling through your back numbers, I will quote the relevant passage: "(Something) which rather stopped my book-writing in its tracks was Earl Spencer's announcement that his sister's body was to be buried on an island in the middle of a lake ... A few days earlier I had written up Gwenhwfar's death in Camelot – and 'my' Camelot is situated on an island in the middle of a (Welsh) lake ... Llyn Syfaddan at Langorse, which has its own legend of a sunken city. And now – if the book ever does get published – I suppose readers will think that I put Camelot there *after* Diana's funeral – but I didn't, honest!"

References and note

While pursuing research for this article, I was struck by the paucity of names for these inhabitants of the feminine element. I have therefore offered details of the few names I did find, with their sources, and if anyone knows of others, I would be pleased to hear of them.

Richard Cavendish, articles in *Man, Myth & Magic* [Orbis]
Ivor H Evans ed (1973) *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* [Cassell]
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John Pughe *transl* (1861) *The Physicians of Myddfai* [Llanerch Publishers, Felinfach 1993]
Keith Roberts (1970) *Anita* [Ace]
Anne Ross (1974) *Pagan Celtic Britain* [Cardinal]

Conundrums

Ian Brown

A lady by another name

I recently read again about the Damosel with the Sword having been sent to Camelot by "the great lady Lile of Avelion" (*Le Morte d'Arthur* Book 2 Chapter 1). Naturally, I was just wondering whether Sir Thomas Malory transcribed a title, "The Lady of *The Isle* of Avelion," as a proper name, "The Lady *Lile*".

It's interesting how, after the sword is taken from the damosel's scabbard, the Lady of the Lake does turn up, demanding the head of either damosel or of the knight, Balin, who has won the sword. Was this a test of faith (perhaps like that which the Green Knight demanded)? Did it go wrong, resulting in the death of the Lady, rather than Balin succeeding in another beheading test, as Gawain had done? Or, did the Lady of the Lake truly wish the damosel to die? If so, why?

Was the Lady of the Lake the same as the great lady Lile of Avelion? Was the damosel some kind of sacrifice, or had she committed some transgression by taking the sword to Camelot? Merlin, in the following chapter (Book 2 Chapter IV), does explain the damosel's history, describing her as false, whereas Balin, before beheading the Lady of the Lake, describes *her* (the Lady) as false; so, who, if anyone, was right? Was Balin right in claiming that this Lady of the Lake was actually an evil sorceress? It's a bit of a conundrum, but then, so are so many facets of the Arthurian legends, which is one of the many things that make them so fascinating.

Rebirth

I was watching *Gardener's World* on Friday 13th of July (landscape gardening is another way in which I like to be creative; although nature always has the last word), the programme being dedicated to some of the islands and coastal gardens around Britain and Ireland.

During a visit to the Isle of Man, a rather cheerful lady was being interviewed. She'd grown up on the island, having moved there with her parents, when she was really young. Referring to the descending mist, she claimed that, according to local tradition, the mist was

sent by the magician Manannan, who used to live on, or in, the hill at the top of the island (she pronounced *Manannan* with the accent on the first syllable, as if the word was kind of falling down stairs. I'm not sure myself, so this is a good time to ask: I thought that the accent was on the second syllable, as in 'banana', making the word long in the middle. Am I wrong, or was her pronunciation a local one?).

Anyway, considering her comment, I was just thinking of how appropriate an example that was of how a character who was possibly originally a kind of god (or perhaps a demi-god: the son of the sea), has become, over the years, a mere magician or one of the faery-folk.

Then I wondered if perhaps the person (or god) known as Manannan, might have originally been a real person. It doesn't seem unfeasible (and I'm sure this has been postulated many times before) to imagine a person being renowned for some great deed or achievement and, over the generations, becoming a hero of gradually greater renown, until he (or she), long after their lifetime, is deified.

Then times change, the stories are forgotten, and the god becomes a fading legend, a magician, one of the Little People, a mere curiosity of folklore and tradition. Then times change again. People become disillusioned with the status quo and look to the old tales, and rebuild half-remembered legends into a new kind of religion, until the old hero becomes a god again, rising up from his forgotten grave, being reborn in the minds and hearts of people still searching for their answers.

Such may well have happened to Arthur (if indeed he ever was real). Perhaps, at some time, one man achieved great things, and became a hero; and after his death still he was lauded, amassing stories from other traditions. Perhaps, many generations before, another man had become a hero and then a god; and then merely a tradition, until another hero came along, joining his deeds to those deeds of years ago, becoming another legend, bearing the memories of a legend of long before.

And then, *his* star having burned brightly, he descended, becoming a mere story, a tradition, a part of folklore; and, perhaps, in years to come, his story may rise again, and Arthur might yet be reborn as a new god in the making. Stranger things have happened.

Fortune's Wheel

Arthur, so the stories claim, saw himself sitting upon Fortune's Wheel, waiting to be dashed into oblivion, unaware that the wheel turns and turns. What is praised is eventually forgotten; but lingering memories are often reborn, and perhaps that is a way in which Arthur will return: not so much when his country needs him, but when hearts and minds, looking for yet another answer, revive the lost legends of Arthur in many, many years from now, building a body of folklore into a giant of a legend. Giving birth to another god of Britain.

It's just a thought, and perhaps a bit of a far-reaching, far-fetched one; but perhaps people, heroes, gods and legends are all sitting on Fortune's Wheel, rising and falling with the passage of time. The greatest heroes, it seems, do not pass into obscurity: they fade into mystery. And curiosity is one of the greatest incentives to keep a legend alive.

• Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley [Omega Books Ltd 1988, ISBN 1 85007 091 1]

The Water Ladies

W M S Russell

Concerning the Arthurian romances, it is generally agreed that, while the *décor* and attitudes are medieval, the plot motifs are largely derived from ancient Celtic religion and folklore.[1]

The Lady of the Lake

The Lady of the Lake appears in six episodes and *personae* in the romances, as follows:

1. In the *Prose Lancelot* of the Vulgate Cycle,[2] she brings up Lancelot and takes him to Arthur's court to be knighted. Later she cures him of a fit of insanity.[3]

The remaining five episodes can all be conveniently found in Malory:[4]

2. She lends the magic sword Excalibur to Arthur, who orders it returned to her when he is dying.
3. She twice saves Arthur's life, first by recovering for him Excalibur, which Morgan le Fay has stolen and given to his opponent in a duel to the death, second by warning him not to put on a garment sent him by Morgan *à la Medea*, which would have burned him to death.
4. She saves Pelleas from his despair and becomes his lover.
5. She tricks Merlin, who is infatuated with her, into telling her magic secrets, and finally magically imprisons him for ever.
6. She falsely accuses Balin's mother, who is burned at the stake, and Balin very understandably cuts her head off.

She has various aliases – Viviane, Niviene, Niniane, Nimue.[5] Because he drew on so many earlier romances, Malory is involved in contradictions: the Lady turns up alive after being beheaded by Balin, and changes her character like a chameleon. In episode 5, in desperation, he calls her 'one of the damosels of the lake', but there is no doubt all five *personae* are identical. Thus in episode 5 she is called Nimue, and in episode 4 she is called Nimue '*the* Damosel of the lake'. In episode 3 she is explicitly identified with the Lady of episode 5. In episode 6, Arthur is offended when Balin executes her, 'for this was a lady I was beholden to', and since this episode is previous to episode 3, he must be identifying her with the Lady of episode 2.

The Lady is thus a mosaic of good and evil, like another water lady, Morgan le Fay, whom I

have earlier discussed.[6] As I observed then, an evil magical female 'represents a matrilineal ancestress, originally benign, seen in the distorting mirror of later patrilineal culture', a goddess turned demon. When there is an admixture of good, this is the return of the repressed good ancestress / goddess. Now the Lady of the Lake is rather more good than bad, whereas Morgan is rather more bad than good. So the origins of the Lady may go back even further than those of Morgan. These origins can of course be found in ancient Celtic beliefs and practices, also reflected in recent folklore. To these matters I now turn.

The Water Goddesses

The Celts were extreme polytheists, with hundreds of deities. The ones associated with water were nearly always goddesses – 'their names may be counted by hundreds'.[7] 'Goddesses protected rivers and springs'.[8] 'The Celtic goddesses have a widespread association with water.'[9] 'The widespread belief that water was governed by female deities still survives today in the predominantly female river names in France and the large number of springs and wells in western Britain and Ireland ascribed to female Christian saints.'[10] 'In modern Welsh all rivers are treated as feminine.'[11]

The Celts took the association of femaleness and water further than other peoples, for instance the Greeks, who had nymphs for springs but usually river gods, whereas the Celts had female deities for both. The Celts certainly had more vestiges of matrilineality than the Greeks: for instance, the heroes of Celtic legends are often named after their mothers, and 'definite traces of matrilineal descent were still remembered by the story-tellers'.[12] We know so many of the goddesses' names because of inscriptions and statues in the temples and shrines erected to them on river banks and at springs and river sources.

'Autrefois, tous les fleuves se trouvaient placés sous la protection d'une déesse' ('In the old days, all the rivers found themselves under the protection of a goddess') in Celtic lands.[13] Some goddesses were specifically associated with river sources, and had temples there, for instance Aventia at Avenches, Vesunna at Périgueux, and Divona at Cahors.[14] At the estuary of the Rhine there were two splendid temples to the goddess Nehalennia, with a magnificent inscribed altar set up by one M Exgingius Agricola of the Celtic tribe Treveri, a salt-merchant.[15] A number of Celtic river goddesses are listed in Table I.

Table I
Celtic River Goddesses

Goddess	*River*	*Source reference*
Abona	Avon (several rivers)	7. 43
Belisama	Mersey	7. 41
Boand	Boyne	9. 47
Brigantia	Brighid, Braint, Brent	14. 35
Clota	Clyde	9. 47
Deva	Dee	9. 47
Icauna	Yonne	7. 43
Matrona	Marne	14. 33
Nic	Neckar	13. 156
Sabrann	Lee	11. Vol 2, 449
Sabrina	Severn	7. 43
Sequana	Seine	7. 43
Sinnan	Shannon	7. 43
Soucanna	Saône	14. 50
Tamesa	Thames	11. Vol 2, 449
Verbeia	Wharfe	9. 295

The names of the lake goddesses do not seem to have survived, unless, which is extremely unlikely, they are recalled by the modern names of lakes. But we do have some names of goddesses of wells and springs, besides those of the river sources already mentioned. The well-nymphs include Acionna, Bormana, Brixia, Carpundia, Clutoida, Ura.[16] Arnemetia presided over the healing springs at Buxton.[17] Near the Roman fort of Brocolitia (Carrawbrough) on Hadrian's Wall are two springs. One was governed by three nymphs shown on a *bas-relief*, the other is *inside* a temple of the goddess Coventina, who is shown on a relief reclining on a water plant and pouring water out of a vessel.[18]

Votive Offerings to Water Goddesses

We know from ancient authors (Caesar, Strabo, Posidonius) that the Celts were in the habit of sacrificing large numbers of costly objects, including weapons, to the goddesses of lakes, springs, wells and rivers, either throwing them into water or depositing them in the water goddesses' shrines.[19] Strabo tells us of a vast treasure in a lake near Toulouse, believed (but not by him) to be the spoils of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, carried off by Brennus and his Celtic army. The treasure was looted in turn in 106 BC by the consul Q

Servilius Caepio.[20] This is an early example of a treasure with a curse on it: Brennus lost a battle and committed suicide, and Caepio was convicted of several offences in 103 BC and died in exile at Smyrna.[21]

In fact there is some doubt whether the Celts got into the temple, but they probably got in briefly before being driven from Delphi by the Greeks, and looted some objects; however, the Toulouse treasure may have been mainly loot from other sources.[22]

These ancient reports explain why vast numbers of often precious objects of Celtic times have been recovered from rivers, springs, wells, lakes and former lakes (peat-bogs, mosses *etc*). 'In Britain it can fairly be said that more than 90% of the known complete weapons of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age come from watery contexts.'[23] Barry Cunliffe has provided maps of Britain to show sites of bogs, lakes and rivers where metal objects have been found. Forty-two of these sites yielded Late Bronze Age vessels, shields and swords, and fifty-five sites yielded Early and Middle Iron Age shields, helmets, swords, vessels, spoons and torcs.[24]

At La Tène, between Lakes Neuchâtel and Bienne,[25] 2500 objects had been thrown in the water, more than a third of them weapons or arms – swords, spears, lances and shields.[26] In the spring of Duchkov, in the Czech Republic, nearly 2000 objects were found, mostly brooches and bracelets.[27] In a peat-bog at Hjortsspring in Denmark, a thirty-foot boat was sunk, with fifty shields, eight swords and 170 spears.[28] Excavations at the source sanctuary of the Seine goddess Sequana produced 190 pieces of wood-carving, including twenty complete statues.[29] In the spring at Bath were many beautiful objects and 10–20,000 coins, many silver and four gold.[30] More than 14,000 coins, with many other objects, had been thrown into Coventina's well.[31] From the former lake of Llyn Cerrig Bach in Anglesey (*llyn* is Welsh for "lake") came many weapons, chariot furniture, cauldrons, and fragments of decorated bronze.[32]

The votive offerings of the Celts were evidently not stinted in quantity. But they were also not stinted in quality. Many of the objects are superb works of art, the product of many hours of highly skilled labour. There are, for instance, pieces with complex and beautiful linear engraved pattern: 'all are "high-status" objects: the panoply of important warriors or high-ranking women. The majority have been found in lakes or rivers.'[33] Barry Cunliffe has provided beautiful coloured illustrations of some of the really sumptuous objects found in the spring at Bath.[34] They were dedicated to the spring Goddess Sulis. Like many Celtic deities, she was identified with a Roman one, and as Sulis Minerva she had a magnificent temple.[35] More beautiful objects, all recovered from water, are well illustrated in a book on Celtic art,[36] and listed in Table II.

Table II
Superb works of art recovered from water

Type of object	*Where found*	*Ref 33 fig no*
ritual flesh-hook	Dunaverney, Ireland	15
bronze figure	R Juine, France	73
decorated cauldron	Gundestrup, Denmark	73-7
scabbard	Thames at Wandsworth	92
scabbard	Thames, Hammersmith	94
scabbard-mount	Standlake, Oxfordshire	95
scabbard	Lisnacroghera, Ireland	96
shield	R Itham, Lincolnshire	101-3
shield	Thames, Battersea	104-5
helmet	Thames, Waterloo Bridge	110

Pewter mask, Bath

Swords in the Water

We have already seen that swords are among the objects offered to goddesses in lakes, rivers, peat-bogs etc. 'Many swords survive by having been committed to water.'[37] Barry Cunliffe provides maps of sites along the Thames where swords have been found, often many to one site.[38] He shows twenty-three such sites with early Iron Age swords, and twenty-one with Middle Iron Age ones. Like the other votive objects, these votive swords were often of very fine workmanship and not only efficient weapons but works of art.

In view of all this, it is no wonder that the Lady of the Lake was able to find among her vast stores of votive objects an exceptionally fine sword to lend to Arthur. With his usual unerring eye for such matters, James Branch Cabell had his greatest hero, Jurgen, simply *give* the magic sword Caliburn to the goddess Anaïtis, whom he had identified with the Lady of the Lake. 'So did the husband of Guenevere win for himself eternal fame with that which Jurgen flung away.'[39]

The Water Fairies

We can now look at later Celtic folklore, to see what became of their water goddesses. 'When paganism had passed away, the goddesses remained as *fées* or fairies haunting spring, or well, or river. By a fairy well Jeanne d'Arc had her first vision.'[40] In many places female saints took over. Holy wells all over Britain, probably originally the domains of the Celtic goddess Briganti, were taken over by her Christian avatar, St Brigid.[41] In Cornwall, holy wells are presided over by St Nunne, St Gundred, St Ruth and Our Lady of Nants.[42] But with the continued advance of patrilineality, many wells have by now been taken over by male saints.

