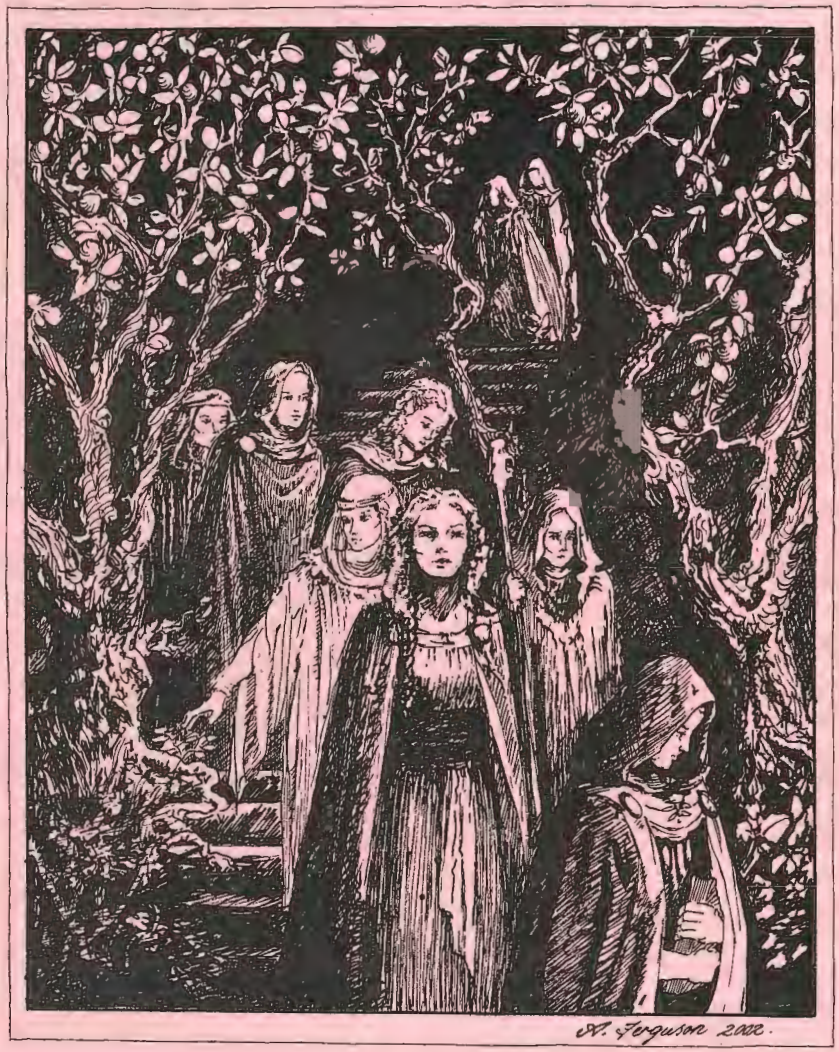
The Journal of the Pendragon Society



pendragon

Editorial

Vol XXIX No 4 Winter 2001–2

Avalon

Bryan Ferry sang about it, and a 50s pop singer chose this as a surname. In my area it is used to sell furniture, garden services, a school of motoring and even knife grinding services, though none of these enterprises are situated in Glastonbury, principal claimant to the name for over eight centuries. What is it then about the idea of **Avalon** that weaves such a spell? You might or might not find the answer in the following pages ...

Other fruits ripe for the plucking in this issue include two **competitions** (see the *Pen*Dragon pages – shameless ploys to get more subscribing members involved), articles detailing members' involvement in the worlds of TV and exhibitions, and a bumper crop in the letters pages themselves (some responses long enough to be articles in themselves!), plus the usual news, views and reviews, not to mention Anna-Marie's splendid **cover picture**. Sadly, some items have unfortunately had to be held over, due to reasons of space.

Themes and guest editing

Next issue will feature **Camelot** as a theme, and will be ably guest-edited by former editor of exchange journal *Ceridwen's Cauldron*, Andrew H W Smith. If you prefer, you may submit comments, articles or other items *as soon as possible* via e-mail to

edpendragon@yahoo.com

which can be accessed by Andrew for the next issue or by me for future editions. Or you can rely on more traditional means by writing to 25 Farmer Place, New Marston, Oxford OX3 0LB ("Camelot" items only).

The summer issue is planned as an opportunity for members to get creative, the theme of which in the absence of appropriate suggestions was to be **The Bard** but could equally be **An Arthurian Eisteddfod**, or even **Cauldron of Inspiration** (these last two from Ian Brown). Well, you get the picture: fiction, poetry, song, artwork – whether you come up with something original or are just responding to a piece of work that catches your fancy.

But remember, all matters Arthurian are always welcome, whether or not they fit in with the proposed theme. I am very grateful to all those – writers and artists – who contributed to this issue, some at short notice. Next issue may well see some new names as well as the dozen or so regulars – it is not a closed shop, despite appearances!

Lastly, apologies are due for the late appearance of this issue, due to personal circumstances. A cross [X] in the box above indicates that your subscription is due.

Chris Lovegrove, Editor

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

PENDRAGON

Journal of the Pendragon Society

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Illustrations *Anna-Marie Ferguson* - cover, *Ian Brown* - 9 18 45

Other illustrations and picture research *Editor*

President Professor W M S Russell

Enquiries and subscriptions Simon and Anne Rouse, 7 Verlon Close, Montgomery, Powys SY15 6SH, Wales **Annual subscription** £7.50 for three issues UK *Sample* £2.50

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Archive Fred Stedman-Jones, Smithy House, Kingsley Road, Newton-by-Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX **Editor** Chris Lovegrove, 125 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5QG

edpendragon@yahoo.com *or* calmgrove@yahoo.com

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PenDragon

FISHES AND WATER BABIES ...

Congratulations to the Editor and all concerned on another fine issue, and many thanks to Ian Brown, Andrew H W Smith, Steve Sneyd and Pamela Harvey for their kind and interesting references to me.

Ian Brown's Arabian angle on Arthurian literature, including the four types of fishes, is fascinating and, I think, extremely plausible. E L Ranelagh published a whole book on the Arabian or Persian influence on European folklore, but missed this parallel (1).

I was intrigued and delighted by the Editor's observations on *The Water Babies*. Since my childhood I have been a passionate admirer of Charles Kingsley; as an adult, I have published an account of him as a biologist (2), and set up brief Parallel Lives to compare him in detail with Plutarch (3). I first read *The Water Babies* when six years old. (A Plymouth child, I firmly believed the adventure of the Mayor of Plymouth and the lobster really happened.) In the same year I was introduced to King Arthur and his knights by a charming illustrated book for children – alas it got lost, and I don't recall the author. When I gave my last article the title 'The Water Ladies' I was consciously thinking of *The Water Babies*.

And *still*, in spite of all this, I never connected the water fairy (or fairies) of *The Water Babies* with the Lady of the Lake, until the Editor drew attention to this connection. Once the point is made, of course, it is perfectly obvious, as Watson used to say of Holmes's deductions, *after* they had been explained. I now think of the closing stanzas of Kingsley's little poem 'Trehill Well' of 1835 (4):

When last I saw that little stream,
A form of light there stood,
That seemed like a precious gem,
Beneath that archway rude:

And as I gazed with love and awe
Upon that sylph-like thing,
Methought that airy form must be
The fairy of the spring.

W M S Russell, Reading, Berkshire

References

1. E L Ranelagh (1979) *The Past we Share: the Near Eastern Ancestry of Western Folk Literature* [London: Quartet Books]
2. W M S Russell (1979) "Biology and literature in Britain, 1500–1900. 2. The Victorians" *Biology and Human Affairs 44* 114–133
3. W M S Russell (1980) "Plutarch as a folklorist" in V J Newall (ed) *Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century* [Woodbridge, Suffolk: D S Brewer] 371–378
4. C Kingsley (1890) *Poems* [London: Macmillan] 214–215

... AND LAKE LADIES

All the articles about water women were full of intriguing and often tantalising links and references. (And we *still* present offerings to water spirits – what else are wishing wells? Incidentally, many of the healing wells in this part of the world – more, I think, than those Christianised as to St Bride or Brigid from the Northern tribal goddess Dea Brigantia – are dedicated to St Helen – there is even one here in Almondbury, now sadly derelict, once a minor pilgrimage well). Melusine has been suggested as being a garbled memory of a water-goddess cult, perhaps one also associated with prophetic or lucky snakes (or water-snakes?), given new resonance by associating it with powerful feudal families.

A similar process could possibly explain the paradoxical rhyme associated with the castle of Mount Ferrant, south of Malton on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds. The verse runs "The fairest lady in all this land was drowned on the top of Monferrand", and the explanation usually given is that it stems from the seduction by a 12th century lord of the castle of his overlord's sister; the overlord retaliated by destroying the castle and giving its site to a nearby monastery, the theory being that the verse relates to the wronged maiden's death, perhaps in the castle well, during the revenge attack.

But the slight earthwork traces of the castle, which I visited last summer, occupy a long, high, promontory-shaped hill plausibly likely to have been earlier occupied by a Celtic hillfort: on the north side, near the promontory's end, a narrow water-cut channel down the steep slope implies a spring at or near the summit – this could have been associated with a belief in a water spirit, even perhaps with maiden sacrifice to one, such a high-set interface of water, earth and air (and fire, too, when the hill was lightning-struck), offering a parallel quality of potential gateway between mundane and sacred realms to the Maya *cenotes*, water-filled caves where human sacrifice marked the meeting of Under and Over worlds.

Steve Sneyd, Almondbury, W Yorks

• We have carried contributions on St Helen before, and most notably had a whole issue dedicated to Helen (16/3, Summer 1983). Perhaps it's time to revisit her ...

Steve Sneyd has done it again, with another clever, thought-provoking poem ["Of the Balancing of Needs"]: an intriguing twist on the whole plot of the downfall of Arthur and the Round Table (and who can blame the Lady of the Lake for her machinations, when clumsy oafs keep on chucking dirty great swords at her?).

Just a brief comment on the fascinating and well-researched features of Beryl Mercer, Professor Russell and Chris Lovegrove, all discussing the history and names of the Lady of the Lake. The particular points I'm thinking of are about the Lady of the Lake being so seldom mentioned by name; and, possibly, of the danger of invoking her name at the wrong time.

I was wondering, reflecting on the first point, if the lack of a name is because, generally, it is unnecessary: in that, could the name of the lake in fact be the name of the lady herself? That little thought occurred when noticing Beryl's account of the Channel 4 presentation, *Merlin*, when the Lady of the Lake describes herself as being "the Lady of the Lake ... made of water ..."