Lakes, however, seem generally to be the preserve of fairies. Certain lake fairies of Wales, known collectively as Gwragedd Annwn,[43] are the subjects of an interesting type of folktale. The most famous of these ladies is the fairy of Llyn y Fan Fach in Carmarthenshire.[44] The tale is quite complicated but, in essence, the fairy marries a mortal, on condition he does not strike her three times. The husband breaks the taboo, though the poor fellow's blows are only light friendly taps, and the fairy returns to the lake. By this time she has had children, and she reappears once briefly to give them a bag of prescriptions, and tell them they will be great physicians. There really does seem to have been a family of physicians in the farm traditionally bestowed on the fairy's children by a medieval prince, the last ones being recorded in the 18th century. No doubt they promoted the tale of their fairy descent, to impress their patients. But they did not invent it, for Sir John Rhys found three other examples of this tale-type in Welsh lakes, including one told by Walter Map (c 1140–1210), the half-Welsh official at the court of Henry II.[45] A rather similar tale is told of a fairy in Lough Inchiquin in Ireland.[46]

Malevolence in water or on land

Among the objects thrown into the spring of the goddess Sulis at Bath were tablets of pewter inscribed with curses, written in Latin but with plenty of Celtic names turning up.[47] This was not an old Celtic practice (the Celts were illiterate until the Roman conquest), but a Celtic adaptation of a Roman practice, itself taken over from the Greeks. The Greeks and Romans generally put curses written on lead tablets in graves, to be implemented by the ghost or by underworld deities, or into the temples of these gods and goddesses.[48] It was natural for the Celts to turn to water goddesses. They did so on a considerable scale: 130 tablets have already been recovered from the spring at Bath.[49] All this shows that already in ancient times a goddess *could* be malevolent. In more recent times, she could turn into a demon.

The water spirits derived from goddesses are often seen as wholly evil and dangerous. People do drown in rivers, and this led to a belief that some rivers *claim* victims at regular intervals. Among rivers claiming one victim a year are the Fulda, the Lahn and the Spey.

La rivière de Drome
A tous les ans cheval ou homme.
(The river Drome, it's clear,
Takes horse or man each year.)
River of Dart, river of Dart.
Every year thou claimest a heart.

The Indre is insatiable:

L'Indre a tous les jours sa proye
Chaque jour quelqu'un s'y noye.
(The Indre daily claims her prey
Someone drowns there every day.)

The rivers are of course acting for their guardian female spirits.[50]

These beliefs obviously hark back to human sacrifice. Caesar mentions sacrificed humans among Celtic votive offerings.[51] On

the Gundestrup cauldron a victim is shown being drowned in a tub of water. Human skulls with other votive objects have been found in a well at Heywood, Wiltshire, and in an underground pool in the River Axe at Wookey Hole. Early Irish literature contains several stories of skulls being thrown into water.[52] But, by a vicious circle, once these beliefs were prevalent they would obviously act as an incentive for (unofficial) human sacrifice, as the year drew to an end without any accidental drowning.

Sometimes the dangerous water spirits are given names. Peg Powler drags children into the Tees and Lancashire streams.[53] The Celts believed in nymphs, usually innocuous, called Niskas. They were usually anonymous, but we know the names of a few – Lerano. Dibons, Dea.[54] By the 10th century AD, Niska has become Nichessa, and after several more name-changes the Niskas finally become Nixies in English and Nixen in German. They are utterly evil, luring people into the waters to drown them. By the 11th century they were considered such a menace that a saint was evoked to deal with them – named, of course, St *Nic*olas. His shrines were situated on river banks, at sources, by fountains, and so on, where he could rescue people from the Nixies.[55]

From another point of view, these evil heiresses of the water goddesses may be seen as the ultimate patrilineal *revanche*. But we have seen that there may also be ambivalence, with echoes of the beneficent ancestress-goddess. In the case of water spirits, this may take two forms:

In the first form an innocent girl becomes a dangerous nixie when she dies. Thus an innocent servant-girl called Peg O'Nell died and became the Nixie of the Ribble, claiming a victim every seven years.[56] But this form of the ambivalence is only the watery version of a very widespread belief that a good and loving person may turn into a monster of hate when he or she dies, for instance the Roman *larva*, the West Indian *duppy*, and the angry ghost of Japan[57] The other form is more interesting.

Grant Allen showed that there are two kinds of human sacrifice. The first, the one everyone knows about, is for propitiation of an existing deity. The other he called the *manufacture* of a deity. A good and wise person is killed, and expected to turn into a good deity who will protect the killers. Sir Richard Burton was visiting a village on the North West Frontier of India, disguised as a Moslem fakir. His knowledge of Moslem devotions greatly impressed the villagers. He was warned to escape, as they were planning to kill him, expecting thus to acquire the protection of a very holy saint in Paradise.[58]

Making a deity of a good person makes a weird sort of sense. But the second form of watery ambivalence is the transformation of a *bad* woman into a good or at least harmless goddess. Ladies called Boand and Sinand arrogantly insulted holy wells. The wells overflowed, engendering the rivers Boyne and Shannon: the ladies were drowned by the rivers and became their goddesses.[59] But the most striking examples are in some of the many Celtic inundation legends, which I will consider from another point of view in the next section.

The most famous of these legends is that of the city of Ys in Brittany. Like most legends, it exists in several different versions.[60] The legend of Ys can be traced back to the 12th century AD, but was probably told long before, and is still told today. It is the most famous Breton legend inside and outside Brittany, and was the basis of Abraham Merritt's superb novel *Creep Shadow Creep*.[61]

The most interesting version runs as follows. Gradlon, king of the Breton district of Cornouaille (not to be confused with Cornwall) sailed North on a campaign, and returned with a mysterious bride. But while they were still at sea, she died giving birth to a daughter, who was thus born on the sea. Her name was either Ahès or Dahud [or Dahut]. Ahès, for reasons that will appear, is related to the Breton word for *key*: Dahud already brings ambivalence into the story, for it means in Breton *the good sorceress*.

When she grows up, Dahud persuades her father to build the city of Ys (Breton *down below*) on very low-lying land on the coast, protected by a dyke and sluice-gate. She has a succession of lovers, whom she has assassinated when she tires of them, but finally this bad woman falls in love with a stranger (in Christian versions the Devil), and steals for him from her father the key of the sluice-gate. The stranger opens this, and a devastating tidal wave sinks the city to the bottom of the sea. Warned by St Gwennolé, Gradlon rides to safety, but when Dahud tries to ride pillion, the horse begins to sink. St Gwennolé touches her with his crucifix, and she disappears in the sea. Gradlon can then

escape, the sole survivor of the city, which has become very wicked.

Beneath the waves, Dahud becomes immortal, a goddess of whom nothing bad is reported. Fishermen see her swimming through the streets of the drowned city. If someone dares to dive to the city, and buys something from one of the citizens, the city will rise to the surface and he will marry Dahud and become the king of the city. Between an immortal princess and a goddess there is little difference.

Wales has a number of legends of lakes forming by floods (which drowned cities) started when the priestess of a well forgetfully or deliberately neglected to close a door that kept the waters in, and in one case (Llyn Syfadon) simply as a divine punishment for the extreme wickedness of a woman.[62] The most famous legend of this kind is that of Cantre'r Gwaelod. Cantre'r means *hundred*, used as in England for a district, and Gwaelod means *down below*. This was a large district, with sixteen towns.[63] The inundation, which sank the whole district, was caused by the priestess of a magic well, who released its waters in revenge for having been raped by Seithennin, son of the king of the land – an appalling vengeance. None of these bad ladies became goddesses, but perhaps this motif was suppressed in an increasingly patrilineal culture.

However, there is a close parallel to the Ys legend in Ireland. Lough Neagh was formed, drowning a town, through the overflow of a magic well, guarded by the king's daughter, Liban, when she omitted to close the well door.[64] Liban lived for a year at the bottom of the lake, and then took the form of a salmon, considered by the Celts the wisest of animals. Three centuries later, she was cheated of immortality by Christian interference with the legend, emerging on land and being baptised by St Congall with the name Muirgen (*sea-born* = Morgan in Welsh and Breton). This is another link with the seaborn Dahud.

The sequence bad woman to good (or at least innocuous) goddess is not confined to the Celts, and the most striking example of all is Greek.[65] Ino was the second wife of Athamas king of Boeotia, and the wickedest stepmother of them all. She sabotaged the cereal crop, and bribed the messengers sent to the Delphic oracle to return with a false message, urging the Boeotians to sacrifice Ino's stepson Phrixus. He was saved by a magic golden winged ram, which flew him to Colchis, where eventually his golden fleece was hung up, to be sought in due time by the Argonauts. Athamas went mad, and pursued Ino, who flung herself into the sea. There she became the wholly beneficent goddess Leucothea, who later saved the life of Odysseus when he was in danger of drowning, by giving him a magic veil.[66]

In view of all these ladies bad on land and good or harmless under water, it is notable that the Lady of the Lake's crimes are committed during long sojourns on land. I have noted that she was more often good than Morgan, and that her origins may therefore go further back. Just how far back can we trace relevant motifs? To provide the background for an answer to this question, I must set the prehistoric scene.

The prehistoric scene

Cavalli-Sforza and his colleagues have worked out a beautiful method of mapping ancient migrations by studying the genetics of present-day populations. The beauty of the method is that it proves the actual movement of peoples, as opposed to the diffusion of their customs, two things liable to be confused in archaeology. In this way it has been shown that more migration has taken place within Europe than in any other continent.[67] Cavalli-Sforza provides a map of the expansion over nearly all Europe of the early Indo-European speakers.[68] The peoples concerned are identified in this way because of the perfect correspondence of the map to the spread of such speakers inferred from linguistics and archaeology.[69] They are usually identified with the Corded Ware material culture, so called because their pots were impressed with cords as decoration before firing, and some neighbouring cultures. The Corded Ware culture flourished from 3500 to 1800 BC.[70] All these peoples came from the (then) Ukrainian steppe, fitting exactly with the origin in Cavalli-Sforza's map, and they were all buried (the men) with battle-axes. These were efficient-looming weapons, surely designed, as Gibbon wrote of the library and harem of the younger Gordian, 'for use rather than for ostentation'.[71]

About the same time, the Beaker Folk (so-called from the unusual shape of their beakers) may have been spreading the proto-Indo-European language all over Western Europe. They were roughly contemporary with the Corded Ware people, and seem to have allied with them in places. Expert archers, they must have usefully complemented those battle-axes in battle. They arrived in Britain around 1800 BC.[72] We know they came themselves, because their skeletons in their Round Barrows are taller and rounder-skulled than the previous natives of Western Europe.[73]

The origins of the Celts must of course be sought much later. The Urnfield people, who cremated their dead and put the ashes in urns, are often thought to be proto-Celts, and may have spoken an early Celtic language. they lived from 1200 to 800 BC.[74] The true Celts are thought to have begun with the Hallstatt culture, named for a great collection of objects found in a cemetery at Hallstatt in the Salzkammergut.[75] The culture lasted until about 500 BC, but there are different views about the culture's beginnings. Some put this as late as 800 BC, others suppose that the Hallstatt and Urnfield cultures overlapped. But there is general agreement that Hallstatt began in the Late Bronze Age, and soon moved into the Iron Age.[76] The more advanced culture named La Tène, from the mass of votive objects in the water there, certainly began around 500 BC,[77] and this second Celtic culture persisted to the Roman conquest, when Roman influences appear in Celtic art.

In the second half of the first millennium BC, the Celts swarmed over Western Europe, including Britain and Ireland, raided deep into Italy and Greece, and even settled in Asia Minor as the Galatians, who were later to receive a letter from St Paul.[78] The Hallstatt culture centred in Bohemia and South Germany, and expanded only a little, but the La Tène outbreak was a veritable explosion of people.[79] Britain received several incursions. A few Umfield people survived to the 7th century BC, and some of them came to Britain.[80] From the 4th to the 1st centuries BC there were at least three waves of true Celts entering Britain, the last, that of the Belgae, being vouched for by Caesar.[81] By the Roman conquest, Britain must have been largely Celtic.

The great expansion was triggered by a natural catastrophe, a drastic climate change.[82] This caused great encroachments by the sea on the coasts of the North Sea and Baltic, and massive flooding inland due to the rise of rivers and overflow of lakes. All this is attested by ancient authors and confirmed by modern geographers and geologists. It happened in the late 6th century BC, just when the great expansion began, and at the same time, many settlements in the Celtic homeland were abandoned.

Markale has pointed out that the inundation in Celtic legend must echo this huge disaster.[83] There are far more inundation legends among the Celts than among any other people. The few involving bad women, which I considered earlier, are only a small fraction of this multitude of legends, in Brittany, Ireland and especially Wales, where they have been collected by Sir John Rhys.[84] The legends were no doubt reinforced by *local* encroachments of the sea and inland floods. In Morbihan Bay the sea has encroached largely since Caesar's time, and a similar encroachment has occurred in Cardigan Bay. Rhys gives several other Welsh examples.[85]

With all these expansions of peoples with efficient weapons, many of the original natives of Western Europe must have been killed, and most of them of them subjected. But some of them were driven, as relict populations, to the extremities of the West. Another of Cavalli-Sforza's genetically determined maps shows that the Basques in the Upper Palaeolithic occupied the very large area of Europe where cave paintings have been found.[86] 'In the Basque country, some folktales and beliefs can be traced to the time of the Franco-Cantabrian cave-painters of the Upper Palaeolithic', including one of a cave-goddess, Mistress of the Animals.[87] The Basques and some of the North Welsh have blood group frequencies different from the rest of Europe.[88] They differ from each other as well, not surprisingly, for the large original native population of Western Europe must have been somewhat heterogeneous. However, it has recently been shown that North Welsh and Basques are similar (and atypical) in their Y chromosomes, confirming their non-Celtic, non-Indo-European status.[89] (Journalists seem to have completely misunderstood this finding.) The Basques and North Welsh also have very unCeltic physiques.[90] The Y chromosome study also suggests there was a relict population in Ireland. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that Irish mythology is unique in the world in beginning, not with the creation of the world or man, but with six ancient invasions of Ireland.[91]

There must have been a time when Celtic languages were spoken all over Western Europe. excluding only the Basques but probably including the North Welsh and Irish. The Celts must therefore have arrived in very large numbers. By contrast, in later centuries, the Franks, Normans and Bulgars conquered and became the ruling classes of France, England and Bulgaria, but were too few to replace the French, English and Slav languages of those lands.

From the Bronze Age to the Dark Ages

We have seen that many votive objects of Late Bronze Age date have been recovered from water in Britain. But we have also seen that the Celtic Hallstatt culture goes back to the Late Bronze Age, and in fact these objects included Hallstatt swords.[92] Can we go further back? At Flag Fen near Peterborough, votive objects were being deposited in water from 'two centuries after the death of King Tutankhamun' (he died in 1343 BC) to 'the lifetime of Christ'.[93] (Incidentally, the excavator, Francis Pryor, states his belief that 'the legends behind King Arthur originate in the Bronze Age'.[94]) The early weapon offerings were Bronze, the later ones iron, showing that the Celts had arrived. The Middle Bronze Age people here may have been Urnfield people, or, if these had not got there, even Beaker folk. Sir Mortimer Wheeler states that in Scandinavia water offerings were being made *throughout* the Bronze Age.[95] In two of the lake fairy legends collected by Rhys, the taboo (which the husband breaks) is touching the fairy with iron – so these legends must have a Bronze Age origin.[96] 'The ancient populations of Gaul, Britain and Ireland deeply influenced Celtic civilisation' (Markale).[97] But the swift transition from bronze to iron offerings at Flag Fen is best explained by a very sensible remark of McCulloch: 'What probably happened was that the Celts, already worshippers of the waters, freely adopted local cults of water wherever they came'.[98]

At the other end of our time-scale, it now seems that pagan practices went on longer than was formerly believed (apart from the ones that continue to the present day, like the pagan religion Asatru in modern Iceland).[99] During the Roman and immediately post-Roman periods in Britain, only one very small church was built, at Silchester, but fourteen pagan temples were built quite late in the Roman occupation, with coin offerings that date them to the fourth and even the fifth centuries. Very few Christian objects are found anywhere except in the villas of the upper classes. It is inferred that even in the fifth century only the upper classes (no doubt including Arthur and his captains) were Christian, the British masses remaining pagan.[100] In seventh-century Gaul, Gregory of Tours reported that people were still placing votives in temples.[101]

It is therefore possible that even after Arthur's death, and when his legend was first

in the making, people at least remembered the practice of presenting votive objects to water goddesses. So this aspect of paganism had a very long run. At any rate we can now be sure that one motif in the story of the Lady of the Lake, the motif that permitted the splendid story of Excalibur, surely her crowning glory, had its origins in the Bronze Age, and was still being formed when Arthur died at Camlann.