If the Lady of the Lake was indeed an embodiment of the lake itself, then would it not be reasonable to expect that she would share the lake's own name? A Lady of the Lake of Windermere, for example, would be Windermere. That might be why they are so rarely named: because those who first told the tales already knew which lakes were being referred to; or because those who later wrote them down had forgotten this simple fact and so had no idea what their names might be. Of course, it may be that they had no name in the tales, and were simply mentioned by their title, but it's an interesting idea: perhpas we can name every Lady of the Lake, simply by discovering which lake was her home.

As to not invoking her name (which might be another reason why it is not generally mentioned in the tales): as Professor Russell comments (page 18), "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."

River do rise up, often without warning; and, in times of severe flooding, lakes can do the same, often with far more devastating effect. I'm thinking now of the old adage, "Speak of the Devil and he will come." Could it be that, to call upon the Lady was to invite the lake to rise up, so the Lady was appeased and referred to by a simple epithet – her title – just as elves and faeries are referred to by such names as "Good Neighbours" and "Lords and Ladies"?

Actually, that thought has brought me back to something I mentioned in the last edition, too: in "Conundrums" (and my further thanks to Professor Russell for also covering this subject on the opening page of his feature, "The Water Ladies") I was wondering if the Lady Lile of Avelion had come to Camelot for some kind of beheading test. Could that be an echo of an older tradition, whereby the spirit of the lake demanded her sacrificial tribute?

And, could Balin's beheading of the Lady of the Lake be a refusal to offer this tribute? Was he indeed the intended sacrifice, having proved himself worthy by winning the sword? Are we perhaps witnessing, in this

episode, the ending of an older belief: the refusal to appease the goddess of the lake any more?

That's intriguing, the tale of Melusine promising to return and bewail any future tragedy of any royal house of Lusignan (Beryl Mercer "The Water Women" page 12). This behaviour is identical to aspects of the behaviour of the banshee, who is also known as the Washer at the Ford.

Again, a female spirit, associated with water. I was just wondering if there might be any direct connection between the two traditions.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough

I was interested to note that Prof Russell ["The Water Ladies"] quotes Sir John Rhys re the drowned city of Lake Syfadon – "a divine punishment for the extreme wickedness of a woman." I would appreciate being given more details about this. Also, I consider it a bit harsh to class the inundation of Gwaelod as "an appalling vengeance" for the rape of a priestess.

"The Lake" makes reference to "Fosse-Arthour, 'Arthour's Grave'" in Brittany, but later there is a mention of "Janet's Foss" in West Yorkshire, "*foss* being force (waterfall), of Scandinavian origin." Any connection? – or with the Fosse Way? You also mention Llyn Syfaddan as having "a 9th–10th century artificial island dwelling or crannog." I think I must try to get hold of – or at least gain access to Rhys's *Celtic Folklore* volumes ...

Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall

• No, Beryl, there's no etymological connection between French fosse *("grave") and waterfalls – it's just coincidence of spelling. However, there is a connection between* fosse *and the Fosse Way, both words ultimately deriving from Latin* fossa, *"ditch" (which usually flanked Roman roads).*

I cited Mark Redknap's The Christian Celts: treasures of Late Celtic Wales *(National Museum of Wales 1991) for the information on the Llyn Syfaddan (near Llangorse) crannog excavation of the late 80s.*

OTHERWORLD DENIZENS

Beryl Mercer's article ["The Water Women: named and nameless" 11–13] brings a few comments. Firstly, the reason why a human baby could be reared in the Lady of the Lake's land is answered in "The Lake" by Chris Lovegrove, though not in detail. The Lady is shown in all articles to be connected with stories such as Llyn y Fan Fach's, and these are about beings from Fairyland or the Otherworld, which is here but not here. The space occupied by the lake in the human world is occupied by a city in the Otherworld. For certain fortunates this land can be seen. To the viewer it looks like a place beneath the waves but it is in a different place. So the child is not actually in water, though for a short time before entry into the Otherworld both denizen and visitor may get wet or worse (see later).

Serpents

Secondly, Beryl's comment (quoting from Robert Graves' controversial book) that the Lady of the Lake is called White Serpent is very interesting. I say this because of my favorite local spots here in Japan two have snakey connections. In nearby Sano shi is Izuruhara Benten Ike – a shrine and pool dedicated to the adopted Hindu goddess Sarasvati under the name Benten. All over the site white snakes are used as part of the iconography. There is even a giant white sname along the ridge of the hill on which the shrine has been placed. I have little information about the location but it is old. Also, the water in the area is so good for you that often there are many people lining up to get cannisters filled, and it's free (about the only thing that is in Japan!).

To add to this, my other favorite spot has a legend that is about 800 years old. A samurai encountered a supematural being who asked him to build a shrine on a nearby hill. The being came out of a lake and promised prosperity and safety if his wish was fulfilled. The samurai was saved from injury by the being and a small boy helped from a well, and so the shrine was built. Unfortunately, the lake has disappeared but the shrine still exists at the top of the hill. The being called itself Hakuryu sama – white dragon or snake. The shrine, at the top of nearly 400 steps, was built some time during the Kamakura Period, 1185–1333.

Unlike Britain where the gods are talked about in retrospect, here in Japan the gods are alive and well. Also unlike Britain, Japan is virtually untouched by Christianity and the foreign religion that did enter the country, Buddhism, soon became accepted and was not adverse to gods. So the age-old belief of Shinto continues and can be found everywhere, from small household shrines – the *kamidana* – to shrines as big as any Buddhist temple. Many of the practices that date to before the introduction of Buddhism continue to take place. Ancient documents such as the Nihon Shoki record rites from the eighth century of the Common Era which are still being performed today. The magic of *omatsuri* – festival – has to be experienced to be believed.

Physicians

Returning to the Lady of the Lake and the Llyn y Fan Fach story. While I was working for Clwyd County Council I produced a number of bilingual comic strip versions of Welsh legends, including Cantre'r Gwaelod, Cilmin Troed Ddu, and Einion and the Fair Folk. During that time I did considerable research and was originally going to do Llyn y Fan Fach but found out it had already been done.

Even so, my research showed that the story of Llyn y Fan Fach and the Doctors of Myddfai were two separate stories that had been joined at a much later date. Both stories are without doubt medieval but it can be shown that the Doctors of Myddfai, a real dynasty of physicians up to the 18th century, made no claim to being descended from a fairy mother. The two stories became linked no earlier than the seventeenth century and much more likely ,in the early nineteenth.

Malevolence

I would also like to comment on a few things in Professor Russell's article ["The Water Ladies" 15–24]. I don't think human attitudes to good and evil apply when it comes to the

denizens of the Otherworld. Whether it is fair to designate goddesses as being evil may be only relevant to humans. The creatures of the Otherworld have a different moral code, may not understand our concepts, or maybe don't care. In general many seem to return good for good, but sometimes their ideas of what is good is different from ours. Less thinking denizens may even not be able to understand that when they take a human into their land death could be a stong possibility (see Chris Lovegrove's introductory poem from Yeats). Apart from passing through different elements, there is also a time factor in which a day in their world may be a lifetime in ours.

Concerning Cantre'r Gwaelod, I know there are a number of versions, but from early Welsh poetry it is Seithenin who is to blame for the flooding of that country. Also, I don't think that he was the son of the king of that land. It is usually Gwyddno Garanhir who is considered to be the king, and it is said that his horses were killed when the cauldron of Ceridwen broke and sent its poison into the rivers. I guess that was an early form of river pollution!

In Katherine Briggs' *An Encyclopaedia of Fairies* – a much used and loved reference book of mine – I found some interesting references linked to Prof Russell's comments about a goddess causing a flood due to neglecting a magic well.

The Cailleach Bheur of the Western Highlands is said to have created Loch Awe by accident when she forgot to cover the opening of a spring. What is interesting about the Cailleach Bheur is that though normally described as a blue-faced hag, she can change into a beautiful woman, as seen in one of the Scottish Fionn tales. Mrs Briggs pointed out the possibility that the Cailleach Bheur is what remains of an ancient Celtic goddess of both winter and summer. I am not a supporter of the Monther Goddess cult, and even wonder if male and female actually applies to these creatures, but there is a tale in Japan, too, that connects a female with both summer and winter. The Irish version is called Cailleach Bheirre and said to be the daughter of the winter sun, and in Ulster she is known as Cally Berry, which makes me think of the Hindu goddess Kali.

Interestingly, Japan also has a female who is connected with the sun, summer and winter – Amaterasu no Okami. She was the daughter of Izanagi and Izanami – though some tales say that she was born after Izanami and died and, like Orpheus, Izanagi visited her in Hell. Izanagi was polluted by the visit and on washing himself Amaterasu came from his left eye and Tsukiyomi no Mikoto, the moon god, from his right eye. Later, Amaterasu hid herself away in a cave and the rest of the gods had to coax her out by holding a festival. When she popped out to see what was goin on, two gods used a magic rope to block off the cave so she couldn't return. Strange that these summer/winter–day/night myths are linked to a female. I am not suggesting that the origins are the same, but they are certainly interesting parallels.

Origins

Personally, I think the story of the Lady of the Lake has its origins in the Middle Ages, but it is easily possible that elements from pre-Christian times have survived. I wonder if too much is made of the similarity between Excalibur's eventual fate and the depositing of treasured offerings into rivers and swamps. Excalibur, for example, comes from one lake and is returned to another lake. Usually the swords were deposited in water, not taken from water. Geoffrey of Monmouth says the sword Caliburn came from Avalon, at which point no location is given nor that it is an island. If there is anything to this, and Geoffrey does have a habit of using the real mixed with the imaginary, a search for a sword-producing area where there is an island might be interesting. Of course, Avalon could be Ireland; then the sword would have arrived by water. Or it could all mean nothing at all and be part of the author's imagination!

I would go with Chris Lovegrove and look to France for the origins of the Lady of the Lake and much else. There is no doubt that French romances writers were influenced by tales coming from the British Isles, but it might be unfair to them to suggest that they were merely copying. (This is not a criticism of any one article!) Such material translated into French from the Latin of Geoffrey of Monmouth usually were added to. A good example is Wace, who introduced the Round Table. When the story was translated into English a lot of new and non-Galfridian ideas appeared. The saga grew from then on until Thomas Malory's classic. I am wholly convinced that too much time has been spent looking for the origins of many of the later Arthurian tales in Britain rather than France. Many elements of the scene have come from France and French writers, and would suggest that place holds the keys to much of the Arthurian genre.

The origin of Arthur is a different thing, and then it is fair to review all the pre-Galfridian material to discover more about the possible Dark Age warrior and what he did. Often little is touched on the oldest version – folk become obsessed by the classic Malory version and try to fit the fifteenth century into the fifth or sixth. What was happening in France during the period of the writings of Chrétien de Troyes and others would, in my opinion, certainly shed light on Lancelot, the Round Table, the Holy Grail and the Lady of the Lake.

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

• *Charles also tells us he is in the process of writing a novel – "a sort of Wales' answer to Harry Potter! Well, yes and no! I started writing it long before I read* Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, *but forgot all about it." Now, he has dug up his notes and already has a tentative title which I suggests he registers as soon as possible, as it's rather good!*

In "The Lake" I was incorrect to say that "Trebe, on the borders of Benoïc lands, is ... impossible to locate". Just downriver from Saumur, the nearest large town to Fontevrault, is Trèves, distinguished only by a 15th-century keep and a Romanesque church. The predecessor of the castle may well be the model for the small besieged stronghold from which the infant Lancelot and his parents escape before his abduction by the damsel of the Lake of Diana in the Prose Lancelot. *More evidence, perhaps, for Charles' assertion that "place holds the keys to much of the Arthurian genre".*

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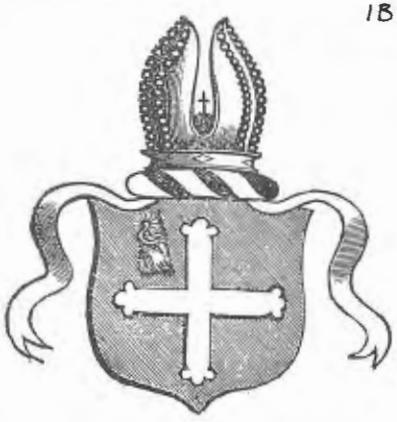


PLAYING THE NAME GAME AGAIN

Whilst delving through a mound of my old notes and sketches I discovered these thoughts which I'd jotted down in the back of one of my sketch books, a few years ago. These notes concern a notion I had, regarding a possible origin of Lancelot's name. It involves some slight playing around with spelling and meaning, and I'm sure there will be plenty of people who can rip this idea to shreads; but, then again, there might be something in it that's worth considering.

I'd been thinking along the lines of Lancelot's history: how he was taken away by the Lady of the Lake, as a child, and raised in all manner of knighthood until, coming of age, he ventured to Arthur's court and then travelled to the Dolorous Garde, where he won that castle and, discovering a tomb within its walls, he first read of his true name.

True name

Now, Lancelot had been raised as Galahad (which name his son retained throughout his life), and only on achieving the Dolorous Garde, and reading the tomb's inscription, did he find his true name. When I first read of that, I wondered how it was that he didn't know his own name; and how he could believe the words written in the stone: had he somehow lost his memory? Or, was there a secret code in the tomb's script, which told him that what was written thereon was true? Then I realised that the intention of the writing upon the tomb was probably to say that *only a knight worthy to be called Sir Lancelot could achieve the Dolorous Garde*.

This, then, led me to believe that Lancelot's name was actually a title.

Coincidentally, Edward Ford covered this very idea, in his excellent article "The Birth of a Literary Character" in the 40th anniversary edition of *Pendragon* (with reference to Lancelot's title as "The Knight of the Cart"). I remember responding positively to his ideas, at the time, having forgotten these scribbled notes of mine, about Lancelot's education by the Lady of the Lake.

Returning to which, as I was saying, perhaps the inscription upon the tomb in the Dolorous Garde actually said something on the line of "Only a Lancelot can win this castle". This would mean that, by achieving the Dolorous Garde, reading the inscription and realising that he had truly achieved the quest for which he had been trained, young Galahad realised that he had become a Lancelot: he had achieved his title, and so now he knew his name. So, what did his name mean; and what is its connection with the Lady of the Lake? Right, well, here's where the name game comes in (and here's probably where my whole idea falls down).

Title

Naturally, I'm imagining, here, that there's some ancient Celtic tradition behind the stories. Maybe there is, and maybe there isn't. It's just interesting to speculate.

Well, the Lady of the Lake was evidently an Otherworldly type of figure, and therefore special, or perhaps holy, in her own right; and so, the palace in which she and her charges lived would also be magical or sanctified.

I think the Celtic word for a holy place was something like *llan*. And I think a Celtic word for lake was *llwch*. So, someone who had been trained upon a holy lake (upon an island in the lake) might well be known as a person of the *Llan yr llwch* (the holy place on the lake). This, then, once they had proved their worth, might become their title: a sort of badge of office.

And, combining these words, might the title have become something like *Llanyllwch*, or probably *Llantyllwch*? It's only a short step from there to adapt the title to a name something like *Lanteloc*, and from there, swapping a couple of letters around, to Lancelot. Despite the probable awkwardness of this idea, Lancelot was known as Sir Lancelot of the Lake; so the fact that he was "of the Lake" was always considered important. Could that mean that it was known that his title as having come from the lake was as important as the rest of his name?

Was Sir Lancelot really "Sir Galahad, of the Holy Lake"? Was that why his son, Sir Galahad, retained his original name:

because he was not taken away by the Lady of the Lake, but instead followed his original destiny in achieving the Holy Grail? I know, I'm playing with a mixture of legends here, and the discussion could take all manner of twists and turns from this point on. So I'll leave it there, as another little morsel of speculation, and let others say whether or not it's food for thought or simply another scrap of nonsense to discard and leave in the Wasteland.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

IMAGES AND IMAGINATION

Thank you very much for the back issue. This sort of variety of work and the different responses they draw from each of us are what I love about poetry ... My favourites from the Winter 1999 issue are "The Passing of the King", "Questions" and "The Horned King", each of them evocative and full of lovely imagery.

Helen Thompson, Oban, Argyll

• *A sequence of Helen's Arthurian miniatures appear elsewhere in this issue.*

I was impressed as ever by the latest edition of *Pendragon*, from Simon Rouse's intricate and subtly symbolic cover illustration onwards. My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Professor Russell for his kind and generous compliments on my illustrations. *Pendragon* is such an inspiration to me, so if I can offer just a little inspiration in return, then I'll be heartily chuffed.

Thanks, too, to Anna-Marie Ferguson, for her description of her thoughts and inspiration behind the development of her enchanting cover illustration for *Pendragon*'s Summer 2000 edition. I've since visited Anna-Marie's website and thoroughly enjoyed it. For anybody with a computer, I'd certainly recommend taking a look. Apart from a brief biography of Anna-Marie and a most interesting interview, there are some beautiful examples of her art, and that makes her website special. I'm certainly looking forward to seeing her cover for the Avalon edition. I'm sure that it will be another entrancing work of art.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough

• *You can view Anna-Marie's art – including that* Pendragon *cover illustration – at*

annamarieferguson.com

Ian also points out that the new website for the Arthurian Association of Australia is

www.arthurian.asn.au

with its president Sophie Masson's site at

www.northnet.com.au/~smasson

COMPETITIONS

In response to Ian Brown's letter in *29/3* regarding the Dark Age People cover art, I thought I would approach this design in a slightly different way than usual.

People who are familiar with my work, and fellow Celtic artists' work, would probably agree that we often tend to make the designs as intricate as possible while still retaining that Celtic character. I'd like to say that there is linking symbolism or harmonic aspects to the figures, but if there is, it's unintentional this time. I simply decided on six strong characters from the Dark Ages and set them where I felt their position should be in the design.

So, no story in the artwork this time, but if anyone can correctly guess the **identities of the six characters** (and they may be historical, legendary, or a combination of both) send your answers to me at the address on the Contents page and I'll draw a winner from Merlin's hat sometime between now and the next journal.

Closing date for entries is about 6 weeks after you receive this edition, to allow our overseas members a chance. The winner will receive a signed piece of **original Arthurian art**. Good luck, folks!

Simon Rouse, Montgomery, Powys

• *So, get scribbling, scribes and scriveners!*

Last issue contained 52 pages but rather longer submissions than usual and subsequently fewer individual contributions. However, we want to encourage more of the

readership to be involved without them thinking they need to be armed with a fistful of typewriter ribbons and a thesaurus, so here are details of another competition that only requires a few sentences and not a degree in linguistics.

This second chance to win prizes comes with ***Deserted Island Books****. If you were allowed only five Arthurian books to take with you to a deserted island, which ones would they be? And why? Fiction, or factual? Populist, or academic? Ancient, or modern? The winner, adjudged by the editor to have (a) the most interesting clutch of titles and (b) the best justification for their choice, will win a package of Arthurian books, including* **A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain** *in pristine condition kindly provided by Professor Russell.*

Closing date is ***July 31st 2002*** *– submissions should be sent to Chris Lovegrove – and a selection of the best entries will be published in the summer issue (due around September). And by this simple yet cunning ploy the number of contributors will hit new record levels for ever and yon!*

MORE FEEDBACK

As a passing comment ["Feedback" *PenDragon* last issue], one other British king who definitely went to Rome – albeit not of his own free-will, but as a prisoner, and well before the Dark Ages – was Caractacus-Ceredig; as the name was still in use among the Celts in the Dark Ages, it is at least possible some garbled version of his Roman sojourn fed into the Arthur story, as later heroes so often ingather the doings of earlier ones they supercede in folktale.

Although the mouth of the Avon is a bit to its west ["Dark Age beach parties" *Old News* last issue], a search for the royal site to which the trade goods were going might include Totnes – perhaps a site underlying the later Norman castle – in view of persistent mentions in Geoffrey of Monmouth *etc*

Steve Sneyd, Almondbury, W Yorks

VIRGIL DEBATE

This might be totally beside the point, but I thought I'd chip this in, from Aubrey's *Brief Lives* (I don't know whether this is the passage that Prof Russell was thinking of in *29/2*):

"... In December 1648 ... Charles Prince of Wales [this is in fact the future Charles II; Charles I was a prisoner in Carisbrooke at the time] being then at Paris, and in profound sorrow for his father, Mr Abraham Cowley [the poet] went to wayte on him; his Highnesse asked him whether he would play at cards, to diverte his sad thoughts. Mr Cowley replied, he did not care to play at cards; but if his Highness pleasd, they would use *Sortes Virgilianae* (Mr Cowley always had a Virgil in his pocket). The Prince accepted the proposal, and prick't his pinne in the fourth booke of the *Aeneids*. The Prince understood not Latin well, and desired Mr Cowley to translate the verses which he did admirably well ...