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The Lake

Chris Lovegrove

A mermaid found a swimming lad,
Picked him for her own,
Pressed her body to his body,
Laughed; and plunging down
Forgot in cruel happiness
That even lovers drown.
W B Yeats (1928) *The Mermaid*

Why a lake? Why not the Lady of the Wood? the Mountain? the Sea? And where is this Lake? in Britain? in France? in Never Never Land? This is an attempt to consider the wheres and wherefores of the abode of this Lady. It will take us on a convoluted journey; there may well be few certain answers at journey's end but there will be plenty of views of the landscape *en route*.[1]

We will concentrate on our first encounter with the Lady of the Lake – her kidnapping of the infant Lancelot – with a detour to consider her last appearance at story's end; but her liaisons with Merlin we will leave to others.[2]

Lancelot's lake

In the early 13th-century French prose romance, *Lancelot du Lac*,[3] the initial action takes place in Gaul "which is now called France":

In the marches of Gaul and Brittany, long ago, there were two kings. They were brothers, and their wives were sisters ...

The future Lancelot's father is Ban of Benoïc or Benoyc (in Malory, Benwick), his mother Hélène (Elaine in English) and his uncle Bors of Gaunes (possibly Vannes, in Brittany).

To the west of these marches is Brittany, ruled by Aramont, "whom people called Hoel". Aramont-Hoel is overlord of Ban and Bors "and all the land as far as the marches of Auvergne and Gascony" – a large tract of land on the map.

In the south-east of this tract is *la Terre Deserte*, the Waste Land, ruled by the renegade Claudas, lord of Bourges and now vassal of the king of Gaul. Why the Waste Land? Because Aramont, with the support of Uther Pendragon of Britain, had laid waste to this area, leaving only Bourges untouched because Uther "remembered that he was born there".

In the course of time Claudas recovers, takes Ban's castle of Benoïc, and besieges Ban at the small castle of Trebe on the borders of Ban's kingdom. Ban, his queen Elaine, and their baby son Galahad leave surreptitiously to invoke aid from the young king Arthur, and within a short while arrive at a large lake.

"The lake had been called the lake of Diana since pagan times. Diana was queen of Sicily and reigned in the time of the good author Virgil, and the foolish pagan people of that time believed that she was a goddess ... The forest where the lake was was the smallest forest in Gaul and Brittany ... and it was called the Wood in the Valley [*Bois en Val*]."

It is from here that – as Ban dies from a horsefall – the young Galahad, unswaddled and out of his cot, is abducted in full view of his mother by "a damsel holding him stark naked in her lap". Despite Elaine's entreaties the damsel "went straight to the lake and jumped in with her feet together ..."

In despair, Queen Elaine becomes a nun at a nearby abbey, which then becomes known as the Royal Minster (*Moustier Royal*). In time, the king's son (originally christened Galahad) is re-named Lancelot of the Lake by Niniane, the water fairy, and, as is traditionally the case, he travels to Arthur's court in Britain to achieve due recognition.

Now, medieval romances were not primarily written as travel guides, as Anne Lister has reminded us. And yet, with such a wealth of detail, surely it should be possible to identify this lake? The general consensus is that it is a waste of time to do so: Benoïc is "a fictional kingdom somewhere in western France" (Owen 1993, 199) while Malory's guesses that it is Bayonne or Beaune must be very wide of the mark.[4] Nevertheless, let's give it a try.

We are told (Corley 2000, 17) that Benoïc lies between the river Loire and the Arsie. The Loire is hard to miss, but I have not yet located the Arsie. Trebe, on the borders of Benoïc lands, is also impossible to locate, and so the nearby Lake of Diana, in a forest, the Bois en Val, must be lost too. What about the Royal Minster? Here we have a bit of luck.

The prose *Lancelot* was "almost certainly" written a decade or so after the historical queen of England Eleanor of Aquitaine's semi-retirement to the cloisters in 1194 (Owen 1993, 210). The widowed queen entered the great abbey of Fontevrault (modern Fontevraud), situated at "the meeting point of Anjou, Touraine and Poitou" (Delpal 1985, 280) where she was eventually buried with her husband Henry II, their son Richard the Lionheart and their daughter-in-law Isabel of Angoulême. Founded in 1101, Fontevrault's religious community – unusually for the time – consisted of both men and women (monks, nuns, nobles, lepers and ex-prostitutes) ruled over by an Abbess.

Fontevrault, with its woodland setting, a name related to the French word for a fountain or spring,[5] and its royal nunnery (Grand Moûtier) patronised by a widowed queen called Eleanor, must surely be the model and stand-in for the Royal Minster of Trebe associated with Queen Elaine – and therefore the original imagined setting for the abduction and secret upbringing of Lancelot du Lac in the Prose *Lancelot*. The difficulty is that there seems to be no large nearby lake remaining, if there ever was one.

In the lands of Lancelot du Lac

So there have been other claimants for Lancelot du Lac's lake. Bagnoles-de-l'Orne in Normandy, for example, has adopted Lancelot in a big way. It claims that the legend of Arthur and his knights was first written down at the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine at Domfront some twelve miles to the west of Bagnoles. "Since that time, the Bagnoles region and the *bocage* (countryside of small fields surrounded by hedges) have inspired writers to locate the tales of Lancelot du Lac here."[6] And it hosts an annual *Festival au pays de Lancelot du Lac*.

We may take the first assertion with a pinch of salt. It is true that Chrétien de Troyes cites Marie de Champagne, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine by Louis VII of France, as the inspiration for his *Lancelot, Knight of the Cart*. But there seems to be no evidence that this, or his other Arthurian romances, was composed at Domfront. It is also true that Eleanor herself spent time at Domfront (though the claim that she was born there is unsubstantiated); but, like her second husband Henry II, she spent time at many venues in Britain and in France, many for much longer periods than Domfront. Domfront also is supposedly where the perilous Water Bridge ("because the bridge runs under the water") encountered by Lancelot was situated (Begg 1995, 65). The nearby village of Gorron allegedly is all that is left of the kingdom of Gorre, into which Lancelot crossed.[7] But the remains of a ford in the River Varenne at Domfront can hardly be the only possible candidate for the title.[8]

What of Bagnoles-de-l'Orne itself? One might suppose that the name is reminiscent of Benoïc, Lancelot's birthplace, but I haven't yet found this suggested anywhere. The modern spa is set in a long, narrow stretch of woodland called the Forêt des Andaines running off towards Domfront, and a lake formed by the River Vée lies in the town centre, pedalos rather than damsels disturbing the waters within the gorge. The healing thermal waters of the spa, despite legends of a knight and his horse being cured, were only fully exploited in relatively recent times.

A nearby site, Banvou, has also been linked with the Lancelot legend;[9] and although nowadays it is too small even to have a tourist office it has old, possibly post-Roman, remains, though apparently nothing definite. This leaves two other localities with possible Arthurian associations.

The first is Fosse-Arthour, "Arthur's Grave" as we might translate it. This lies to the north-west of Domfront, in a gorge 70 metres deep through which the River Sonce flows into pools and over falls. An account by Hippolyte Sauvage, a collector of Norman folktales, tells how Arthur and his wife resided in caves either side of the river. Arthur was forbidden – by an unnamed water fairy – to join his spouse until after sunset. Needless to say, one day he broke the taboo, wading across to the Bed of the Lovers. The king disappeared into the gulf (or floodwaters swept him away) and his queen, in despair, jumped in after him. Local lore mentions two white ravens who appeared and subsequently protected crops from other birds.[10]

Here is an unusual version of the end of Arthur and Guinevere, all the more strange for their connection with waterfalls in Normandy.[11] Despite the mention of the water fairy, however, Lancelot doesn't appear at all. Speculations suggests that the hermitage of Saint Ortaire west of Bagnoles is evidence of the "memory and name of Arthur" lingering on in the area. This is unlikely, and the unusual form of the name, Arthour – Arthus or Artus is more normal in French and German tradition –

points either to Breton influence (from Arzhul) or recent literary fashion.

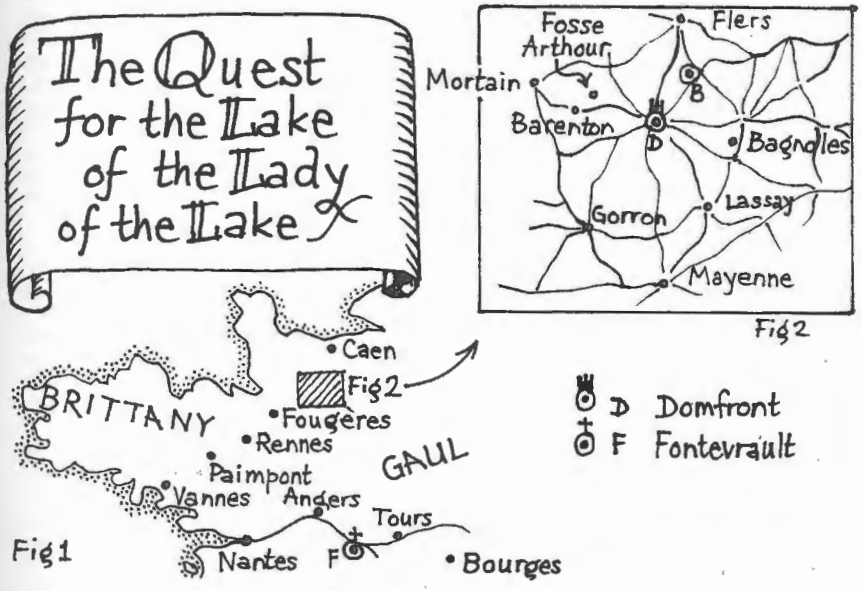
The other Arthurian link is with a certain St Fraimbault. The claim, by René Bansard, is that a Dark Age hermit is the model for Lancelot, made by a series of totally spurious parallels (*eg* both have names linked with lances and lakes, both are high-born, both meet a carter, live in the 6th century in monasteries and die in hermitages, at once achieving saint-like status). In Normandy there are villages named after him, including St-Fraimbault south-west of Domfront, and St-Fraimbault-de-Lassay, situated south of Bagnoles between Lassay and Javron.[12]

This concentration of sites connected with Lancelot in Normandy and its marches may represent centuries of myth-making – some of it very recent – but there was certainly the germ of something that caused the author of the Prose *Lancelot* to set his birthplace and infancy here. Whether or not Lancelot was based on a real person or was a title (Ford 1999) is now immaterial; what could well be represented here is late 12th century harmonising of the motif of a royal child adopted by a water fairy with a particular location and with the burgeoning popularity of Arthurian tales.

Meanwhile, in Brittany such tales survive in profusion; here is a typical story, located in the Forest of Paimpont at the Fontaine de Barenton:

The fairies of Barenton are supposed to be especially the friends of children. There exists a curious old manuscript ... which describes how Butor de la Montagne, on the birth of his son, is desirous that he shall receive the fairies' blessing. The infant is therefore sent, under the care of a trusty knight, to the 'Bois Bersillant' and placed on the enchanted fountain. Before long the little people appear, endowing him with the choicest gifts they have it in their power to bestow. One of them, however, envious of his prospects, dooms him to disappointment in love ... (Johnson 1927, 105).

Speculation places Lancelot's lake by the castle of Comper in the same forest, at the Étang de Comper – renamed, naturally, Viviane's Pool (*eg* Glot 1996, 18–20). However, while Brittany seems to have a respectable history of water-fairies, the Lancelot links seem to have arisen relatively recently, and none have great antiquity.[13]



Lakes of the imagination

From the great formal lakes like those of Versailles to the 'natural' English creations like that of Stourhead, water features have always been an essential of the artificial wildernesses, tamed or otherwise, of the rich. The modern British obsession with garden water features has a long prehistory where paradise was recreated in your own grounds or, if you had no property, in your imagination – for, in a sense, the Lake really only exists in the mind's eye, and it is there we now travel.

Manuel Periáñez (1995) postulated three elements that characterised the *espace lacustre*, the lake of the imagination:[14]

1. unlike the sea, marsh or river it was a stretch of calm water, like a mirror;
2. it was finite, bounded and therefore an interface, a point of transition;
3. its depths represented the unconscious, and a place where time had no hold.

To test his theories Periáñez interrogated the 150,000 entries of the Stith Thompson Motif-Index of folktales. He found that, of the four traditional elements, water easily topped the list ahead of Fire, Earth and Air.[15] Watery themes in total amounted to 1115 entries. When the most important themes from the Index were ranked, Water came joint fourth with Love, following Horse and King (1st), Dog, Tree and Wife (2nd) and Food (3rd).

When he then ranked some of the themes in the Index associated with Water, this is what he found:

1. Sea
2. River
3. Well
4. Bath, and Drowning
5. Stream
6. Lake

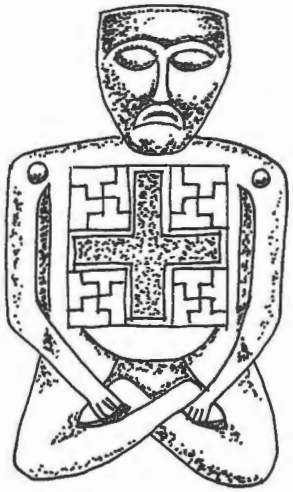
Next, he grouped the motifs associated with lakes into ten families:

1. magic portal (to or from the Otherworld *etc*);
2. natural home for supernatural creatures (monsters, dragons, fairies, giants *etc*);
3. supernatural home for natural creatures (*eg* serpents, cattle, villagers);
4. positive plunge (*eg* healings, disenchantments, rejuvenations);
5. negative plunge (*eg* disappearances, premature ageing);
6. lake dries up or disappears;
7. lake is transformed (into blood or milk) or is transported;
8. supernatural lake (*eg* bottomless, impossibly huge, forbidden);
9. magic objects (*eg* cauldrons, swords);
10. magic events (hero's underwater fight, tests, taboos, revelations *etc*).

Now Periáñez found that while both Seas and Rivers shared these families of motifs, the Lake's special feature was as a place to find tranquillity; however, when its surface was agitated, it functioned exactly like the seas and rivers. Conversely, only occasionally would the sea's surface become "as calm as a lake".

Were his initial propositions substantiated? Periáñez found that, contrary to what he (and perhaps you and I) expected, folktales showed no interest at all in the possible distinguishing qualities of lakes (mirror-like or otherwise); nor were there any "pretentious abstractions" that favoured lakes over other bodies of water or as other than a space in which actions ("moves") can take place.