'By a bold people's stubborn arms opprest,
Forced to forsake the land he once possess't,
Torn from his dearest sonne, let him in vaine
Seeke help, and see his friends unjustly slain.
Let him to base unequal termes submit,
In hope to save his crown, yet loose both it
And life at once, untimely let him dy,
And on an open stage unburied ly.'"

Charles I was beheaded at Whitehall a few months later. Aubrey insists that he has seen this passage in Cowley's own hand-writing, but presumably much later.

There is an interesting pair of postscripts: after Charles II's younger brother, James II, was deposed in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688–89, another Royalist poet with strong Stuart sympathies, John Dryden, unable to voice these sympathies openly, did so in the form of an allegory: a translation of *Virgil's Aeneid*, published in 1697. Dryden makes the wandering Aeneas resemble the Catholic King James II, and readers who knew their Geoffrey of Monmouth would remember that Aeneas' grandson Brutus would go on to found the state of Britain. The implication, that James was the rightful monarch, was clear to all.

Fifty years later, the House of Stuart was still trying to stake its claim. Contemporary

accounts of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion refer to Prince Edward Stuart as 'Ascanius' – Aeneas' son!

Geoff Sawers, Swansea

• *Geoff has passed on to us "A Famous Prediction of Merlin" – with its apparent blending of prognostication and politics it illustrates perfectly the public appetite for the supernaturally pre-ordained, as you can judge for yourselves in this issue.*

RECORD KEEPING

The most impressive (to me) item in [last] issue: Andrew Smith's pointing out that "though the Romans may have been sticklers [for accuracy], their successors were not, and very few legal records remain." This has given me cause to re-assess my ideas on the authenticity of Jesus, also to want to know more about the afore-mentioned 'successors'. When did the Roman occupation of Judaea end, and who took it over afterwards? Did the Jews reclaim it?

Re the TV series *What the Romans did for us* – I didn't watch this, as I suspected it would not have given any details of what the Romans did *to* us ... enslaved us, sent us to suffer early death in lead-mines and stone-quarries, wiped out the Druids, cruelly murdered any native Britons who dared to oppose them (*eg* Boudicca and her daughters), robbed us of many of our natural resources, to be sent as 'tribute' to Rome, imposed Christian rule from Rome upon us ... and finally deserted us to face 'the Saxon terror' on our own. I'm definitely not enamoured of the time when Britain was an outpost of the Roman Empire!

Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall

• *Apropos Geoff's 'King of the Jews' observation, an interesting investigation of the* titulus, *the placard reportedly nailed to Jesus' cross – commonly shown with* INRI *in religious paintings of the Crucifixion – is found in Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew D'Ancona's* The Quest for the True Cross *(Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2000).*

As usual, Beryl is being provocative, this time concerning the Roman legacy – talk about tarring them all with the same brush! The modern equivalent is, I suppose, the Brussells unloved by Eurosceptics ...

Beryl Mercer questions [*29/2* 5] why there is no Roman record of Jesus' trial. Because he wasn't given a Roman trial. He was tried by the *Sanhedrin*, the Jewish chief priests (during the night, which was against their own laws, so they wouldn't have kept records either), then delivered him to Pilate, the governor, who after a short interview washes his hands of the matter and gets a verdict from the crowd outside – no wonder that didn't get written down officially! Then he was executed not under his own name (whatever *that* was ...) or 'Christ', but as 'the King of the Jews' – a sarcastic title. Perhaps that explains the omission?

Geoff Sawers, Swansea

WASTELANDS

I've followed the various "Bolts from the Blue" items in the letters columns since my previous contribution in the Summer 2000 issue (*28/4*) with interest, and would like to return with some additional thoughts here.

The Tunguska event

Beryl Mercer's comments about the 1908 June 30 Tunguska event being due to a cometary fragment associated with the daytime Beta Taurid meteor stream (*28/4*), reiterated and expanded by Philip Clapham (*29/1*), are not entirely correct. It remains unknown what the source of this probable cometary fragment was, largely because the critical data concerning the direction of the object's flight through the atmosphere was collected from witnesses only some twenty years or more after the event. There is only a very rough consensus from this information. The best we can say is that the possibility the object may have come from the Beta Taurid stream cannot be ruled out. Investigations into the Beta Taurids and the probably associated Zeta Perseids (another daytime meteor shower active in June) plus their night-time twins visible in October-November, the Northern and Southern

Taurids, continue to try to establish whether there are "swarms" of larger bodies within the stream. So far the results are inconclusive. One predicted Taurid swarm for October-November 1998 did coincide with a significant spell of more and somewhat brighter meteors than expected in late October, but another prediction for June 1999 gave less clear-cut results, for instance.

Before leaving the Tunguska topic, two other points are worth making. One is that similar airburst events, or actual falls of meteorites, are quite indiscriminate in what they hit. An airburst will blast a sizable ground are more or less uniformly (as amended by topography, flight direction and energy involved), while a fall of meteorites (and a large meteorite fall is very rarely only of a single object) will likely strike multiple targets over several, to several tens of, square kilometres. This does not gell well with the more selective "bolts from the blue" found in various mythological literatures.

The second point is that careful investigations by Russian scientists have shown the blast-devasted area of the Tunguska taiga recovered significantly faster than after the far commoner lightning-induced forest fires of the region. Why is unclear, though one possibility is that a natural fertilizer – nitric oxide – may have been created during the object's atmospheric flight, which was rained out soon after. This makes it more difficult to associate such an event with the Arthurian Wasteland concept with any conviction.

In considering blast phenomena more gererally, we should also take account of commoner earthly explanations as well a extra-terrestrial ones. Important here are volcanic eruptions, which may include pyroclastic bombs hurled many kilometres from the volcano, or the horrific pyroclastic flows which can devastate vast swathes of land (as around Mount St Helens in the USA back in the 1980s), which areas then can take decades to even begin their recovery sometimes. Human-poisonous gases such as carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide which have no scent, leaking from a small subterranean vent, could destroy an entire army in a few minutes, especially while sleeping. This is all aside from explosive blasts or fires from natural gas and oil traps. These may not seem very applicable to Britain with its lack of active volcanoes or large land oil and gas deposits (though the undersea Witch Ground 150 km north-east of Aberdeen is an area where explosive releases of natural gas seem to have produced a reputation for the area of very deadly seas for many generations. Ships trying to sail across a sea suddenly filled with methane will instantly sink like a stone), we should recall that many mythological ideas in this country have roots traceable back to the Near East, where such things are commoner.

Fire from heaven

Continuing with Philip Clapham's letter in *29/1*, I've been unable to find the biblical reference to Elijah's calling down hot coals from the sky he mentions. In *1 Kings 18:38* and *2 Kings 1:10*, the event is simply described as fire falling from heaven, one of many similar Old Testament fire-falls. *2 Kings 1:2* has the interesting variant that fire caused by lightning falls from heaven to destroy another 50 armed men sent against Elijah.

Vortigern's end in Geoffrey of Monmouth (*History of the Kings of Britain, viii.2*, foretold by Merlin in *viii.1*) is indeed by fire, but his stronghold and tower are simply burnt to the ground using ordinary fire by Constantine's sons during the siege of the place, not by fire summoned from heaven. While some other unstated source Philip has seen may mention fire from heaven in this regard, we should be aware that from very early medieval European literature onwards, various apparently miraculous events like this are featured, often in language that clearly ties them to apocalyptic Judaeo-Christian literature from before and during this period, both biblical and extra-biblical. Such an influence cannot be ignored throughout the medieval period, and we should not necessarily assume it refers to specific, witnessed events in any case.

The biblical Sennacherib quotes Philip mentions appear to be from an older

translation of the Bible. The apparent confusion between them is smoothed away by more accurate modern translations.

So, *Kings 19:7* and *Isiah 37:7* (effectively a repetition of the *2 Kings* piece) should read "I am going to put a spirit in him", where "I" is Yahweh, "him" Sennacherib, and the "spirit" an imperative inspiration from the deity, not some celestial personal spirit or a physical force (which latter is implied by the King James' translation Philip noted: "I will send a blast upon him").

Isiah 10:16 should be better read as "That is why Yahweh Sabaoth is going to inflict leanness on his stout men, and beneath his glory kindle a fever burning like a fire", rather than "burning like the burning of a fire" (King James' version). It is not clear if this refers to the same incident as the *2 Kings* text, though it is part of the same condemnation of the king of Assyria.

If nothing else, the various points throughout the Sennacherib discussions especially have reiterated the need to check more than one translation or version of a source text where possible.

Finally, seeing the way thoughts have been moving towards bow-armed deities shooting lightning or magically powerful arrows (Philip Clapham *29/2*, Daphne Phillips *29/3*) with or without mice, I suspect this will weaken the topic completely, since far too many leading deities are associated with storms and lightning, including Marduk and Yahweh in the Near East and Zeus in Europe for instance. Some of these may have been storm deities originally, and it is curious that storm deities and stormy powers came to such prominence during the last millennium BC. Climate change to stormier weather then, perhaps? Or simply storm = power, and a powerful king/leader needs/deserves a powerful deity, in the approaches to monotheism?

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

• *Alistair's points indicate that the Matter of Britain frequently leads us down strange and, at first sight, irrelevant paths! A few editorial responses for now on the matter of nature impacting on humanity (see also* Old News*).*

Sadly, the spectacular November Leonid shower did not materialise as promised due to cloudy skies over Europe. Let's keep our fingers crossed for 2002 (Tim Radford "US enjoys a perfect star shower" in The Guardian *November 19 2001).*

*Herculaneum, the less famous cousin to Pompeii, was, we now know, hit by a pyroclastic flow from Vesuvius in August 79 AD (*National Geographic 165 No 5, *May 1984 557–613 and recent TV programmes).*

And it's generally reported that more scientists are now willing to give credence to tales of disappearing ships in the Bermuda Triangle as the result of experiments with lighter than water gases suddenly causing a floating object to sink as they rise up undemeath ...

AND FINALLY ...

I was delighted to read the chough news from Cornwall [*29/2* 10]. Does anyone know much about the decline of the bird in Britain? Edgar in *King Lear* talks about seeing them from the cliffs of Dover, and three choughs appear on Thomas à Becket's coat-of-arms – another Kentish connection. When was the last chough seen in Eastern Britain?

Geoff Sawers, Swansea

An Epitaph for Arthur: Forever in Avalon

I am not dead; I am but waiting:
In Heaven, in Avalon,
In every pasture of the Earth,
I watch. I am ready
For your call.
Know that I am by your side
And should you ever need a friend,
Then I am here.
Always.
For nature's love; for freedom, peace:
For all God's children,
I am here.
I wait.
I am ready.
Forever
In Avalon.

Ian Brown

Memory

For the few who remained
In the desolate years
Any small thing could bring the king to mind
A black horse
A red cloak
A silver cup
A brace of hounds
A sudden laugh
A cradled hope
A star smeared night
A flash of colour from a signet ring
A listening tilt to a dark man's head
A slow smile which crinkled the eyes
An unexpected sorrow
An unfaithful woman
An ungrateful son
Any ordinary thing
Would bring the king to mind

Helen Thompson

Westward

Left yearning
He stood on the shore
Thigh deep in memory
The whole of the ocean breathing around him
In sympathy with a dying king
Sighing like the three women
When they laid their palms against him
Knowing that Avalon was not for this time
Nor for him
Ever

Helen Thompson

Progression

I've sung songs weighted with sadness
About the bereavement of Britain
And the groaning grief of the people

But now I want to sing
Of Arthur cloaking Camelot in joy
And of him laughing in that sunlight

Helen Thompson

Inviolate

Working in the city
In the man made chasms
Pressed by people
Pinched by demands
She kept a place inside her
Always sacred
Camelot blue
And guarded by Pendragons

Helen Thompson

When I last saw Arthur

I saw Arthur the night before Camlann
He seemed to be bleeding from both eyes
But perhaps it was just the setting sun
Reflecting in his tears

Helen Thompson

Alas

When I hear how the streams ran red at Camlann
Ran red with blood
I weep not only for Arthur
Though fewer fates are more worthy of tears
Nor yet for Britain
Last cause, lost hope
But also for those ordinary warriors
Smiling and unknowing
Who dying, devastated, broken
Cut open
Bleed red into Camlann's streams

For all that was lost that day
Every bright, personal dream
Camlann's waters should stay forever red

Helen Thompson

Arthur's Cloak

There was never a cloak like Arthur's
Which the whole of Britain wove
From their dreams
And dearest hopes

Helen Thompson

Origins

And was it a night of enchantment
Which gave rise to Arthur?
Starlit paths
Unguarded doors
Secrecy, treachery, surprise
Glamour, innocence
And magic?
No
What gave rise to Arthur
What gave form to that night
Was all human
And that is more fitting

Helen Thompson

There are those which define all others
All smaller

The loss of Arthur
The loss of all that was Arthur

The loss
And the manner of losing
Lancelot

The dreadful bereavement of Camlann

The fate of Merlin
The continued life of Merlin

The dark destiny of three bright brothers
Gawain, Gareth, Gaheris

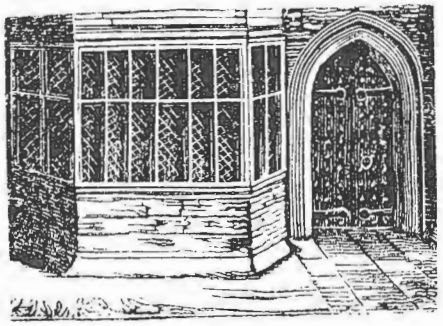
The famous beauty of Guinevere
And of Camelot
The famous beauty of Excalibur
And of the word in song
The famous beauty of the Prydwen
Sharp in the water
The love of home
Hope
Beauty
Heroes
And the bright sharpness of water

Helen Thompson

An End

The dream of Britain is dead
There are no more words
Grief is a mute agony

Helen Thompson



Drain the Lake

is this all we shall find
when the power of reflection is gone
two dragons at war for all time
silently snarling on?

or a single bee perched in the bell
in the honey and dove-grey dawn
of a gorse flower blazing yellow
steadily gathering on?

Geoff Sawers

Stanzas from Carnac

Far on its rocky knoll descried
Saint Michael's chapel cuts the sky.
I climb'd;– beneath me, bright and wide,
Lay the lone coast of Brittany.

Bright in the sunset, weird and still,
It lay beside the Atlantic wave,
As though the wizard Merlin's will
Yet charm'd it from his forest-grave.

Behind me on their grassy sweep,
Bearded with lichen, scrawl'd and grey,
The giant stones of Carnac sleep,
In the mild evening of the May.

No priestly stern procession now
Streams through their rows of pillars old;
No victims bleed, no Druids bow –
Sheep make the daisied aisles their fold.

From bush to bush the cuckoo flies,
The orchis red gleams everywhere;
Gold furze with broom in blossom vies,
The blue-bells perfume all the air.

And o'er the glistening, lonely land,
Rise up, all round, the Christian spires;
The church of Carnac, by the strand,
Catches the westering sun's last fires.

And there, across the watery way,
See, low above the tide at flood,
The sickle-sweep of Quiberon Bay,
Whose beach once ran with loyal blood!

And beyond that, the Atlantic wide! –
All round, no soul, no boat, no hail;
But, on the horizon's verge descried,
Hangs, touch'd with light,
one snowy sail! ...

Matthew Arnold

• *This poem went on to lament the death of the poet's brother, William Arnold, at Gibraltar in 1859. Taken from* Selected Poems of Matthew Arnold *(Macmillan 1878). Other poems with a Dark Age background include his narrative poems "Tristram and Iseult" and "Saint Brendan".*

Fortunate Isles

W M S Russell

To the island-valley of Avilion
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd, with summer sea.

– Tennyson[1]

Geoffrey, Avalon and Celtic Legend

In his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Geoffrey of Monmouth twice mentions the Isle of Avalon, as the place where Caliburn (Excalibur) was forged, and as the place to which Arthur is taken to be healed of his wounds.[2] Here he gives no description of the island. But in his *Vita Merlini* he does describe the Isle of Apples, or Fortunate Isle.[3] This is generally identified with Avalon, from the Welsh word *afal* (apple). On this island, grain harvests, grapes and other fruits are produced in abundance without any human labour. The people there live a hundred years or longer. The island is ruled by nine sisters; the eldest, Morgan, is a great healer, and can take animal forms. Arthur is taken to Avalon by the bard Telgesin (Taliesin) and the navigator Barinthus, and Morgan promises to heal his wounds if he stays there long enough.

Geoffrey had plenty of sources for his Fortunate Isle in Celtic legend. This image of an island of wonderful climate and vegetation, where people live long or even for ever, 'was handled repeatedly and with remarkable sensitivity by a succession of monastic lyric poets and storytellers from the seventh century onwards'.[4] There are no harsh sounds, only sweet music, there is an inexhaustible supply of food and drink, and 'sickness and decay are unknown'.[5] Examples are the Land of the Living *Tir inna mBeo*, and even more relevantly, the Land of Women, *Tir inna mBan*.

A still more exact parallel is provided by a Celtic tale reported by the Spanish geographer Pomponius Mela in the 1st century AD.[6] He wrote of nine virgin priestesses 'actually living' on the Île de Sein off the coast of Brittany, who could heal the sick and turn into animals.[7] Manuscripts of Mela were available in medieval Northern Europe,[8] and it is possible Geoffrey read him. Alternatively, this bit of Celtic lore may have come down to the twelfth century as a spoken tradition.

The connection with Glastonbury is absent from Geoffrey's works; and it sounds as if Tennyson preferred a remote island setting; I shall not pursue this aspect of Avalon in this paper. However, the Celts were not the only people to dream of Fortunate Isles. Not surprisingly, the souls of the dead are believed by some Polynesians, Micronesians and Melanesians to arrive at an island paradise, if they can pass a number of tests or ordeals. The Marshall Islanders believe in a paradise island called Nako, 'where the spirit food is everlasting'.[9] The souls of the dead can get there by swimming, provided

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[1] Tennyson, A Lord (1895) *The Works* (London: Macmillan) 473–4
[2] Thorpe, L *ed transl* (1966) *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin) 217, 261
[3] Jourdan, I *ed transl* (1996) *Geoffrey de Monmouth: La Vie de Merlin* (Castelnau-le-Lez: Climats) 45, 54–5
[4] MacCana, P (1970) *Celtic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn) 123–4
[5] *Ibid*
[6] Hammond, N G L and Scullard, H H *eds* (1970) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2nd edn Oxford: Clarendon Press) 666
[7] Lacy, N J *ed* (1996) *The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (New York: Garland Publishing) 25
[8] Reynolds, L D and Wilson, N G (1974) *Scribes and Scholars* (2nd edn Oxford: Clarendon Press) 80, 94, 115
[9] Poignant, R (1967) *Oceanic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn) 63, 73 (quotation), 105–6

they are not weighed down and sunk by their sins.

Obviously these Pacific Fortunate Isles are of no relevance for twelfth-century Britain – though in 1169 Étienne de Rouen reported that Arthur, healed in Avalon, was now ruling the Antipodes![10] But the Fortunate Isles of the Greeks, taken over like so much else by the Romans, are another matter. Geoffrey might have come across them in Horace, one of several Latin authors who 'were the staple literary diet of the twelfth century'.[11] They may well have influenced his Avalon; a few lines earlier, in the *Vita Merlini*, he mentions the Hesperides and the Pillars of Heracles (Hercules in Latin).[12] And certainly Tennyson, who so often used Greek and Roman themes, may have had these ancient isles in mind. So it is worth looking at the Greek (and Roman) Fortunate Isles as possible sources for Avalon.

The Greek Fortunate Isles[13] [14]

The early Greeks believed the earth was flat, and entirely encircled by Ocean. The dead were rather naturally supposed to be underground, enduring a shadowy and miserable existence. This primitive belief continued to dictate ritual practice long after other forms of afterlife had been envisaged; for instance, 'feeding tubes were placed in graves, down which liquid offerings could be poured for the dead'.[15]

However, even very early in Greek history there were exceptions. In the *Odyssey*, the sea-god Proteus tells Menelaus he will not die, but will be carried to the Elysian plain at the ends of the earth, where there is no snow, no storm, no rain, and where Ocean sends up refreshing Western breezes[16] – surely Tennyson was remembering this passage. The location of Elysium surely suggests one or more islands, and later authors regularly refer in this context to the Fortunate Isles.