Now, while this may be a little disappointing for those hoping for the Lake to have a significance that tradition clearly ignores, that doesn't mean that lakes in general, and some lakes in particular, haven't taken possession of one or other of the motifs mentioned above and given them a sense of place. As an example, let us look at the Vietnamese tale of The Lake of the Restored Sword.[16]



The Sword in the Lake

In the time of the Ming dynasty, about 500 years ago, the Chinese dominated Vietnam, burdening the people with taxes and defeating their patriotic forces.

In Thanh Hoa province, a fisherman called Le Than twice threw back into the water an iron bar he had caught in his net. The third time he looked closer and saw it was a sword.

Later, after he had joined the Lam Son district volunteers, his commander-in-chief Le Loi studied the sword, which shone even in the dark of the Le Than's hut. Engraved on the metal were the words, "By the will of Heaven!"

Later, retreating from defeat, Le Loi saw a strange light on top of a banyan tree. It was a sword hilt inlaid with jade. Le Loi found the hilt fitted the fisherman's sword perfectly.

At this sign from Heaven, patriotic morale was lifted and soon the whole country was liberated.

After the Ming had been driven out, Le Loi, now King, took a boat onto Ta Vong Lake in the heart of the Vietnamese capital.

Suddenly a golden tortoise rose from the water and said, "Please be so kind as to return to my master Long Quan, the Emperor of the Kingdom of Waters, the sacred sword that he has entrusted to you."

Le Loi threw the sword into the water, which the golden tortoise swallowed before diving off. Ever since then Ta Vong Lake in Hanoi has been called The Lake of the Restored Sword. South-east Asia has many such legends of miraculous swords, we are told. The swords may "fall from the sky into water ... or may be hung from a tree, or be forged out of miraculous stones". In Ngoc Son pagoda, on a small island in the Lake of the Restored Sword, the body of a 500-year-old tortoise caught in 1963 is displayed; supposedly its age helps date the story to the reign of Le Loi half a millennium before.

This Vietnamese folktale, given location and apparently authenticated by the capture of the long-lived tortoise, shares some motifs with the tale of the gift of Excalibur to Arthur, thousands of miles away, even if the supernatural agency is male. In the European tale, the motifs are of the magic sword received from the Lady of the Lake (Stith Thompson D813.1.1) and the magic sword returned to the lake whence it was received, taken back by a lake-spirit (D878.1).[17]

But the location of the receiving or returning of this votive offering is disputed, and unlike the Vietnamese tale there is no relic to authenticate any one site. There are several claimants, however, and they are all in Britain, as it is agreed that the site of Excalibur's return is predicated by the battle of Camlann.

Dozmary Pool on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall, though a dramatic site, is rather a distance from the nearest contender for Camlann, Slaughter Bridge. Near Helston the largest lake in Cornwall, Loe Pool, was favoured by Tennyson, but has no Camlann nearby, nor have Bosherston Fish Pools in Dyfed, another claimant.

Pomparles Bridge near Glastonbury and Broomlee Lough near Hadrian's Wall have slightly more logic, with the Somerset river Cam and Castlesteads or *Camboglana* Roman fort respectively at hand. Broomlee Lough at least has a genuine legend of a 12th-century Dane called Oswald hiding treasure in the lough, though with no mention of a water fairy,[18] while on the Wall there is well-known sleeping king legend at nearby Sewingshields Castle.

Llyn Llydaw ("Lake Brittany"?) to the east of Snowdon has rather more going for it in terms of wealth of local lore, as Arthur's last stand and burial cairn were located a mile from Snowdon's summit, and a cave of sleeping warriors was reported by the lake itself. However, the casting of the sword into the lake was only a fancy of the scholar, Sir John Rhys, seen (as he himself confessed) "with the eyes of Malory".[19]

Rhys was much more impressed with the legend of Marchlyn Mawr – or Great Horse Lake – about five miles north of Snowdon as the crow flies. A farmer's son manages to find a treasure cave for the second time – this in itself is unusual – and, although no sleeping heroes are present, attempts to take the crown of Arthur from a table of pure gold. Before he can do this, however, thunderous sounds send him outside in fear. And then, in the middle of the lake

he beheld a coracle containing three women, the fairest that the eyes of men ever fell on. They were being quickly rowed to the mouth of the cave, but the dread aspect of him who rowed was enough to send thrills of horror through the strongest of men.

He flees home, but is never the same again.[20] We never find out who these fair women are, nor who the dread rower is. And though these "ladies of the lake" seem to arrive because of the breaking of a taboo (attempted theft of a

votive object?), no sword is mentioned, which Rhys ruefully acknowledged.

Many Welsh lakes have hidden realms like that of the Lady of the Lake, of course. Lake Tegid, near Bala in central Wales, has an invisible island associated with Ceridwen. Llyn Cwm Llwch ("Dust Valley Lake") below the Brecon Beacons – themselves with a slight Arthurian tale – have a story of an invisible fairy island, once accessible through an underground passage from a hidden doorway by the lake. And, between the Beacons and the Black Mountains, Llyn Syfaddan or Llangors Lake [21] has an artificial island dwelling or *crannog*, but this is associated with a 9th–10th century local royal dynasty, not water fairies. Fired clay, slags and fragments of metal suggested metalworking, but – sadly – no evidence of the forging of swords.

The Water Baby

Welsh lake-fairies, the Gwragedd Annwn, were never sinister, as Briggs (1976) has pointed out, and while "beautiful and desirable ... are not sirens or nixies" (as in the Grimm tale *Die Nixe im Teich*). This seems, therefore, to rule out a Welsh Niniane or Nimue as abductor of the young Lancelot. So, not in Wales, nor in Dumnonia, nor Cumbria. The Lake is everywhere, and yet nowhere – the very stuff of fiction, it seems. We now turn, finally, to a Victorian treatment of the tale to see how literary artifice parallels some of the folklore motifs we have noted.

Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* is an uneven masterpiece, almost impossible to categorise. A chimney-sweep, Tom, ostensibly drowns, but turns into a water-baby. Watched over by a series of water-fairies – all ultimately the same personage, the Queen of the Fairies – he moves from a new innocence to maturity in the watery world to become "a great man of science". The whole reflects Kingsley's various obsessions – for example Darwinian evolution, Victorian education, natural history, Christian socialism – written under the guise of "A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby". For present purposes, it reflects how much he was steeped in classical mythology, fantastic literature and folklore, relating it all to events in his personal life. Here then are some of the undercurrents that intriguingly link *The Water-Babies* to the story of Lancelot and the Lady of the Lake.

First, Malory and Spenser "from first to last [were] among his most beloved books". At the end of *The Water-Babies* Tom is said to have "won his spurs in the great battle," and this merely echoes what Kingsley wrote elsewhere, that the "qualifications required for a perfect naturalist are as many and as lofty as were required ... for the perfect knight errant of the middle-ages."

Privately, Kingsley used to enjoy what he called his lonely "woodland baths" in streams at the height of summer, which inspired in him strong metaphysical feelings. It is hardly surprising that that Kingsley the Anglican rector places Tom's self-immersion in a stream on a midsummer's day, traditionally the feast of John the Baptist.

And it is natural for Kingsley the classicist to want to emulate all those mythological figures who found themselves, like him, drawn to the water. These include Glaucus the fisherman who, "seized with a strange longing" to follow his fish under the waves, became a marine god, and Hylas the friend of Heracles who, during the quest for the Golden Fleece, sat down by the side of a lake where "the water nymphs came up to look at him, and loved him, and carried him down under the lake to be their playfellow, for ever happy and young".[22]

There was a persistent Helston tradition about Herbert Kingsley, younger brother of Charles, when both were at Helston Grammar School in 1834. When Herbert was 14 he stole, then sold, a silver spoon before running away and spending a night in the open. After being caught and punished, he developed rheumatic fever. Just when he was becoming better, he suddenly and tragically died.

The usual explanation is that his heart had been weakened by the fever, but locally the whisper was that Herbert had drowned himself in Loe Pool – presumably because of the shame attached to his crime and

punishment.[23] If the Loe Pool story is true, there is a dreadful irony that it is also the place described in *The Passing of Arthur* by Kingsley's friend Tennyson with the lines

I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag,

and where Escalibur is finally committed.[24]

Even if the suicide story cannot be substantiated, we have enough evidence to see how the story of the removal of Lancelot to the lake may have been echoed by the story of Tom the climbing boy. Whatever the truth of the matter, the young Charles was deeply affected by the death of his brother, and may have partly written *The Water-Babies* to exorcise this dreadful event.

What of the Lady of the Lake? Like the Welsh lake women, the fairies in *The Water-Babies* are not malign – quite the reverse. From the mysterious Irishwoman, who reveals herself as the Queen of the Fairies, through Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby and her severe sister Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, and on to Mother Carey, they all have a deep care for living things.

We don't have to look far for one of Kingsley's water-fairy models – the landscape of modern West Yorkshire, where the opening scenes of the book are set. In Malhamdale, not far from Malham Tarn, between the dramatic limestone theatres of Malham Cove and Gordale Scar, we find Janet's Foss. This is a small waterfall – *foss* being *force*, of Scandinavian origin – behind which is a limestone cave and pool, home of Janet or Gennet, Queen of the Fairies.

Unlike the Lancastrian Jenny Greenteeth, or the North Yorkshire Jeannie of Biggersdale, or the Teesside Peg Powler, or Peg o'Nell at Waddow Hall by the Ribble, or the witch of Biard's Leap near Lincoln, or the witch of Wookey Hole, or the witch Orddu, daughter of Orwen from Pen Nant Gofid who was bested by Arthur, or the mother of Grendel who was bested by Beowulf, she is not reported as malevolent, although she lives in a cave by a stream. But she must be related to the benign Welsh lake fairies that Kingsley and his friend Tom Hughes might have encountered on a trip to Snowdonia in 1856,[25] and of course to the eponymous figure of Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, Kingsley's favourite reading matter.

Fairy tales

What are we to make of all this? Is there a conclusion we can draw? Perhaps! The French romancers well knew (as W B Yeats did too) that no mortal could live below the water's surface, and they therefore made it clear that the Lady of the Lake used magic to create the illusion that she and her court lived at the bottom of the pool – wherever it was. Kingsley's moral in *The Water-Babies* says much the same:

Remember always ... that this is all a fairy tale, and only fun and pretence: and, therefore, you are not to believe a word of it, even if it is true.

The lake is in itself a seductive place. Those who swim in pools should have a healthy respect for their dangerous siren calls, especially in high summer, and avoid the fatal mistake of Joseph Knecht in Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*. Those who survive the experience may emerge changed forever.

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[1] Writing as one who finds a swim hard to resist – whether, for example, a freezing dip in a pool fed by glacial melt-waters in the Pyrenees or Alps, or a chance to scuba-dive in the Red Sea – this essay is in the nature of an exorcism!

[2] *eg* Anne Berthelot (2000) "Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake" *Arthuriana 10.1*, 55–81

[3] Corley (2000). This anonymous romance, and the *Lanzelet* by the Swiss Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, share some common themes – infant abduction by a water fay or mermaid, childhood in a magical kingdom of women, ignorance of identity and championship of Guenevere – based, it is assumed, on a lost Anglo-Norman source (Schultz 1996).

[4] "The lake itself ... is geographically vague" writes Geoffrey Ashe in *The Arthurian Handbook* ("Lady of the Lake" page 327). Brian Edward Rise writes, in a paraphrase of the *Handbook* entry, "there is no geographically identifiable lake" (www.pantheon.org/mythica/articles/l/lady_of_the_lake.html).

[5] Fontevrault breaks down into Font-Evrault, the spring of Evraud. Evrault may be the same as Evroult or Ebrulf, a 6th-century saint who founded several monasteries in the Normandy area. The famous kitchen at the Abbey is called Tour Evraud.

[6] www.bagnoles-de-lome.com/uk/tourism/tour_cultur.htm

[7] Owen (1987): "The vagueness of the situation and topography of Bademagu's kingdom of Gorre may reflect its likely otherworld origins ... The general lack of geographical precision in much of this romance is not necessarily an indication of carelessness on Chrétien's part, contributing to the air of incongruity and mystery that he appears to be consciously cultivating" (513).

[8] Domfront was named after the Dark Age St Front who founded his woodland hermitage in the mid-6th century overlooking the 70-metre gorge of the Varenne. It wasn't until the 11th century that a castle was built.

[9] The boundaries of three bishoprics – Maine, Sées and Dol – meet at Vieux Bourg, the former site of the town of Banvou between Domfront and Dompierre. In the Prose *Lancelot* the hero's home is set on the boundaries of Brittany and Gaul.

[10] Begg (1995) 66, for the ravens and fairy; and http://perso.wanadoo.fr/randolande/circuit2.htm (23 July 2001) for walks (in French) with la Fosse-Arthour as a base.

[11] Two miles to the east of the nearby hamlet called La Fosse is another hamlet called Le Fay – curiously this is Morgan's epithet (in Modern French this however would be *la Fée*).

[12] Begg (1995) 68f, and Georges Bertin at http://perso.wanadoo.fr/g.bertin/%20saint%20graal.htm

[13] This is despite the 11th-century Château de Joyeuse-Garde in Finistère, Brittany, now in ruins (Fairbaim 1983, 78).

[14] Mygale.org/mpzga/mpzweb1024x768/Eaux/lac94.html

[15] Water 280, Fire 240, Earth 100 Air 38.

[16] English language version at http://www.nhandan.org.vn/english/folklore/20000930.html

[17] Briggs (1976) 467

[18] "A lake with some depths" *The National Trust Magazine 92* Spring 2001, 6. See also last issue's *Old News*.

[19] Quoted in Snell (1926) 172f.

[20] Snell (1926) 173.

[21] Brecenanmere *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, under AD 916 (Redknap 1991).

[22] From Charles Kingsley (1855) *Glaucus, or the Wonders of the Shore*, and (1855) *The Heroes*

[23] Susan Chitty (19) *The Beast and the Monk*, 44–5; at Helston, Kingsley "practised a kind of pantheism, peopling favourite moorland springs with attendant nymphs and writing poems about them," notes Chitty in her *Charles Kingsley's Landscape* (1976, David & Charles) 19

[24] Kingsley's *Hypatia* has an incident which reflects contemporary reports of his own terrible reaction to the news of Herbert's death: "(Philammon) had never heard a human being shriek but once ... a boy bathing on the opposite Nile bank, whom a crocodile had dragged down ... and that scream, faint and distant as it came across the mighty tide, had [w]rung intolerable in his ears for days ..."

[25] F E Kingsley (1883) *Charles Kingsley: his letters and memories of his life* [one volume edition by Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, London] 182–7

The Arabian Knights of the Round Table?

Ian Brown

Whilst chatting about legends and fairy stories with some friends recently, I recalled reading again *The Arabian Nights* a couple of years back and noticing a few similarities to aspects of some of the Arthurian legends in the tale "The Fisherman and the Jinee".

Now, maybe these similarities are purely coincidental, or maybe, at some point, there just might have been either an exchange of some story elements between two cultures, or perhaps a common origin behind them. I'm kind of throwing these ideas into the melting pot, as food for thought, to see what comes to the surface. Perhaps further research, by someone who does know what they're talking about, will reveal more similarities, or maybe disprove the notion entirely.

Anyway, the story goes pretty much as follows:

The Fisherman and the Genie

There once lived a poor fisherman, with a wife, two daughters and a son to support. He habitually cast his net four times a day. On his fourth and final catch during one particularly fruitless day, he drew a copper jar from the sea, sealed with the signet of Solomon.

Naturally enough, when the seal was removed, a genie appeared (spelt Jinnee in the Burton translation). The genie had been trapped inside the jar by Solomon, eighteen hundred years before. At first, he threatened to kill the fisherman (he was in a bit of a bad mood after his long confinement), but the fisherman managed to trap him in the jar again, and only released the genie after he solemnly promised to spare the fisherman's life and make him rich.