By Hellenistic times, 'with continued population growth, the underworld was getting crowded, and astronomers and cosmologists were agreed that the earth was a sphere at the centre of the larger concentric sphere making up the heavens. The topography of the afterlife was accordingly adjusted to match this new cosmos. The underworld became the southern hemisphere of the earth, together with the celestial hemisphere beyond it. The Islands of the Blest drifted out of sight over the horizon to somewhere in the region of (if they had known about it!) Tahiti'.[17]

But the ancient geographers reasoned that climatic conditions must be similar in both hemispheres, and so there was probably life in the Antipodes; if so, there could not be afterlife there. Eventually this and the growing numbers of the dead resulted in the underworld being transferred wholesale into the heavens as what I have called 'the *overworld* – the space above the earth with the heavenly bodies – the moon, sun and stars'.[18]

The by now quite elaborate geography of the underworld was projected into this overworld, and the Fortunate Isles got there too. The Neo-Pythagoreans of the Roman Empire said, quite simply, the Fortunate Isles are the sun and the moon. They wrote allegorical stories of voyages to these islands in the sky. 'None of these have survived, but we do have a parody of a tale by the Pythagorean Antonius Diogenes, which gives a good idea of them.'[19] This is Lucian's *A True Story*, a very tall Munchausen tale about a voyage to the moon.

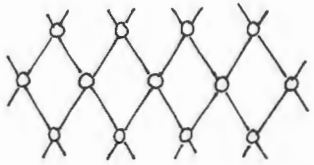
Privilege

Wherever they were, the Fortunate Isles were at first a very exclusive address. In Homer they are reserved for relatives of the gods, and the only two mentioned are Rhadamanthus (Zeus's son by Europa) and Menelaus (Zeus's son-in-law, husband of his daughter Helen by Leda). But gradually the privilege was extended to more and more people. Hesiod admitted there all the heroes of the Trojan and Theban wars.[20] But the big break-through came with the mysteries of Eleusis.

Tradition and archaeology both support the existence of a cult of Demeter at Eleusis in Mycenaean times.[21] By the eighth century BC there was a Panhellenic festival there, and from then on the Eleusinian mysteries attracted more and more pilgrims from all over the Greek and later the Roman world.[22] Initiation into the mysteries was a guarantee of admission to the Fortunate Isles. Already in the seventh century BC the great Hymn to Demeter promises her initiates escape from the gloomy underworld after death.[23] In Aristophanes's comedy *The Peace*, when the hero is threatened with death he tries to borrow three drachmas to buy a pig (the animal sacrificed to Demeter).[24]

Some intellectuals began to have an uneasy feeling that there should be a more ethical reason for being admitted to the paradisal islands. The Cynic Diogenes asked if an initiated robber really deserved a better afterlife than the great Theban statesman Epaminondas, who apparently had not been initiated.[25] The Orphic cultists, who were becoming influential in the sixth century BC, regarded a happy afterlife as a reward for asceticism in this one. They believed in reincarnation as a punishment, but if someone finally reincarnated three times as a good man, he might come to judgement and be directed to the Fortunate Isles. This at least was the picture given by the poet Pindar in the fifth century, and it may be a rough impression of the Orphic belief, of which we have little direct evidence.[26] [27] And Horace, in his sixteenth Epode, reserved the Isles for a 'pious race'.[28] (He wrote that the Isles yield plenty of grain, grapes and other fruit without human labour, exactly like Geoffrey's Avalon.)

In this manner the way was prepared for the Christian paradise. But Geoffrey's tale of the wounded Arthur goes right back to Homer, for Arthur, like Menelaus, does not die, as the Welsh, Cornish and Bretons believed until recent times.



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[10] Loomis, R S "The Legend of Arthur's Survival" in Loomis, R S *ed* (1959) *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 64–71, especially 69

[11] Reynolds and Wilson (ref 8) 98

[12] Jourdan (ref 3) 53

[13] Delumeau, J (1992) *Une Histoire du Paradis* (Paris: Fayard) 15–20

[14] Russell, W M S (1983) "Life and Afterlife on Other Worlds" *Foundation* No 28, 34–56

[15] Russell, W M S "Greek and Roman Ghosts" in Davidson, H R E and Russell, W M S *eds* (1981) *The Folklore of Ghosts* (Cambridge: Brewer) 193–213, 261–6, quotation 197

[16] *Odyssey* 4, 561–8

[17] Russell (ref 14) 41

[18] *Ibid* 42

[19] *Ibid* 46

[20] *Works and Days* 167–73

[21] Mylonas, G E (1961) *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, NJ: University Press) 29–30, 40–49

[22] *Ibid* 7

[23] *To Demeter* 480–82

[24] Guthrie, W K C 1952) *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (2nd edn London: Methuen) 154

[25] *Ibid* 154

[26] *Ibid* 169–70

[27] Delumeau (ref 13) 17

[28] *Ibid* 18–19

An earthly paradise

Chris Lovegrove

Od li s'en vait en Avalun,
Ceo nus recontent li Bretun,
En un isle que mut est beaus;
La fu ravi li dameiseaus.
– Marie de France, *Lanval*

The Garden of Eden

In a side chapel in a church in Florence is one of the most moving representations of Adam and Eve ever painted. The early 15th-century artist Masaccio depicts our first parents as they are expelled from the Garden of Eden, Eve's face contorted in a howl of despair while Adam's hands cover his eyes. On the opposite wall, Masaccio's contemporary, Masolino, portrays the duo in a rather more formal way at the point where they are about to give in to temptation and partake of the fruit from "the tree which is in the midst of the garden". These two frescoes, located as they are at the entrance to the Brancacci chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine, illustrate perfectly the significance once attributed to the Garden of Eden as the fountainhead of what makes us simultaneously human and fallible.

The depiction of Adam and Eve, either resident in the Garden or expelled from it, was ever popular: for example, a sizeable proportion – nearly one-third – of Irish high crosses include them in a panel (Richardson and Scarry 1990). In the famous 13th-century World Map in Hereford Cathedral the Garden of Eden appears as a walled island to the far east of the inhabited world (at the top of the map). Within the precinct are named the four rivers that watered the garden – Pison, Gihon, the Tigris (Hiddekel, in *Genesis* 2:14) and the Euphrates – with the temptation of Adam and Eve within matched by their expulsion outside the island. Not all *mappae mundi* showed the Terrestrial Paradise as an island, but it was agreed that it was as far east as east of Eden could be (Harvey 1996).

Perhaps the idea of the Garden as an island was popularised by the Land of Promise of the Saints. This was described in *The Voyage of St Brendan*, possibly composed in the ninth century (Webb 1965), and found in many medieval manuscripts. Here, after seven years wandering around the North Atlantic, the 6th-century Irish saint Brendan and his fellow monks make landfall as soon as they have passed through an enveloping darkness. "Before them lay open country covered with apple trees laden with fruit ... The island was so wide that forty days' wandering still did not bring them to the farther shore. One day they came upon a vast river flowing through the middle of the country ..."

Dante's vision of Purgatory was of an mountainous island, at the top of which is the Earthly Paradise, reached through a wall of flames. Through the summit garden flows a stream called Lethe, the waters of which were in classical times supposed to bring forgetfulness to the spirits of the dead who drank from them (Cary 1921).

A century later, chapter 33 of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* illustrates the 14th-century vision of the Earthly Paradise. As you go east, there is no inhabited land, "only wastes and wilderness and great crags and mountains and a dark land" until you get to where Adam and Eve were put. "Of Paradise I cannot speak properly, for I have not been there," Mandeville modestly tells us, though he has been told "it is so high it touches the sphere of the moon". It is encircled by a wall covered all over with vegetation, stretching from north to south. The four rivers which spring from the middle of Paradise sink down into the earth, re-emerging elsewhere in the world. Mandeville identifies them as the Phison or Ganges, the Nile or Gyon, the Tigris and the

Euphrates (Moseley 1983).

To a large extent, the original meaning of the word (Greek *paradeisos*, Old Persian *pairidaeza*, a park) has been retained over the millennia – that of a large formal walled park established by Persian kings ("unto whom we owe the very name of Paradise", as Sir Thomas Browne put it) including water features, trees and fauna.

This brief survey of visions of the Earthly Paradise reveals some common themes:

- it still exists;
- it can be reached, eventually, by travelling to the east by land or to the west by sea;
- it is surrounded by a wall, sometimes of flames;
- it has fruit trees, often apples;
- one or more rivers run through it;
- only a few are lucky enough to visit it.

Its lure still exerts its pull on us, even when the name varies – Atlantis, for example, or Tolkien's Undying Lands way out to the west of Middle Earth – though often a sojourn there is a mixed blessing – like More's Utopia, Conan Doyle's Lost World or a myriad other dystopias.

Curiously, of all the paradises that could have been discussed in Heinberg's *Memories & Visions of Paradise* (1990), one is conspicuous by its absence. Before we turn our steps to that place, however, let us visit one of the manifestations of the Garden of Eden, the apple orchard.

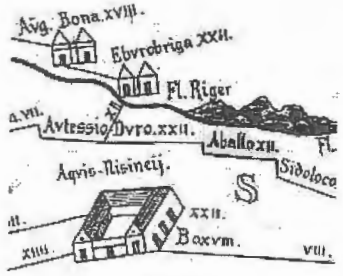


Table de Peutinger

The apple orchard

It has been suggested that the fruit of the Garden of Eden was not the apple at all but the pomegranate, or the golden apricot ("the most abundant of all Palestine fruits except the fig" and known in Greece as "the golden apple": Miller & Miller 1957, 209), or even the fig itself. The apple has nevertheless been around for some time, though its precise origins and even nomenclature are disputed.

The wild apple tree of ancient Asia, *Malus pumila*, is to be distinguished from *Malus sylvestris*, the crab apple of temperate Europe. *M pumila* seeds from Çatal Hüyük in Turkey have been carbon-dated to 6500 BCE, while *M sylvestris* has been identified from the Neolithic site at Windmill Hill in Wiltshire. A red variety of crab apple, with some examples cut in half for drying, were found at Neolithic Swiss villages (Cole 1970, 20).

Both species apparently still grow south of the Caucasus between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and it is surmised that natural hybridisation produced edible apples, sweet to the taste, without human intervention. Varieties of edible apples were introduced to Persia, Turkey, Palestine and Egypt by the 13th century BCE, and apples growing in a fruit orchard are mentioned by Odysseus himself in *The Odyssey* (8th century BCE).

The Romans were credited not only with cultivating several varieties of edible apple but also with introducing them to the provinces by encouraging army veterans to grow them. Apples were being cultivated along the Rhine valley in the 1st century CE and the name of the Gallo-Roman town of *Aballo* in present-day Burgundy is testimony to apple orchards in central Roman Gaul. We know too that apple orchards existed in Roman Britain due to the existence of the place-name *Aballava* (literally perhaps "apple orchard"), one of the most western forts on Hadrian's Wall (de la Bédoyère 1998, 116). The fort now lies under the present village of Burgh by Sands. Evidence for apples has also been found at Roman sites in Bermondsey, Doncaster and Silchester.

European words for the apple are surprisingly varied. Latin *malus* (apple-tree)

and *malum* (the apple) give rise to Italian *melo* and *mela* respectively, and are cognate with the Modern Greek for the apple [*mela*]. Latin *pomus* and *pomum*, respectively fruit-tree and fruit, have become *pommier* and *pomme* in French, and *pomo* (apple) in Italian. On the other hand, in Spanish the apple-tree and its fruit are *manzano* and *manzana*.

In north-western and northern Europe there is rather more consistency. The equivalents of the modern English word *apple* (MacKillop 1998) are:

Modern German	*apfel*
Cornish and Breton	*aval*
Old Welsh	*abal*
Modern Welsh	*afal*
Old Irish	*uball* or *ubull*
Modern Irish	*ubhal* or *úll*
Scots Gaelic	*ubhall*
Manx	*ooyl*

These cognate words could suggest that the fruit they originally referred to was from *M sylvestris*, the crab appletree (Welsh *afallen*), and not the more edible hybrids introduced in historic times producing the *malum* (apple) or *pomum* (fruit).

What evidence do we have that either type of apple were grown systematically as they are in modern orchards? Sir Thomas Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus. Or, The Quincunciall, Lozenge, or Net-work Plantations of the Ancients, Artificially, Naturally, Mystically Considered* was first published in 1658 (Greenhill 1911), discoursing in great detail the concept of the *quincunx*. Essentially, this term referred to a way of planting "five trees so set together that a regular angularity, and th[o]rough prospect, was left on every side". This produced the basic pattern of a letter X (but without the right angles seen when the figure five is represented on dice). When repeated, the quincunx formed a reticulated or network pattern, reproducing rhomboid or lozenge figures.

Browne believed that this pattern for planting fruit trees dated at least as far back as the hanging gardens of Babylon, and cited various authorities as evidence for its use in classical times in and around the Mediterranean. Whether this pattern for planting orchards was familiar to the pre-Roman Celts in the lands facing the Atlantic however is another question, with no clear answers (despite the recent discovery of a lone appletree on Bardsey Island, claimed as the last survivor of a Dark Age monastic orchard).

It is time now to look at the significance of appletrees in the Celtic West, and at the claim made by one site in particular.

Avalon and Glastonbury

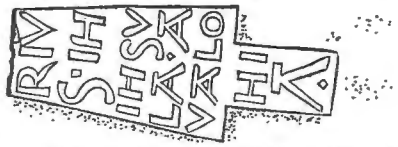
There is every likelihood that the form of the word Avalon that has come down to us is influenced by French usage. So, skiers in the French Alps may be familiar with the terms *aval* ("downhill"), and certainly everybody is familiar with *avalanche* (from *avaler* "to descend"). *Val* ("Vale") is familiar in place-names like Val d'Isere, while *vallée* has directly led to the English word "valley". The French *vallon*, much closer to modern Avalon, generally means "a small valley". And, of course, we are all familiar with "the Vale of Avalon" as a sobriquet for the area around the town of Glastonbury.

It then follows, doesn't it, that we are referring to the Somerset Levels when we talk of the Vale of Avalon. Unfortunately, it hasn't always been so. The mellifluous phrase Vale of Avalon seems first to have appeared only around 1200, as "the vales of Avaron" (*sic*), in Robert de Boron's *Merlin* poem, where it was to be the final destination for the Grail. This name for a mystical "land in the West" is assumed to be Glastonbury. How far back can we trace this link?

12th-century England became much more familiar with the place-name Avallon as a result of one particular bishop. The prelate who has become known to us as St Hugh of Lincoln was born in 1140 in a fortified town in Burgundy. Renowned for his saintly living, Hugh was sent for by the Plantagenet king Henry II in 1180 to be Prior of the Charterhouse in Somerset, and

subse-quently became Bishop of Lincoln. When he died in 1200 his head was apparently separated from his torso to double his value as a relic (Bentley 1985, 94). So Hugh was certainly an important figure in 12th-century England; Gerald of Wales dedicated editions of two of his books to the Bishop sometime around 1196–8 (Thorpe 1978 38, 49).

But Hugh of Lincoln was equally known from his birthplace as Hugh of Avallon. Avallon, though relatively small now, began as the previously-mentioned Gallo-Roman site *Aballo*, later becoming an important stronghold in the medieval period. Its Gaulish meaning is said to be "place of apples" or "apple orchard" (Ashe 1985, 95); certainly its root word means "apple" (sadly, no connection with mountains or valleys). Now, although Gerald never referred to Hugh other than as Bishop of Lincoln, he was of course by this time familiar with Avallon as a placename: not just in Burgundy but also in Somerset.



When Gerald described the leaden cross that was allegedly found above King Arthur's grave at Glastonbury Abbey, he quoted the inscription as saying, in part, "Here lies buried the famous King Arthur *in insula Avallonia*, in the Avallonian island." (Chambers 1927 269, 273). Gerald wrote soon after the discovery of the inscribed cross in 1191, and his accounts helped cement the identification of the otherwise geographically vague Isle of Avalon, where Geoffrey of Monmouth placed King Arthur's final destination, with Glastonbury. The composition of the romance *Perlesvaus* soon after 1200 clinched the matter:

The Latin from whence this history was drawn into Romance was taken in the Isle of Avalon, in a holy house of religion that standeth at the head of the Moors Adventurous, there where King Arthur and Queen Guenievre lie, according to the witness of the good men religious that are therein, that have the whole history thereof, true from the beginning even to the end (Evans 1910).

However, there is no certain identification of Glastonbury as Avalon before the 1191 "discovery" of Arthur's cross, despite all the special pleading. The most detailed of Geoffrey of Monmouth's descriptions of Avalon (in his *Vita Merlini*, the Life of Merlin) merely says

The Island of Apples, which men call the Fortunate Isle, is so named because it produces all things of itself. The fields there have no need of farmers to plough them, and Nature alone provides all cultivation. Grain and grapes are produced without tending, and apple trees grow in the woods from the close-clipped grass. The earth of its own accord brings forth not merely grass but all things in superabundance ... Thither after the battle of Camlan we took the wounded Arthur (Jones 1963).

This doesn't sound like a real place like Glastonbury, with real human inhabitants, but like a Celtic paradise, in line with the other Eden-like gardens we have already met. Celtic literature is replete with these mysterious places connected with apples – for example, the mythical island of Emain Ablach ("Eamhain of the Apples") visited by Bran in the 7th-century *Voyage of Bran Son of Febal*, or the island with an apple branch that feeds Máel Dúin for forty days in the 8th-century *Voyage of Máel Dúin* (perhaps the same as the Atlantic island of Hy Brasil) in Irish literature; or the Forest of Celidon where Myrddin composes his eulogy to appletrees, *Afallenau* (Pennar 1989, 70ff; Tolstoy 1985, 252f); or the "very beautiful island" of Avalun (*sic*) that Lanval is taken to from Carlisle by his fairy mistress in Marie de France's Breton *lai* (Burgess 1999).

We now associate Somerset (along with Herefordshire and other western counties) with cider apple orchards and wassailing on Old Twelfth Night. We forget perhaps that it was the Normans who introduced both the name and the practice of systematically producing an alcoholic drink from fermented apple juice. Was Glastonbury known by a Celtic name for appletrees before the Norman arrival? It seems unlikely, given the

resounding silence before the alleged discovery of Arthur's grave, and the cacophony which followed it.

Glastonbury undoubtedly has much going for it, but it certainly isn't the embodiment of an Earthly Paradise, Celtic or otherwise – it scarcely fulfils the criteria mentioned above, for a start. And would Masaccio's Eve howl in despair at being forced to leave it forever?

That doesn't however stop the hyperbolic language sometimes heaped on it as visionaries look for reasons to identify something they know with something they long for. This is nothing new of course.

This other Eden

In Act II of Shakespeare's *Richard II* comes this fearful eulogy by John of Gaunt, fancying himself "a prophet new inspired" against the tyranny of his king:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house
Against the envy of less happier lands ...

This vision is bejewelled with epithets explicitly abrogating to "this England" the attributes of Adam and Eve's first home.

More, it echoes the depiction of the orb on top of the banner of the famous 14th-century Wilton Diptych, painted for the tragic Richard II himself, and now in the National Gallery in London. Only one centimetre across, the painted orb contains "a tiny map of a green island with trees on the horizon and a small white tower with two turrets ... Above is blue sky, and below is sea, originally made of silver leaf, with a boat in full sail with masts" (Gordon 1993, 57–8).

The depiction of the trees are too small to identify them as apples; but if ever an idealised medieval illustration of Avalon were needed, this could be it.

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Avalon: the Cornish connection

Beryl Mercer

Valley of the apple-trees

"Carlyon – Caerlydan in AD 969 – is a small earthwork or round, south of the River Fal," wrote Daphne du Maurier in *Vanishing Cornwall*[1] "and particularly interesting for the fact that about a mile and a half distant is Nansavallon, Cornish for apple tree." Actually, it isn't: it's Cornish for 'valley of the apples, or apple-trees' – *nans* = valley, dale. On OS (blue) sheet SW84 (Truro), *Nansavallon* appears three times, WSW of Truro City: Nansavallon Wood, north of *Nansavallon (site of)* in OE script, and that north of *Nansavallon* (which turns out to be a farm). All three are west of Truro River as it flows southward to join the River Fal.

Archie and I tried to find these places some years ago, but they remained as elusive as that mysterious, still-missing hamlet near Kelliwic. We did find Carlyon but there was nothing in particular to see there ... no kind of evocative atmosphere. Just a few ordinary-looking farmhouses and their outbuildings.