The genie thereupon led the fisherman to a lake, which was filled with four different types of fish: white, red, blue and yellow. Upon the genie's advice, the fisherman cast his net, and caught one of each type of fish. He was then advised to take them to the king, and then the genie left him alone.

The fisherman was richly rewarded for his unusual gift for the king, and the fish were taken to be cooked.

Whilst they were roasting in the pan, though, the kitchen wall burst open, a mysterious lady entered and demanded to know of the fish whether they were still keeping their pledge. The fish all replied that they were, upon which point the lady departed whence she'd come, and the cook, quite naturally, fainted away dead.

When the cook revived, the fish, quite blackened, uttered their dying words, "His staff broke in his first bout," and the cook fainted again.

This incident was reported to the king, who ordered the fisherman to catch four of the same kind of fish, so that they might be cooked before his grand vizier.

This was done and, under the grand vizier's supervision, the fish were roasted and exactly the same thing happened.

Upon the king's orders, the fisherman then caught four more of these fish, and the king himself now witnessed the stange scene.

His curiosity naturally piqued, he asked the fisherman where he had caught the fish, and was directed to a lake on the other side of a nearby mountain.

The king mounted an expedition and, much to everyone's surprise, a desert wasteland was discovered on the other side of the mountain, where nobody had been previously aware of any desert. In a valley surrounded by four mountains, they found the lake, wherein were the four types of fish.

The king decided to continue nother, alone, and after a couple of days, he reached an empty palace, wherein lay a grieving king, his lower body turned to stone, so that he could not move. His body was scarred by constant whipping.

This wounded king, whose land was the wasteland desert through which the visiting king had passed, related how his unfaithful had enchanted him into this condition and regularly whipped him for wounding the man with whom she continued have her adulterous affair. The four kinds of fish were the people of his kingdom: the Moslems became white fish, the Magicians red, the Christians blue and the Jews yellow.

The visiting king immediately went to the queen's paramour and slew him; then, disguising himself as her lover, he demanded that the enchanted king be restored to health: a demand to which she acceded. He then demanded that the fish be restored to their human shape, and she complied with these wishes, too, the wasteland now becoming a bustling bazaar within a busy town: "the city in the Black Islands."

Upon the faithless queen's return, the visiting king slew her and the two kings became firm friends.

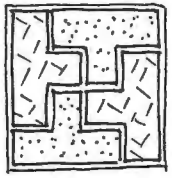
It transpired that the previously wounded king's land was actually much further away from the visiting king's land than it had appeared to be. Through the family of the fisherman, the two nations were united (by marrying his two daughters to the two kings) and all was restored to peace and plenty.

Comparisons

Now, there are a few elements here with which I can readily make comparisons with the Arthurian legends. There may be more, and those which I've noticed could be coincidental.

- First of all, we have a wounded king, disabled from the waist down. He presides over a wasteland (a land now inhabited by fish: a "Fisher King"?), which is restored when a visiting champion restores him to health.
- We have the adulterous liaison bringing about the king's initial downfall: now, that could be similar to Arthur's situation, or simply be a popular literary convention.
- There is the evil sorceress involved (a Morgan-le-Fay type of figure, or another literary convention?).
- The claim of the fried fish, that "His staff broke in his first bout": is there a connection there with the Dolorous Stroke, or am I stretching things there?
- Then there is the part about the four different kinds of fish, which drew my attention with regards to an entirely different part of the Arthurian legends: in particular, Arthur's campaign at Loch Lomond, as recounted in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*. During the campaign, Arthur shows Hoel a nearby pool (Thorpe 1966, 220), which is twenty feet square and five feet deep, and has four different kinds of fish in it, each kind living in a different corner of the pool. Where on earth did that story come from?

Anyway, these coincidences have intrigued me, in particular the idea of the wounded king and his wasteland of fish, so, as I said, I thought I'd drop the idea into the pot, to see if anyone better informed than me can make more of a meal of it.



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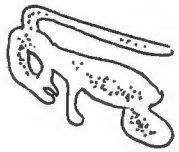
old news



This issue's *Old News* begins, appropriately, with some watery news items.

WHAT A MONSTER!

In Adomnán's *Life of St Columba* there is a chapter headed "How a water beast was driven off by the power of [Columba]'s prayer". This tale, located on the River Ness in Scotland, is claimed as a genuine early Dark Age sighting of the **Loch Ness** Monster.

In Highland folklore, the dangerous water-horse of lochs and the sea is called *each uisge*, and is supposedly depicted on Pictish stones. There are links with the Manx *cabbyll ushtey*, the shape-shifting Scottish *kelpie* and the Welsh *afanc* or *ceffyl dwr*.

In appearance it has a strong resemblance to the fabulous Greek water-horse, the Hippocampus, the steed of Poseidon, god of the sea and earthquakes. The hippocampus had the head and forequarters of a horse and tail and hindquarters of a fish or dolphin, and the Pictish water-horse does indeed look like a cross between a dolphin and a horse.

A recent theory has claimed that Nessie is a phenomenon caused by seismic activity from the Great Glen fault on which the loch nestles. Dr Luigi Piccardi from the Florence Centro di Studio dell'Appennino e delle Catene Peri-mediterranee presented his theory at *Earth System Processes*, a joint meeting in Edinburgh between the Geological Society of London and the Geological Society of America. "When there are small shocks, it can create a commotion on the water surface. Along the fault there can be gas emissions, which can be linked to the activity of the fault," he is quoted as saying.

However, Hilary Heason of the British Geological Survey said there was no evidence that the Great Glen Fault was still active and therefore the suggestion that earthquake foreshocks were mistaken for a monster was "insupportable". But this may not be the last word on the matter of this water monster.

• Richard Sharpe *transl* (1995) *Adomnán of Iona: Life of St Columba* [Penguin, Harmondsworth] 175f, 330

• Katherine Briggs (1976) *A Dictionary of Fairies* [Allen Lane, London]

• Roger Highfield "Is the real Nessie just a case of the shakes?" *The Daily Telegraph* June 27 2001

• "Nessie quake theory 'flawed'" *The Daily Telegraph* June 29 2001

AVANT MOI, LE DELUGE

Tales of **submerged lands** are widespread along western Celtic coasts, the most famous being the legends of the Breton city of Ker-Ys and the Welsh Cantre'r Gwaelod. For most people, however, the best-known inundation is of course Noah's Flood.

In 1998 the American geologists Walter Pitman and William Ryan suggested that the Biblical deluge (and others like the flood in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*) were memories of a cataclysmic event around 7500 years ago, in the Neolithic period, that turned the Black Sea Basin from a freshwater lake into a saltwater sea.

Core samples had suggested that the shoreline of the ancient lake should lie 500 feet below the present surface. More recent research, sponsored by the American National Geographic Society, confirmed this by using sonar.

When the waters of the Mediterranean breached the Bosporus Valley, after sea levels rose following the end of the last Ice Age, two distinct layers were created in the newly formed Black Sea – an oxygenated upper level composed of the original lake freshwater, and an anoxic (oxygen-less) level made up of the heavier Mediterranean saltwater which had sunk below.

This lower level, below 600 feet, would have encouraged the formation of amounts of hydrogen sulphide so toxic that no life could exist there – including organisms that would

destroy later shipwrecks. So the theory went! Would the reality of modern investigations confirm the preservation of ancient vessels?

In between this lower and the upper level was discovered a fluctuating layer composed of a mixture of anoxic and oxygenated water, and from this level, and below, were indeed found shipwrecks sufficiently preserved to identify them as being from the late Roman and early Byzantine periods, contemporary with Britain's Dark Ages.

In fact, as far as one 1500-year-old vessel was concerned, "no one had ever seen a wooden ship from the classical world in this state of preservation. The cargo it carried would be intact too – and filled with answers to the conjectures of a generation of historians and nautical archaeologists."

Bob Ballard and his team hope to return with Hercules, "the world's first robotic deep-water archaeological excavation vehicle", to search out more exciting clues in 2002.

• Robin McKie "Deluge that swept in a new Europe" *The Observer* March 1 1998

• Robert D Ballard (2001) "The Deep Black Sea" *National Geographic Vol 199 No 5* May 2001 52–69

EARTH, AIR AND FIRE

The remaining four elements – earth, air and fire – have also been giving us much to think about. Snow-covered **Mount Etna**, the largest and, at over 3000 metres, the highest active volcano in Europe, has been demonstrating its power in recent weeks. These eruptions are the most serious since the mid-eighties and, before that, 1928.

In Sicily it is known as Monte Gibello, from the Arabic *gebel*, meaning hill or mount (which is also the first element of Gibraltar, *Gebel al Tariq*). Classical mythology attributes its eruptions either to Enceladus, the most powerful of the giants, who was chained under Etna for challenging the gods, or to Vulcan who, with the help of the Cyclops, established his forge there. It is from the slopes of Etna that Proserpina (Persephone) was said to have been abducted by Pluto.

At least three separate 13th-century accounts place King Arthur also under Etna. Gervase of Tilbury reported "many records of sightings" as well as an account of Arthur reclining on a couch in a palace reached through a cleft in the rocks. Caesarius of Heisterbach recounts a German tale of a lost horse to be found at Arthur's court on Mount Gyber. "This same mountain emits flames, like Vulcan". And Gatto Lupesco in a fictional account (but no doubt based on fact) described two English knights looking for Arthur at Mongibello.

Arthur thus seems to have become an avatar of Enceladus. Modern day Sicilians by all accounts respect but do not fear Etna. Neapolitans, however, seem mostly oblivious to the dangers posed by Vesuvius, well overdue a major eruption.

• H A Guerber (2000) *The Myths of Greece Rome* [Wordsworth Editions / FLS Books, London]

• Richard White *ed* (1997) *King Arthur in legend and history* [J M Dent, London] 523–5

DARK AGE BEACH PARTIES

Recent archaeological work has revealed the remains of ten "huge" early sixth-century beach parties at Bantham Sands in south Devon, perhaps celebrating the arrival of Byzantine traders.

Where the River Avon reaches the sea near Burgh Island, after its journey from Dartmoor, 530 sherds of Mediterranean wine amphorae have been recovered by Exeter Archaeology. These fragments originated mainly from North Africa, Palestine and Turkey, and represent the second largest quantity of such imported pottery in Britain – the largest being Tintagel.

In addition, 2400 pieces of animal bone – beef, pork, mutton, venison, rabbit, duck and chicken – were evidence of feasting on a large scale. Four open-air camp fires and fragments of high-status North African tableware helped fill out the picture.

What was being traded here? Twenty pieces of metal slag from a hearth were found, and the site is less than a mile from a "probable" Byzantine whipwreck from which forty-three ingots of tin have been recovered by divers. Examination has shown that the ingots were made on a sandy surface, conceivably this same beach near Bantham.

The mystery is where exactly was the Dumnonian high-status or royal site that the goods were destined for. Just as intriguing is the suggestion that Dumnonia might have "briefly become a semi-detached part of the Byzantine empire", especially as Procopius at the same period was picturing Britain as a barbaric backwater. Yet, a century later, the *Life* of the Patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almsgiver, included a story of a merchant ship

sailing from Egypt to Britain with a cargo of corn to relieve a famine, and returning with tin, so Procopius must have been badly informed.

Press reports might imply that the Bantham site is a new discovery. In fact imported pottery has been known from the site for some decades now and from the nearby port of Mothecombe (eg Fox 1964 and 1973, 196). What is new is the scale of the evidence, with the promise of more to come.

• David Keys "Evidence of Dark Age beach parties suggests Celts were connoisseurs of Byzantine wine" *The Independent* August 6 2001

• Aileen Fox (1964) *South West England* [Thames & Hudson; David & Charles 1973]

DARK AGE CAERWENT

Recently reported excavations at Caerwent (1981–1995) have provided sparse evidence of Dark Age activity in the forum-basilica area, in the centre of the modern Welsh village. The great hall of the basilica was given over to metal-working for a while in the 4th century – a similar practice was evident in contemporary Silchester – with a suite of rooms behind it surviving into the early 5th century, dated by worn late 4th-century Theodosian coins, deposited or discarded perhaps as late as AD 425. "And then – above the levels dated by these coins – nothing."

Elsewhere in Caerwent, investigations however had already suggested that several houses in the Roman town were occupied (or re-occupied) into the fifth century, while Early Medieval burials were found outside the east gate in 1973 (4th–9th centuries) and inside the town by the present church of St Tathan. The Irish St Tathan (or Tatheus) was said to have been given the town by the local king, Caradoc ab Ynyr, at the end of the 5th century as the site for a monastery, though there remains no material evidence for this, as yet.

• Richard Brewer and Peter Guest "Caerwent: *Venta Silurum*" *Current Archaeology 174* June 2001, 232–246

Richard Brewer (1993) *Caerwent Roman Town* [CADW, Cardiff]

A PREHISTORIC BALDER

Ötzi the famous "iceman" may have died in the Alps over five thousand years ago but, ten years after his discovery, he is still capable of surprises. It was thought that he had got lost in a snowstorm or somehow injured himself before succumbing to the cold, but recent research suggests he may have been murdered.

Recent X-rays and CT scans seem to show a flint arrowhead between his left shoulder bone and the ribs, though of a different shape to Ötzi's own arrowheads. Only a limited autopsy can decide for certain; all that's clear is that if he was shot, it was from behind. Unlike the Scandinavian god Balder, who was also shot, Ötzi did not receive a boat funeral.

• Stephanie Pain "Was it murder? The mystery surrounding the death of Ötzi the iceman just deepened" *New Scientist 2302* August 4 2001

THE CASTE AMONG THE PIDJINS?

Scientists from India and the US compared the genetic signatures of Indians of all castes with Europeans and east Asians. Controversially, their study – unfortunately publication details are not given – concludes "that the upper castes are genetically closer to Europeans and the lower castes to Asians". In addition, Indians "have a common maternal ancestry but different paternal stock".

Not unnaturally, this has led to heated debate with its implications that Brahmins (the priestly caste) and Shatriyas or Kshatriyas (the warrior caste) are "really Europeans inside", and resurrects old arguments about the Aryans and Dravidians with their unfortunate resonances of Nazi ideology.

Aryan – the term meant "noble" in Hindu and Persian usage – was commonly used by philologists for the Indo-European family of languages, and was then further perverted to mean non-Semitic or to exclude any "undesirable" ethnic minority. Early philological theories postulated that because Sanskrit and European languages are similar then this was evidence for Europeans having invaded India. Sadly for these theories, archaeology provides no evidence for violent invasion.

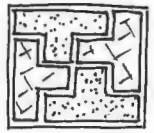
The study's conclusion is that there was "a migration, mainly of males, that brought the west Eurasians here, not invasion. The white men didn't come in plundering and pillaging. They just drifted in and ... became sufficiently popular to begin cohabiting with the local women ..." Anthropologist Shiv Vishwanathan says that "we shouldn't be afraid of truth or data. Evidence shrinks to shape with time."

• Supriya Bezbaruah and Samrat Choudhury (*India Today* July 30), in "European forefathers cast their genes into the caste system," in *The Editor* magazine, *The Guardian* August 4 2001

"Quel chant éternel à ces échoes modernes ...?"

Aragon's "Lancelot"

Geoff Sawers



Louis Aragon's wartime potery is widely anthologised; any good collection of second world war verse will contain either the moving, passionate, 'The Lilacs & the Roses', or 'Tapestry of the Great Terror', or another of the small handful of Aragon's poems that deal with the German invasion of France; or else the bitterly ironic 'Twenty Year-old's Waltz', in which he describes the parades of inadequately armed French troops marching off to fight against far superior forces. Neither quite pacifist nor patriot, Aragon had been among these troops himself, though twice the age of many of his fellow-conscripts; and unlike them he remembered the events of twenty years before.

But Aragon continued to write and to publish poetry throughout the war period. His poems appeared in a variety of French journals, large and small. 'The Lilacs & the Roses' had actually appeared, albeit slightly amended, in *Le Figaro*, in September 1940; other poems made their way into literary journals in Switzerland and Tunisia. A collected edition of these works was published in Paris, but suppressed by the Germans. After this, Aragon's work could no longer express direct political sentiments, but he continued to speak, twisting and concealing but never abandoning the essentially rebellious spirit at the heart of his work. Two of Aragon's most arcane and recondite poems of this period were published in *Les Cahiers du Rhône* in April 1942. These were 'Imité de Camoëns' and 'Lancelot'. Both were later included in *Les Yeux d'Elsa*, published in French in London (Édition *La France Libre*, 1943), but I have never seen either translated into English. This is a great shame, because it is stunning, terrifying work.

'Lancelot'

I'd like to concentrate on 'Lancelot'. This poem is a mock-heroic ballad in twenty four-line stanzas; a surreal, even nightmarish parade of imagery. It opens thus:

Ce siècle a sur la mort quarante-deux fenêtres
Les nègres se sont tus dans Montmartre
obscurci ...
'This century opens forty-two windows on
Death
Montmartre's dark streets strewn with black
corpses ...'

Immediately, the feel is both agonised and nostalgic, but also firmly rooted in the present. There is much imagery of new technologies; technicolor cartoons, the cinema, the wireless. Cyril Connolly, introducing the London edition of these poems, disliked these modern usuages, feeling that they were inclined to jar, but recognised that "without the spirit which introduces such material into poetry there would be none of its successes". But the jarring is quite deliberate. When Aragon broke with the Surrealist movement at the end of the 1920s it was because he saw their work as elitist, and in these poems he crams present-day imagery into traditional rhymes and metre in an attempt to make his poetry accessible to all, to drive home the horror of which he is writing. The phoney War and France's ignominious defeat were long gone; now he had to wake his countrymen up to the horrors of collaboration.

'The minstrel argues of iambics and dactyls
but the butcher already has him hung on a
hook.
He waves his little toy rattles and scans the
dead
unaware of the coming plague ...'

The imagery piles up in bewildering profusion. Radio waves drift down from the sky; a guillotine waits (for whom?) in a wintry dawn. A music-hall melodrama becomes a high mass; young people dance dreamily, they don't seem to notice the bawling, blaspheming

singer. 'Go and hide your sobs in the brothel sheets!' the poet orders, trying to wake his audience from their maudlin escapism. A pigeon coos, a ship shatters; and becomes an acanthus flower on a painter's canvas. Aragon seems to aim, like Rimbaud before him, at complete derangement of the senses. We are almost half way into the poem before the poet reveals who 'he', the narrator actually is:

Je suis ce chevalier qu'on dit de la charrette ...

and the penny begins to drop. The knight who hid on the cart? We had almost forgotten the title by this stage. And then there are references to a Lady whom the knight serves, of course; who demands such terrible things of him that his heart (literally) begins to bleed, '... even as [his] knee gives way'.

The lady to whom he must remain true is, of course, La France. The whole poem is, in effect, a pæan to the French Resistance, whose marginal existence Aragon equates with Lancelot's years in the wilderness. He is careful to say that, 'like Tristan', his madness is feigned. The connections which Aragon is making with the medieval tales of British (and Breton) resistance to the Saxon, though couched in the most surreal language, are inescapable.

A foreign land

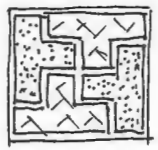
It is worth quoting the poem's climactic final lines in full:

La cendre en gardera le parfum de la France

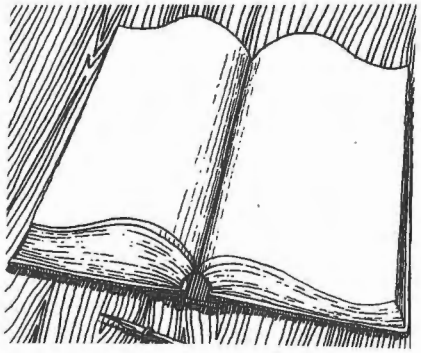
Et les passants du ciel en parleront entre eux
O terre où je naquis couleur de mes
blasphèmes
En étrange pays dans mon pays lui-même
Je sais bien ce que c'est qu'un amour
malheureux

'The ashes still hold the perfume of France

And the wandering angels mutter amongst
themselves
Oh pristine earth smeared with my
blasphemies!
Truly this is just a bitter, cursed love
To find my own country a foreign land.'



To appear in *Les Cahiers du Rhône*, this poem must have been passed by the Vichy censors. I honestly have no idea how.



Martin Biddle and others
King Arthur's Round Table:
an archaeological investigation
Boydell Press 2000 £30.00
0 85115 626 6 hb 533pp illus

For centuries the huge wooden disk known as 'King Arthur's Round Table' has hung on the wall of Winchester's mediaeval Great Hall. In 1976 it was temporarily taken down for examination and restoration, and this action initiated a programme of research and analysis by a team led by Martin Biddle. This has taken a quarter of a century to come to fruition in the form of this study.

This splendid work must now be regarded as the definitive statement about the Round Table. It is scholarly, well-presented, and thoroughly argued. It is also handsomely illustrated with 28 colour plates, 169 figures, and 20 tables. The book is split into a series of themed sections, each prefaced by an introduction, consisting of a series of specialist essays. Thus there are sections on the background and context of the table (covering the Round Table in mediaeval Arthurian literature, mediaeval furniture, and the Great Hall), the table's physical make-up and construction, the painting on the table, an analysis of the dates of the table's making, hanging and painting and its purpose, and finally the table's symbolic position in history and literature in the mediaeval period. Martin Biddle himself contributes the analysis section, and introductions to the essays by specialists in the remaining sections. Some of these are more technical than others; I would guess that most non-specialist readers will be happy to skip to the conclusions of, for example, the chapters on tree-ring and radio-carbon dating.

The book's sub-title 'An Archaeological Investigation' is perhaps a curious one: archaeology in its classical sense is just about the only research process not employed on the table. Documentary research into the historical sources, literary analysis of mediaeval texts, the study of mediaeval craftsmanship and carpentry techniques, art-history and its influence on royal culture, dating by radiocarbon and tree-ring analysis, X-ray photography, and simple physical examination are, however, all employed.

What are the main conclusions of this historical detective story? It is thought that the table was made in the later 13th century, perhaps for a tournament of Edward I held at Winchester in 1290. However, it was not painted until *c* 1516 for Henry VIII. By this time it had ceased to be used as a table and had become a symbol of Tudor dynastic power and royal continuity, to be displayed. However, this is merely to scratch the surface of what this work covers. There are a whole series of fascinating avenues explored in this collaborative study; just two example are the essay about the table as an item of mediaeval furniture, which underlies the uniqueness of the table, and the essay about the names on the table, which shows they are strongly but by no means exclusively influenced by Malory.

Reading this book we learn nothing of the historical Arthur (if there was one), and only little about the Arthur of mediaeval legend. Rather we learn a great deal about mediaeval society and the activities and beliefs of the English monarchy. But perhaps what we learn most of all is how widely the disciplines of modern historical research can now range and how effectively this interdisciplinary approach can be applied to illuminate the past. Highly recommended.

Nick Grant

Martin Biddle and others
King Arthur's Round Table:
an archaeological investigation
Boydell Press 2000 £30.00
0 85115 626 6 hb 533pp illus

My own favoured approach to the Arthurian legends is mainly through a fascination with mythology and a constant search for inspiration for artwork, so a thorough review of this book is really beyond my scope. For now, I'll simply give a general view for anyone interested.

This is an incredibly detailed, very well documented and researched work, begun with the scientific investigation of the Round Table at Winchester when it was taken temporarily from the wall in 1976, and culminating subsequent research and findings by 1990. The list of contributors is impressive in itself, and the whole work is compiled in a clear, detailed manner, built upon solid research and investigation, with any speculation based more on sensible deduction than guesswork.

Beginning with a history of the development of the idea of the Round Table in Arthurian legend and literature, the book goes on to describe the history of Winchester, especially of the Great Hall, moving on to discuss the impact of the very idea of a Round Table (and it's interesting to note just how dramatic a statement a Round Table would have been, going against the very grain of hierarchical structure), and comparing the table's design to other mediaeval tables.

Naturally, although the book is chiefly concerned with the Round Table as an object, references are made to the threefold meaning of the term: the Round Table as a piece of furniture, as an institution, and as a gathering of people around the table.

The text then describes the lowering of the table from the wall, before moving on to discuss the findings of the various methods of investigation to confirm its structure, its possible function, its history and its dating. This is followed by discussions of historical context and documentary evidence, to arrive at tentative dates for the creation and subsequent alterations of the Round Table.

Amongst many interesting points covered in the book, there's an intriguing section on the names documented around the table, written by Sally Badham and Martin Biddle, discussing their possible origins, with an aim of using these sources to help date the original painting. Among these names, a few are misnomers, such as 'Sir Lybyus Dyconyus' instead of 'Le Bel Desconneu': The Fair Unknown (identified by John Flemming in Chapter 1) and 'Sir Degore' who is possibly a knight 'de Gore' (page 280).

There's another knight discussed, Sir Alynore (page 281) who has not yet been positively identified. In this chapter, he is tentatively identified as Sir Alymere, one of the knights appearing in the final battle of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*. I was wondering if this might be another corrupted name, perhaps coming from a knight who was known as 'le Noir', though I do feel the identity already suggested is the most likely.

This is a serious and invaluable work, which will doubtless be a highly regarded reference sources for years to come.

Ian Brown

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen
Of giants: sex, monsters, and the Middle Ages
Medieval Cultures Volume 17
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London 1999 £13.00
0 8166 3217 0 pb 235pp illus

You might suspect that any academic title with the word "sex" in the title is probably Freudian in inspiration. With *Of Giants*, one of the jumping-off points is the psychoanalytical approach of Jacques Lacan which, in part, re-interprets Freudian theory through linguistic criticism. In this book this can result in what almost seems a parody of the academic verbal jungle: "a gestalt radically estranging subjectivity from somacity... This mis-construction is a kind of teratogenesis... The giant can be perceived only synecdochically..."

But persevere! For this book reveals an aspect of medieval – particularly medieval Arthurian – literature that is rarely confronted, and more usually shied away from. As Cohen points out, as long ago as 1936 J R R Tolkien put the monsters in *Beowulf* at the centre, not the periphery, of academic criticism; and monsters are of course what a general reader goes for unhesitatingly. The same applies to Arthurian literature, and Cohen addresses this, though in rather more difficult language.

Consider these monsters – the Titans, Goliath, Grendel, Gogmagog, Ysbaddaden, Ymir, the giant of Mont Saint Michel, Harpin de la Montagne, the Green Knight, the Carl of Carlisle, Gargantua, the inhabitants of Brobdingnag, the giants in *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Jack the Giant Killer,* King Kong, the BFG, the jolly Green Giant – which speak to us of terror, comedy, cannibalism, rape, sadism, dismemberment, stupidity, folk humour, folk wisdom, advertising and, usually, maleness. And, of course, size matters ... What is there about these figures that simultaneously repels and attracts us?

Cohen suggests that the giant is crucial to an understanding of the way identity is formed. He (and it is usually, but not always, a "he") has a frightening otherness and yet is

strangely familiar; he is what the author and others call an "intimate stranger". In examining the transformations of the Giant, Cohen draws mainly on those "within a specifically English national imaginery", many of which figure in Arthurian romance. So persevere, and you should gain insights into how these creatures – and we ourselves – tick.

Chris Lovegrove

Sir Thomas Malory **Le Morte d'Arthur**
complete, unabridged, new illustrated edition
edited by John Matthews, illustrated by Anna-Marie Ferguson, foreword: Michael Moorcock
Cassell 2000 £30.00 hb

This is an excellent book, and Anna-Marie Ferguson shows a true love of the legends with her imaginative and sympathetic depictions of the tales, blending clear renditions of Malory's own imagery with elements inspired by more ancient Celtic traditions. Here is a work in veritable harmony with the atmosphere of Malory's wonderful epic.

It is accessible, too. The print is clear and, for anyone not used to Malory, very easy to read: the typeface itself has been chosen specifically for this purpose (such attention to detail helps to make this book a winner). John Matthews has been true to the original (as explained in his introduction), only editing where he felt essential to cover errors in earlier editions, and where it seemed necessary to maintain clarity in the body of the text. Michael Moorcock's foreword is full of admiration for Malory and sets the tone for the enjoyment of the whole work.

And so we come to Anna-Marie's illustrations; and they are a feast for the eye and the imagination. One advantage of Malory's work is that it is a magical playing field for the mind's eye and offers any artist endless scope for development; but that in itself poses its own problems, because sometimes a drawing can fall short of the imagination. It is just as easy to detract from a great work, by producing an unsympathetic illustration, as it is to enhance it with apt illumination. Anna-Marie has quite evidently been aware of this and has chosen her subjects well, taking elements of Malory's text into her work, whilst allowing herself the freedom to let her own imagination run free. The result is a beautiful and quite enchanting blend of a kind of pseudo-mediaeval world intermixed with pagan imagery.

There are 62 illustrations in all, half in colour and half in black and white line work. There is a freedom of expression to the black and white drawings, and a delicacy of touch to the colour illustrations, that balance each other well and blend subtly with the mysteries of the stories themselves.

To dip in at random and describe but a few:

- "The Sword in the Stone" (illustration 2; black and white): Anna-Marie has taken Malory's description of the sword embedded in an anvil upon a stone, and has then embellished this by making the stone a richly carbed pedestal, set within an overgrown Churchyard, wherein masks of Green Men adorn two guardian trees. The image therefore brings older traditions right into Malory's tale, and the mystery hinted at in the picture helps to set the tone for the whole of the book.
- "Tintagil Castle" (illustration 1, on the previous page; colour): this is not Tintagil Castle exactly as it was, but the atmosphere is spot on, and it is most definitely in keeping with the tone of Malory's description. The castle is formidable and, at the same time, a safe haven; and the brooding skies and clutching waves add depth and power to the painting.
- "The Maid of Astolat" (illustration 51; colour): a tender depiction of purity, which,

I feel, would have captured the hearts of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. This is such a delicate work, without any of the heaviness or morbidity which could so easily have accompanied the death barget of the Fair Maiden of Astolat.

I could go on: there are so many to choose from, and I'm sure that various people will have their different favourites. From the clever expressions of "Tristram and Isoud" (Illustration 29; colour) to the pageantry, gradeur and fantasy of "Elaine comes to Camelot" (Illustration 39; colour), these enchanting illustrations capture the whole range of emotions within *Le Morte d'Arthur* and bring an already epic work to rich and wonderful life.

Whether adding to your own library of Arthurian works, or introducing someone new to the legends of King Arthur, I would be very happy to highly recommend this book. It is a marvel and, in Annan-Maire's own words ("The Illustration of Malory" on page xxxvii), this is "a true labour of love".

Ian Brown

Roger Sherman Loomis *ed*
Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a collaborative history
Oxford University Press 1959; special edition for Sandpiper Books Ltd 2001
hb 574pp
41 articles plus prologue, epilogue, index

This reprint, it must first be said, is extraordinary value for money. The work of thirty scholars all eminent in the field, it discusses in some depth not just the well-known Arthurian texts, verse and prose, but also, in its fine-seined trawl from the Dark Ages to Malory, an immense number of less well-known works, including such specialist areas as Breton *lais*, works in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Dutch and from Scandinavia, miscellaneous French romances, and obscurities and fragments in Middle English.

Inevitably, since this is, not an update, but an unaltered reprint of a work forty-two years old, there are statements that subsequent scholarship might amend. Inevitably, also, with so many authors involved there are contradictions and repetitions (the technique of interlacing – stories interrupted by other stories so frequent to Malory's ruthless innovation of linear beginning to end narratives – is explained several times by different writers, for example).

Inevitably, also, because most individual articles are relatively short, conclusions, often controversial or at any rate arguable ones, are frequently given without fully developed reasoning or evidence to lead to them.

However, extensive sourcing and footnotes *are* given, including references to opposing views. As the editor pointed out, no attempt was made by him to impose uniformity of view, but he did insist on reference to divergent views: "differences of opinion ... serve the useful purpose of reminding the reader that these issues are not closed."

Some articles try to cover subjects in too little space – an extreme example being Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson's "The Arthur of History", valiantly attempting to cover all the bases in just eleven pages, the Welsh Triads, despite their importance, likewise being somewhat brusquely dealt with compared to other early Celtic Arthur and Myrddin material – whilst others arguably tend to sprawl till the reader loses sight of the forest for treeloads of detail.

Yet such minor inconsistencies of quality are all but inevitable, so many individuals facing each their corner of so vast a topic, comparable to a medieval cathedral in its organic, haphazard growth, and are far outweighed by the riches to be found.

There are numerous fascinating discussions, for example, of folktale linkages, parallels, and borrowings – those to the deflowering of the well-maidens and theft of their cups as "first cause" of the Wasteland in the *Elucidation* of Chrétien's *Perceval*, for example, to the goat-riding image of Arthur in Southern Italy, or the several discussions of the related dragon / loathly hag episodes where the knight's kiss will restore the enchanted maiden, and its relation to Irish and Middle East folklore, possible sources also discussed for the Arthur and Gorlagon story of the king changed by his wife to a werewolf, then accused falsely of devouring a king's child. (The former is sourced as Irish, as Perceval's childhood is seen as echoing that of Finn and Cuchullain, while the latter is seen as coming from the Mideast *via* Breton Crusaders, although in neither case does the evidence as given seem particularly decisive as to direction of travel of the tale's essence.) Among the many other episodes with folktale parallels discussed are those of gabs or

boasting contests, fights at fords, and exchanges of winnings.

Comments on the literary value of some of the works were brusque (if intriguing in the case of the suggestions that manuscript copying shops employed hack house writers – so Grub Street had far earlier roots!), and many fascinating suggestions (that, for example, the author of the alliterative *Morte Artur* was a West Yorkshireman, and indeed more generally that the alliterative revival of the 14th century was more precisely a resurfacing of a form that had never gone away, but had gone unrecorded because up till then English-speakers were not high enough on the social scale to afford manuscript copiers) were made as brisk asides, where this reader wished for more discussion. Food for thought aplenty, but, like *nouvelle cuisine*, times when there wasn't enough on the plate!

But these are minor carpings at a book which should be a must for every Arthurian – and, as a final incentive, I must mention just a few of the wonderful serendipities that make this volume a dipping-in book *par excellence* as well as a key field guide to the overviewing of its topic.

- Item: that in the *Lancercost Chronicles* for the year 1216 is noted that the Bishop of Worcester, while out hunting, was entertained by King Arthur in his otherworld mansion, and, as evidence of the meeting, given the power to produce butterflies from his closed fist whenever he wished.
- Item: that a rare 15th century French prose romance, Arsenal 5229, brings into the Arthurian story "copper automata operated by levers and a box of quicksilver".
- Item: that in Thomas' version of the Tristan story, the hero set up an underground statue of Yseult, complete with a cavity filled with perfume which sent sweet odours from "her" mouth.
- Item: that, in the late French prose romance *Le Chevalier du Papegau*, Arthur has at his saddle-bow a parrot which sings him songs of encouragement, and encounters a dwarf's son grown gigantic after being suckled by a unicorn. The same tale also includes a fish-creature which disguises itself as a knight in armour and his horse – when the shield is cut, it bleeds – and a supposedly deadly spinning wheel, blocking a bridge, which is disarmed just by cutting the wire that operates it!
- Item: explaining how to make Greek Fire, the *Historia Meriadoci* completes its (otherwise practical) list of ingredients with "the blood of a red-headed man" (watch out, Chris Evans!) "and water-snakes fed on a human cadaver".
- Item: that the 14th century verse romance *Sir Perceval of Galles* vividly catches the eternal vagaries of British weather when Saracen skull-bones hop about on the grass like hail-stones.
- Item: Eugene Vinaver, plumping firmly in his Malory article for the Worcestershire candidate, includes in a lively account of that Sir Thomas' violent career how, during his second attack in two days on the Cistercian Abbey of Combe, he had "broken eighteen doors" – presumably making him popular at least with joiners in search of work!

This is a book to read again and again.

Steve Sneyd

• *£18.99 incl p&p from Sandpiper distribution subsidiary* Postscript *(cheques payable to / credit card orders / book tokens accepted), 24 Langroyd Road, London SW17 7PL*

Arthur Cotterell
The Encyclopaedia of Mythology
Lorenz Books 1996 £16.95
1 85967 164 0 (1996 edition)
1 85833 963 4 (1998 edition) hb
Arthur Cotterell and Rachel Storm
The Ultimate Encyclopaedia of Mythology
Lorenz Books 1999 £25.00
0 7548 0091 1 hb

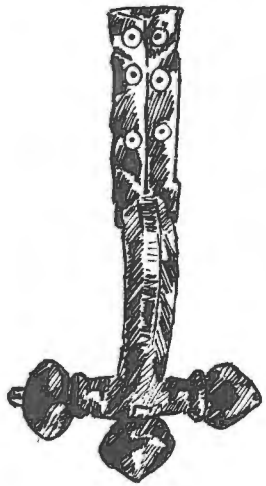
I'm mentioning both of these very splendid books together, because the second is an extension of the first.

In 1996, I bought a copy of Arthur Cotterells's encyclopaedia and was very impressed. It contains three main sections, each compiled alphabetically, covering Classical, Celtic and Norse mythology. The format is clear and concise, and the illustrations quite beautiful, including work by many superb artists, right from Rubens through to Alan Lee and beyond. If anyone has seen a copy of Ronan Coghlan's excellent *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends* (Element Books 1993), I would put this work on a similar par. It is beautiful to look at, and a good reference source, too.

And, three years later, Lorenz Books published a greater work, which I have just got hold of: *The Ultimate Encyclopaedia*. Again, the Classical, Celtic and Norse sections, by Cotterell, are the same; and now there are additional sections, by Rachel Storm, on the myths of Egypt and West Asia; South and Central Asia; and East Asia.

If the first format for the encyclopaedia was an invaluable and handsome reference source, then this larger work is truly well worthwhile.

Ian Brown



Crossbow brooch, Canterbury

Thomas Bulfinch
The Illustrated Age of Fable
Frances Lincoln Ltd 1998 £14.99
0 7112 1613 4 pb illus

Thomas Bulfinch's original *The Age of Fable* was published in 1855. This new edition has been graced with some lively and wonderfully colourful illustrations, especially from some of the great masters such as Michaelangelo and Titian. At the back of the book are genealogies of the Greek gods, followed by a very clear index of the artists and artwork used in the book. Although not an Arthurian work, it is a very good source of information on classical mythology; and, with its bright and inspiring illustrations, is a joy to read.

Ian Brown

Ellen Swift
The End of the Western Roman Empire: an archaeological investigation
Tempus Publishing 2000 £14.99
0 7524 1478 X pb illus

As Dr Swift acknowledges, "the End of the Roman Empire is a misleading term to use for the changes at the end of the fourth century and in the fifth century. The end of official Roman authority would perhaps be more accurate." The thrust of this book, distilled from her doctoral research, is that the archaeology of personal items may help chart the gradual transition from Western Empire to Medieval Europe, but that it still leaves many questions unanswered.

This book is plentifully illustrated with articles such as jewellery – bracelets, necklaces and arm-rings, for example – and status symbols – crossbow brooches and belt buckles and fittings, together with distribution maps. The story they seem to tell is a complex one, as you maight expect. Finds from the military frontiers of the Danube, Rhine and, later, the Meuse differ from more civilian areas, but the picture changes over time. Arm-rings seem to have evolved from male weapon-arm items of adornment to become generalised female jewellery. Status symbols like the so-called crossbow brooch begin as military badges of office but by later centuries are made in precious metals for non-military or non-Roman individuals (such as the general Stilicho's young son or the Frankish king Childeric).

She charts too how designs for bracelets, say, in some cases crossed provincial boundaries and in others had a limited distribution, and how certain barbarian fashions influenced Roman civilian dress so that it becomes difficult to distinguish Germans from Roman citizens. As well as being fascinating in its own right, the presentation of this research has implications for those trying to identify a clear division between native Briton and immigrant Saxon.

On a personal level, it helped to put some Dark Age finds from the Pendragon-sponsored dig at Llanelen into a wider context. It also raised the question of whether an Arthur-type figure ever wore a so-called crossbow brooch. Picture the scenario: an eager 12th century monk leaps into a trench to grasp at a cruciform metal object in an old grave at Glastonbury ... No! Banish the thought!

Chris Lovegrove

Philip Wilkinson
What the Romans did for us
Boxtree 2000 £18.99
0 7522 1902 2 pb

This is a friendly kind of book, evidently aimed at the popular market, for general family reading, to accompany the popular BBC2 television series for general family viewing, presented by the ever-enthusiastic Adam Hart-Davis (who provides the foreword for this book).

It actually takes a good deal of research and knowledge to produce a book as apparently straightforward and simple as this is, and the bibliography does indeed suggest some good reading for anyone wishing to take their interest in history further. So, the book in itself is really pretty much for anyone with more than a passing interest in history: a kind of attention-grabber, a potted version of what happened before and after the Romans came.

It is interesting, and should catch the imagination of a wide range of age groups, giving some idea of the innovations which the Romans brought with them. As a work designed to reach a wide and popular market, it does its job well enough.

Ian Brown

Steve Sneyd and John Light
Neolithon: poems and drawings born of ancient stories
Kite Modern Poetry Series K T 100
K T Publications 2001 £4.95
0 907759 18 1 pb 60pp

This is a highly accessible collection of pieces by two accomplished poets, decorated by John Light's simple but effective black and white illustrations. The only direct Arthurian connection is in John's *Stone Deaf* – "Four millennia since / these stones were raised, / mighty, colossal, huge: / they shatter words. / Merlin's puny magic / ephemeral / beside the ancient men / who forged this ring ..." – but perusal of all these miniatures repays the effort, whether to note the references to "wind-driven ghosts / of ancient Britons" in *Yeavering Bell* or to ponder on the unanswered questions posed by almost all the poems.

The work of the two poets complement each other well, from Steve's often intense, word-rich contributions to John's deceptively simple gems. This is a pleasing tome to place in your pocket for that trip to Rollright, Stanton Drew or Castlerigg (OS grid refs are given), or to dip into from the comfort of your armchair. The format is attractive with its sans-serif font, interspersed drawings and overall design incorporating at most two poems to a page. There are nice conceits too, like John's visual *Duddo Stones Collage*, with part of the text giving the profile of the monument.

Neolithon is available by post from K T Publications, 16 Fane Close, Stamford, Lincs PE9 1HG for £5.50 (£8.00 overseas).

Chris Lovegrove

book worm

FACTUAL

Boydell & Brewer have some tempting new titles coming up in the next few months. The most recent is Richard Barber's ***Legends of Arthur*** [0 85115 837 4 £30.00], an anthology which shows how poets and writers, ancient and modern, have created new tales around Arthurian heroes or told the same story in different ways. Arthur, Gawain, Tristan and others are all presented in two contrasting versions in this 488-page hardback. Meanwhile, ***King Arthur in America***, edited by Alan and Barbara Tepa Lupack [0 85991 630 8], will be issued in paperback in October, priced £16.99 or thereabouts; two separate reviews in *Pendragon* rated the hardback highly.

Edited by Giorgio Ausenda, ***After Empire: towards an ethnology of Europe's barbarians*** [0 85115 853 6 £25.00] is a collection of studies focusing on the customs and beliefs of east European migrants into the declining Roman Empire and the effects on indigenous peoples such as the Celts. On a different note, James Rattue's ***The Living Stream*** [0 85115 848 X], to be re-published in paperback in October (192pp, price unknown), bills itself as "a history of holy wells from the pagan cult of water to the Christian wells of the middle ages" concentrating on the British Isles.

FICTION

From the American *Scavenger's Newsletter #208*, June 2001 [noted by Steve Sneyd] comes the announcement of the Aurora Awards for various literary publications in English and French – suggesting some Canadian involvement. The award for the Best Short-Form Work in English went to a poem by Marcie Tentchoff called "Surrendering the Blade", from ***The Doom of Camelot*** [Green Knight Publishing] – presumably featuring Excalibur and the Lady of the Lake.

Steve also spotted, in *Metro* (August 1 2001), an interview with the singularly named Bidisha. Her second novel, ***Too Fast To Live*** [Duck Editions paperback 2000 £9.99] is described as a modern thriller based on the legend of King Arthur. "I just loved Anglo-Saxon and Middle English at Oxford and then I fell in love with *Morte D'Arthur* with its superfluous detail and tight plot. It really is a thriller. I love crime films, such as the old Scorsese movies, and I really wanted to mix those two loves – do the King Arthur story in a way which included racial and sexual reversals and put in some filmic, spare, details."

Andrew Smith of *Ceridwen's Cauldron* has however decried *Too Fast To Live*'s lack of psychological insight, while praising A L Kennedy's ***Everything You Need*** [Vintage paperback 2000 £6.99] as "an immensely powerful and successful novel from Scotland's greatest living writer". Kennedy's novel, like Bidisha's, sets an Arthurian plot (in this case *Perlesvaus*) in the present, but rather more successfully.

PUBLISHERS

The good news is that **Llanerch Press** has taken over the titles formerly published by Llanerch Publishers [see also last issue's *BookWorm* and this issue's *PenDragon*]. Their autumn booklist will include new and imminent titles as well as existing publications. They can be contacted at
Penbryn Lodge, Pandy, Cribyn, Lampeter,
Ceredigion SA48 7QH
or by telephone or fax at (01570) 470567 or by e-mail at enquiries@llanerch-publishers.co.uk

King Arthur Publications are produced by Richard White, who established The King Arthur Centre in 1982 to disseminate his self-published titles on a number of subjects. These currently include Neighbourhood Watch, local traffic schemes, Council Tax and the Enfield Archaeological Society library. Of more Arthurian interest are two booklets – ***How not to deal with a hoaxer*** (described as "a cautionary tale with an Arthurian backdrop") and ***King Arthur's greatest battle: is 2003 the 1500th anniversary?*** published in August 2001. Further information is available from
Dr Richard White, 106 Roding Lane North,
Woodford Bridge, Woodford Green,
Essex IG8 8LJ
or phone 020 8551 4113. Incidentally, this author is not to be confused with the Richard White who edited the comprehensive compendium *King Arthur in legend and history* (Dent 1997).

*Pen*Dragon *Extra*

APOLLO'S BOLTS

Just a few comments on the ongoing, and fascinating, correspondence concerning Sennacherib *et al* ("Bolts from the blue" *29/1* 8f). Is too literal a translation being put on the "fire (and blasts) from Heaven"? That is, is a punishment inflicted by God / the gods, and described thus, being assumed to be factual, to suit our literal 20th century minds?

Philip Clapham draws our attention to Herodotus, who "associated the event with mice and bows" – we are talking Apollo here, surely, two of whose epithets were Apollo Smintheos (the Greek word for mouse) and Lord (sometimes King) of the Silver (sometimes Golden) Bow. Philip did mention Apollo in his original article, but then moved on.

Long before the Greeks adopted Apollo, he fought against them (that is, with the Trojans) in the Trojan War, when he smote the Greek camp with the plague. Sound familiar?! This was about 12–1300 BC, long before Sennacherib, and even longer before Herodotus. Letopolis, although Egyptian, had a Greek name – and is it anything to do with Leto, who was Apollo's Mother?

I agree that certain elements seem to occur in myths down the ages, and that myth was alive and well in the Old Testament, just as it was in the "history" of the Trojan War, and of Arthur. What fulfilment we all get from trying to sort it out!!

Dapne Phillips, High Wycombe

◆ *See also "Another bolt from the blue" last issue.*

CHIVALRY IS NAT DEDE

Many thanks for the latest edition of your stimulating and interesting magazine. Thank you, too, for including my article "The War Lord". I referred to the concept of chivalry – the concept rather than whether or not it was adhered to by most of the knights *etc.* Like Professor Russell, our new and welcome President, "I have always vaguely assumed that chivalry was a wholly fine and commendable concept," although he goes on to add "totally ignored by the knights and men-at-arms of medieval Europe", in his review of Kaeuper's *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* [last issue]. My article did assume that the concept of chivalry was practised to some extent, and that it did have some ideals, as, I think, most people have thought. Are we all wrong? I have, of course, no quarrel with the scholarship of the above-mentioned book, but, as I questioned in my article on the subject of history, is it all true?

Even in thoroughly well documented evidence from history there can be exaggeration, distortion, self-aggandisement and even lies on the part of those who documented it at the time and thus passed it down to our times. Some facts are provable, of course, but some are not. Even corroborative evidence can be influenced by personal aspirations, whishes for popular acclaim, and fashions in literary taste can give rise to twisting of facts.

Prowess is mentioned as being the most important thing to the knights. In the Martial Arts prowess is mastery of one's particular discipline, perfection, not belligerence. I based my comments on this knowledge, assuming that medieval prowess would be the same, obeying the same criteria. Prowess is the ability to conquer, but not to abuse such ability. To hit the target, not demolish it! Women admire men of toughness and courage, not just brutes. It is very strange that such churlish men would honour ladies, even if they might rape peasant girls! I suspect that with the latter it was more a question of opportunity; consent with some, and perhaps a smack in the eye, or another region, from other girls. Men are not the only ones who can feel aggression ...

We must necessarily accept that the world is far from perfect, and has been pretty awful in the past, but there is doubtless another side to the story. There must have been some reasonable behaviour if one can have any confidence at all in the human race. Otherwise it can only be assumed that, as the Greeks used to say, "Men are not Gods", and our planet won't last much longer! Women of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your virginity – but make quite sure you pick a man who knows how to treat a lady! (I did enjoy and appreciate Professor's article "An Ill-Made Knight: Sir Thomas Malory". Dare I say, I hope Sir Thomas wasn't typical!)

Pamela Harvey, Edmonton, London

EVENTS AND COURSES

The **Edinburgh City Art Centre** has planned an Arthurian exhibition called ***The Quest for Camelot***. Subtitled *The Arthurian Legend in Art*, this promises to be an impressive occasion, with numerous other Arthurian events. The exhibition runs from November 3rd 2001 to January 26th 2002, with further details available from David Paterson at the City Art Centre, telephone (0131) 529 3993.

Member **Anna-Marie Ferguson** tells us that some of her Malory originals are to be included in with works from a company of other great artists. Her own work, including those splendid illustrations for *Le Morte d'Arthur* (see *Reviews*), is on view at www.annamarieferguson.com

If you have an interest in **Wace**, who re-wrote Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* in French verse as the *Roman de Brut*, then the following details might interest you. A symposium with the unwieldy title of *Normandie mythique et Normandie historique dan le Brut de Wace (partie arthurienne)* takes place between 28th and 30th September 2001 at the Centre d'Animation de Bagnoles de l'Orne, 8 avenue Professeur Louvel. This meeting, on the mythic and historic Norman links with Wace's *Brut*, is based around Emmanuèle Baumgartner's book *La saga du roi*, and is part of the Festival au pays de Lancelot du Lac (Lancelot Country festival) which takes place annually in the spa town of **Bagnoles de l'Orne** in Normandy. A knowledge of French is a *sine qua non* ...

This next information should really have appeared in the last issue. The **Taliesin Trust** runs week-long residential writing courses at Tŷ Newydd, Llanystumdwy, on the edge of Snowdonia National Park, each focusing on an aspect of drama, poetry, fiction, comedy and so on, for writers at all levels. One of the more specialist courses is a Storytelling Retreat, run by Hugh Lupton and Eric Maddern, on ***The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*** (October 1–6, 2001). Planned for storytellers with some experience, the course is one of many led by experienced practitioners. Contact the Trust at Tŷ Newydd, Llanstumdwy, Cricieth, Gwynedd LL52 0LW (01766 522811) or e-mail tynewydd@dial.pipex.com or view www.tynewydd.org

Midas Tours run military history based trips, focusing on, for example, the American Civil War, the Russian Revolution, Byzantium and various Napoleonic campaigns. They are looking for initial interest in trips for 2002, including ***Arthur of the Britons***, pencilled in for 17–21 May 2002 and visiting Tintagel, Damelioc, Little Solsbury Hill, Liddington, Silchester, South Cadbury and Glastonbury. If it is to go ahead, prospective participants should register interest as soon as possible (registration fee £10.00 refundable):
Midas Tours, The Ravelin, Shepherd's Hill, Buckthorn Weston, Dorset SP8 5HX.
Tel 01963 371550, fax 01963 371510 or email info@midastours.co.uk – the website is http://www.midastours.co.uk

STAGE AND SCREEN

David Bintley's ballet *Arthur Part 1* was generously praised by John Matthews in *Pendragon 28/3* (Spring 2000). ***Arthur Part 2*** (playing with *Part 1*) was less favoured by some critics such as *The Guardian*'s Judith Mackrell ("A cumbersome Camelot" May 11 2001). The massacre of innocents at the beginning reveals the ballet's purpose, which is to construct "a morality play about power". Arthur is a "dull cipher" (so what's new?), with Mordred the most "flamboyant" character of *Part 2* (as Morgan was in *Part 1*). The episodic nature of the opening makes it "unfocused", especially if you have to resort to "swotting up the programme" (she's obviously no Arthur buff, but she may have a valid point).

John McCabe's score "contrives to be both disjointed and monotonous" even if the choreography is "more fluently written" than

Part 1, until Mordred takes the scene when it all comes alive. Lighting and sets get praise, especially the Round Table which "glows like a spacecraft hovering over the stage". But both parts are "ultimately a doomed act of hubris". Ouch! The Birmingham Royal Ballet played both parts at Sadler's Wells before taking it on tour [*item spotted by Steve Sneyd*].

Charlie Skelton's gone and spoilt it all – he's revealed the end of the ***Tournament of Kings*** dinner show at the **Excalibur Hotel** in Las Vegas [The Guide, *Guardian* May 26 2001]. The cast includes Merlin and a dancing dwarf, a cheating Russian knight, King Arthur's son Prince Christopher, Turkish tumblers and the Prince of Hungary. Legend, but not as we know it ... And I won't reveal who-dun-what.

From *The Guardian* [August 18 2001, clipped by Steve Sneyd] comes news of an Arthurian film planned by **Merlin Films**. John Boorman, well known as director of *Excalibur*, was due to begin ***Knight's Castle***, "the story of a 10-year-old boy who is transported back to rescue the magic sword Excalibur", but production of the film in Ireland has been delayed.

Meanwhile, a review in the same paper of the re-make of *Planet of the Apes* ("The apes of wrath" by John Patterson) attracted opprobrium from one reader for comments on the "stupidising" effect of ***Star Wars***. The latter "of course reworks and mixes ancient myths and legends using as its base the Arthurian quest for the Holy Grail. But in that respect," wrote Jeremy Reynolds, "George Lucas is no different from Shakespeare, who also mainly reworked old stories ..." [Letters July 28 2001].

NAMING NAMES

Arthurian place-names get around, don't they? The blues singer Mississippi John Hurt was, after decades of obscurity, rediscovered as a result of a song of his being heard in the archives of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, *writes Steve Sneyd*. One of Radio 2's American Day programmes on July 4th 2001, about the Institute's collection of American folk music field recordings, featured the singer's ***Avalon's My Home Town***.

Also from Steve, notice of a whole cluster of little streets with Arthurian names in Toxteth, Liverpool, between North Hill and Upper Warwick Street (and adjacent to a batch of streets named for Dickens characters). These include a **Mordred Street** –"can't image that 'bad guy' has many places named after him!" – and **Elaine Street**, as well as others derived from **Enid**, **Geraint**, **Gwendoline**, **Madelaine**, **Merlin** and **Shallott**.

Peer support for business bosses was reported using Arthurian imagery in *The Guardian* financial section for August 4 2001. Nick Pandya's "Knights without a boardroom table" reported on TEC International, "an executive **round table** of senior business leaders aimed at offering advice and support to owners and professional managers in the business community."

This doesn't come cheap, but is perceived to be money well spent. "Just as the legendary **King Arthur** had his band of knights to guide him, corporate leaders need the counsel of their peers ... While the members of their management team have various axes to grind ... the advice that the executive gets from fellow TEC members is both impartial and totally non-political ... Members know that they will get the combined experience and wisdom of fellow **knights in shining Armanis**."

An indiscretion by the royal correspondent of the *Daily Mirror* was very revealing, as reported by Nancy Banks-Smith in *The Guardian G2* section [May 30 2001]. On Channel 5's documentary *Charles and Camilla* James Whitaker enthused about a certain Luis Basueldo: "Yes! A wonderful person! A real smoothie! Argentinian polo player. The captain of **Prince Charles**'s team. Enormous fun! Used to procure women, girlfriends, for him ..."

Basueldo reprotedly said, "The girls I fix him up with were a bit wild. They used to call him **Arthur**. One of them told me she said, 'What shall I call you, sir?' as they were about to get into bed. Charles said 'Call me Arthur', because that's his third name, Charles Philip Arthur. So she said 'All right, sir, I mean Charles, I mean Arthur. Aargh!' He jump on her. I listen to everything ..." [*Steve Sneyd*]

Bangor in North Wales is the only UK university with an ocean going ship, and has just taken delivery of a new research vessel to replace its 1969 ship [*Guardian Education* August 7 2001]. The new ship is named *Prince Madog*, just like the old one, in reference to **Madog ab Owain** – reputed to have discovered America in 1170, though *Prince Madog* will only be conducting its important research (on shallow seas) in the Irish Sea.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Paul Broadhurst of **Pendragon Press** writes to point out that the information given on page 39 of the Winter 2000–1 issue was incorrect. Pendragon Press is, of course, not the same as **Pendragon House Inc** (whose publications were distributed by Pendragon House UK Ltd operating from The Old Schoolhouse, Penwartha, Perranporth in Cornwall), and we apologise for this unfortunate confusion. Pendragon Press of Launceston and their current publications will feature in *The Board* for next issue.

The illustration by Ian Brown on page 15 of the last edition, noted as "Mountain Sanctuary", is actually "Castle in a Forest".

FEATURED JOURNALS AND SOCIETIES

Juliette Wood, Vice-President of the Folklore Society, writes comprehensively on the Holy Grail in exchange journal ***3rd Stone*** (No 40 20–25). In "Obscure objects of desire: is this the real Holy Grail?" she outlines the transformations of the Grail not only in the 12th–15th centuries but also in the 20th. Adherents of this or that theory are "fierce enough to start another crusade" but all assume not only that the grail's origin is mysterious but that only a chosen few know its whereabouts, conspiracies having obscured its real meaning ...

The Free Pagan Press ("the magazine for open paganism") proclaim that they have "a variety of Arthurian scholars itching to tell their tales". Issue 4 features Old Derfel's *Venison and Virgins (Part One)* – a sixth-century narrative using an anachronistic dating system which I assume must be by Pendragon member Laurence Main (who also contributes some reviews) – and *Merlin's Song (At Camlan)*, a poem of despair at the inevitable Arthurian Götterdämmerung. The annual subscription, for four issues, is £5.00 from 7 Nunnery Walk, South Cave, Brough HU15 2JA (cheques payable to "P Revell") and their website is www.freepaganpress.co.uk

The Free Pagan Press usefully highlights the formation of **The Society of Ley Hunters**. With the demise of *The Ley Hunter* magazine, aficionados of Old Straight Tracks were bereft of a focus for their interest, but this new group has stepped into the breach. The inaugural meeting was held in Stroud, Gloucestershire in November 2000 with the aim of providing "a forum and information resource for all persons and organisations interested in Leys and alignments, ancient and ceremonial tracks and roads, and sacred and ritual landscapes." Further details can be had from www.leyhunter.com or from The Society of Ley Hunters, PO Box 1634, Hassocks BN6 7BZ. or by e-mail from element@pavilion.co.uk

Exchange journal ***The Cauldron*** takes an independent line on paganism, witchcraft, earth mysteries and folklore, and articles occasionally touch on Arthurian subject matter. No 101 includes, for example, Douglas McIlwain's "In defense of the mysteries" which cites *Owein*, Avalon and *Gawain and the Green Knight*.

The journal ***New Scientist*** needs little or no introduction. It does occasionally carry relevant items – for example *No 2302* (4 August 2001) carries reviews of Michael Pitts' *Hengeworld* and Francis Pryor's *Seahenge*, news on Ötzi the iceman [see *Old News*] and potted background info on Alan Garner and the prehistory of Alderley Edge ("Legends of the Edge" by Stephanie Pain). The weekly costs £2.20 from newsagents or, currently, a whopping 40% reduction for an annual subscription.

Current Archaeology 174 (June 2001) includes an article by **Mike Baillie** bemoaning "resistance to new ideas ideas based on science [afflicting] attitudes to the 'AD 540 event' [when] something nasty seemed to be happening on a global scale." However, the time bracket for his Dark Age disasters is rather wider than a singular event such as an exploding comet fragment would occasion – famines and extreme cold and the death of "King" Arthur pre-dating his AD 540 event (actually 538 according to Baillie's tree-ring dating) do not inspire confidence in his own scientific approach, unfortunately.

Also in the same issue is an appreciation of the life and work of the late **Philip Barker**, best known as the excavator of Dark Age Wroxeter. Barker once visited the Pendragon-sponsored dig at Llanelen, Gower, and gave useful advice on the pottery we'd uncovered. By all accounts there was much more to him than the learned academic.

Windgather Press publish ***Landscapes***, a journal for those interested in the history, archaeology and contemporary significance of cultural landscapes. Published twice a year (April, October), it is available on subscription (£25.00 UK and Europe, $45.00 N America) from Windgather Press, 31 Shrigley Road, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5RD.

EXCHANGE JOURNALS

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

The Cauldron Paganism, folklore, earth mysteries *Sample* £2.50 *Four issues* £10.00 *Cheques* M A Howard, Caemorgan Cottage, Caemorgan Rd, Cardigan, West Wales SA43 1QU Please **don't** put *The Cauldron* on the envelope
http://www.the-cauldron.fsnet.co.uk

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
www.celtic-connections-magazine.co.uk

Ceridwen's Cauldron Magazine of the Oxford Arthurian Society *Editor* Hannah E Means *E-mail* arthsoc@herald.ox.ac.uk *Three issues* £5.50 *Cheques* Oxford Arthurian Society
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* £2.50 *Annual subscription* £15.00
http://www.dalriada.co.uk

Hallowquest Caitlin and John Matthews' publishing and teaching programmes *Four issues* £6.00 *Cheques* Graal Publications, BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX
www.hallowquest.org.uk

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

Northern Earth Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group *Editor* John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W Yorks HX7 5NP
email ne_editor@annexe.org.uk
Sample £1.70 *Four issues* £6.50 *Cheques* Northern Earth Mysteries Group
www.northernearth.co.uk

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)
www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/arthmenu.htm

3rd Stone Archaeology, folklore, myth *Sample* £5.00 *Annual sub* £10.00 from PO Box 961, Devizes, Wilts SN10 2TS *Cheques* 3rd Stone
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
www.kami.demon.col.uk/gesithas

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