Man, Myth and Magic is not very informative: "Paradise of Celtic legends, an island of apple trees situated in the far west, to which King Arthur was taken after being wounded to death. First mentioned in the 12th century by Geoffrey of Monmouth" – which, of course, immediately casts doubt on the authenticity of this version: Geoffrey refers to 'The Isle of Avallon' and Brewer[2] to "a Celtic word meaning 'the island of apples'." He adds: "Its identification with Glastonbury is due to etymological error." This is probably because the *glas* (*glaes*) element does not mean 'glass' – it means 'blue' or 'green'. *Glaston* means 'greensward'. Yet even Mary Stewart succumbs to the error, in *The Last Enchantment* she writes: "Beyond the Island's triple hill ... was a great shining level of water ... It was all one long shifting,

[1] Daphne du Maurier (1967) *Vanishing Cornwall* [Victor Gollancz; Penguin 1972, 27]

[2] Ivor H Evans *ed* (1970) *Brewer's Phrase and Fable* [Cassell; centenary edition] 61

moving glimmer as far as the sea. One could see why the Island was called Ynys Witrin, the Isle of Glass. Sometimes, now, men call it Avalon ... There were orchards everywhere on Ynys Witrin."[3]

Blancheland

October 23rd 2001: David and Laura (son and daughter-in-law) came to spend a few days with me, it being half-term and therefore a holiday-week for teacher David. On the 24th they agreed to take me on another hunt for *Nansavallon (site of)*. We had no better luck than Archie and I did, finding nothing but an empty field where we calculated *site of* would have been. Enquiries at Nansavallen revealed only that a large manor house had once stood on the now-empty field.

Later, I went to the County Library at Truro Museum, where the very helpful Librarian supplied me with photo-copies of various old maps, book extracts, documents *etc.* This was when I realised that this particular Avalon was not connected with Arthur, but with the Tristan and Iseult legend. It appears, from various sources, that the *(site of) Nansavallon* was, in King Mark's time, known as Blancheland. E M R Ditmas, in her 1969 re-telling of Béroul's 12th century fragment,[4] appends a section (with photographs) of "notes on old Cornwall and a survey of place-names in [Béroul's] poem." Of Blancheland (The White Land) Ditmas writes: "... it is difficult to locate ... Professor Loth thought Béroul's Blancheland was west of Truro where, in the late 13th century, the Albalanda family held estates with the administrative centre at Nansavallen. Certainly the district is called Blancheland in some fairly old maps, and it is possible that the family might even have taken their name from the district."

Volume II of *Lake's Parochial History of Cornwall* (1868)[5] states: "The Manor of Albalanda or Blanchland, partly in this parish [Kea] and partly in Kenwyn, was for a considerable time the property of the Albalandas ... [I]t passed by lineal descent to the present Viscount Falmouth ... Nansavallon is now considered as a barton only ..."

Volume II of *A Parochial History of Cornwall* (1838),[6] compiled by Mr Halo and Mr Tonkin, states: "Nansavallan. Avallan is an apple-tree, and the name signifies the valley of apple-trees. This I take to have been the chief seat of the Albalondas, as it hath been since of some of the Boscawens ..." (The latter was obviously an important name at one time – at least one Boscawen became MP, for Tregony, in the 19th century. One of Truro's main streets is Boscawen Street, and there is an Admiral Boscawen pub on Truro's Richmond Hill. However, it would appear that the family has died out, since there is only one 'Boscawen' entry in the telephone. But the *Bos* prefix is fairly common in names of both people and places, meaning 'abode' or 'dwelling (of)'; *Boscawen* was probably derived from ' the dwelling of Cawen'.)

Various other places mentioned in the legend are within this area, including the Forest of Morrois (modern Moresk), and the riverside district of Truro called Malpas (*Mal Pas* = bad step), where a disguised Tristan is said to have carried Iseult on his back across the ford.

But it would seem that the people of this legend have no particular connection with apple orchards, or with the Cornish Nansavallon, except under its alternative name of Blancheland. Unless ... a fanciful image presents itself: supposing Blancheland *was* situated in "a valley of apple-trees"? Wouldn't that valley have been *white* with blossom in the spring?

[3] Mary Stewart (1979) *The Last Enchantment* [Hodder & Stoughton] 228–9

[4] E M R Ditmas (1970) *Tristan and Iseult in Cornwall* [Forrester Roberts, Gloucester] 85–86; this is the 12th century romance by Béroul, re-told from the Norman French

[5] *Lake's Parochial History of Cornwall, Vol II* (1868) [Joseph Polsue] 321

[6] Mr Halo and Mr Tonkin (1838) *A Parochial History of Cornwall, Vol II* 302–3

We lead with three stories of regions claiming Arthur for their very own

STRICTLY FOR THE BIRDS

A bird colony in the Firth of Forth has been claimed as **Avalon**, Arthur's final resting place. Stuart McHardy suggests that the legendary king died on the **Isle of May** off Edinburgh, now popular with both puffins and day-trippers.

After the obligatory decades of research, McHardy reveals that Arthur was really a Scottish tribal warlord wounded in battle near Falkirk in 539 and taken to the island, which he identifies with a mythical Isle of Maidens.

Apparently the monarch's bones may have already been excavated there on an old archaeological dig, according to his forthcoming book, *The Quest for Arthur.*

• "Avalon – a real flight of fancy" *Metro* October 31, 2001 [*Steve Sneyd*]

OPERATION CHOUGH

Three members of Cornwall's Stannary Parliament have been conducting a campaign – codenamed Operation Chough – against English Heritage in their fight to have Kernow to be recognised as "the Cornish indigenous Celtic nation of Britain".

Using the bird believed to house the soul of King Arthur as a symbol of their campaign, Rod Nute, Hugh Rowe and Nigel Hicks conducted a guerrilla action, beginning in early 2000, by removing English Heritage signs from ancient sites including Chysauster, Bodmin Moor, Pendennis Castle and **Tintagel Castle**.

In November 2000 they were spotted by a security guard at Pendennis Castle and arrested on their way back to Redruth on suspicion of theft and criminal damage. The Stannary Parliament posted the news on their website: "Arrested – the first Cornish political prisoners this century!" The trio faced the possibility of ten years imprisonment for conspiracy to commit criminal damage.

However, at Truro Crown Court on January 18th 2002 **the Chough Three** (as they were dubbed) were bound over at £500 each to keep the peace for a year. The conspiracy charge was dropped after eighteen English Heritage signs were returned and £4,500 in compensation paid.

Behind the three's actions lie serious issues of local identity and ownership which are increasingly reflected in polls. Ten per cent of the Cornish population supported a petition for a Cornish assembly, and a recent Plymouth University poll indicated a third of schoolchildren felt Cornish and not English. Whether the choice of Arthur under the guise of a Cornish chough will find favour with other regions of Britain may be another matter, however.

• Steven Morris "How 3 Cornish men and a raid on King Arthur's castle rocked English Heritage" *The Guardian* January 19 2002

• www.guardian.co.uk/britain for discussion on what Britain actually is

STIRRING UP A HORNETS' NEST

The pages of *Pendragon* have over the years charted the media-reported careers of two researchers who have ruffled the feathers of academia, the police and others with not only their interpretation of the figure of King Arthur but also their abrasive approach. Recent reports have sustained the impression of a pair with a penchant for controversy.

Alan Wilson and Brian Terry (the latter *aka* Baram Blackett and Anthony T Blackett) first came to our notice in 1983 when they were publicising their self-published *King Arthur, King of Glamorgan & Gwent* and *King Arthur & the Charters of the Kings*, "in-depth" studies of "the Dynasty of Kings which ruled the South East Wales area" in the Dark Ages. Brief correspondence with them ended after my polite criticisms were dismissed as "the gibberish of a very jealous and disappointed man [with] intellectual barrenness and a

closed mind". *Ouch!*

The pair launched a damages claim against South Wales Police, alleging that twelve officers had raided the home shared by the researchers without just cause, following which they claimed that £1000 and research papers had gone missing.

In Wilson's version of the 1994 police raid, police were looking for a wooden casket, "bigger than your average television" and containing the bones of **King Arthur**, supposed to have been stolen from a tiny church in the mountains above Pencoed (which the researchers in fact owned). However, it was alleged that there were irregularities in the police raid, including the use of an improper warrant.

But despite it being expected to last two weeks, Wilson and Terry dropped their civil case two-and-a-half days later, fearing the risks of having to pay all costs, and agreed not to pursue proceedings over the house raid ever again.

At the hearing, Wilson admitted their conclusions about Arthur being a South Walian did not find favour with Wales's academic establishment. "We stirred up a hornets' nest," he is reported to have said. "We upset and offended everybody. If you upset academics, you had better watch it."

And *vice versa*.

- Phil Davies "King Arthur hunters sue the police" *The Western Mail* October 2 2001
- Anon "King Arthur historians agree to drop case against raid police" *The Western Mail* October 4 2001
- A Gilbert *et al* (1998) *The Holy Kingdom* [Bantam Press]
- Chris Lovegrove "The Grave of Arthur? (I)" *Pendragon 16* Nos 3–4, 27–31

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- http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk

IN THE BLEAK FIFTH CENTURY

More theories about the Dark Ages really being dark continue to emerge from climatologists and others. The American Geophysical Union were recently told that waning sunspot activity – an indicator of a "weakened" sun – could and did make the world cooler by about half a degree in the late 5th century, and this could explain **barbarian movements** in Europe.

Kevin Pang, a meteorologist, noted that sunspots were "conspicuously absent" from the historical record "just about the time the Roman Empire fell in 476". This coincided with high levels of carbon-14 in tree rings, apparently another indicator of a decrease in solar activity.

"In the northern latitudes," Pang thinks, "a half of a degree of cooling can shorten the growing season just enough to make crops fail," thus sending barbarians south into Roman territory to escape poor harvests and bleak conditions. An earlier study by researchers at Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland (published in *Science* vol 294, 2149) deduced from computer modelling that regional cooling could be greater than the global half a degree, perhaps as much as two degrees in Europe during the winter.

The link between climate and perceptible change in human culture is controversial and not always explained by simple cause and effect, however. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that there was an observable downtum in climactic conditions before the middle of the first millennium AD (Dark 2000, esp chapter 2). Certainly the freezing over of the Rhine at the end of 406 allowed a major incursion of barbarians into the Roman Empire, leading to the sacking of Rome by Alaric the Goth in 410.

- Betsy Mason "End of an empire? Blame it on the weather" *New Scientist 2322/2323* December 22–29 2001, 11
- Petra Dark (2000) *The Environment of Britain in the First Millennium AD* [Duckworth, London]

RITUAL RELIC

Visitors to Newcastle University's Museum of Antiquity can now see displayed a recently restored Bronze Age object called **The Tribley Shield**. Discovered in a peat bog close to Edmondsley near Chester-le-Street in 1802, the 3500-year-old shield was cut into three by its finders, and the restored object still lacks a missing third.

A local history group member has a theory about its original disposal (as reported in a newspaper article noted by Kevin Byme). "It is possible it was thrown in the bog as part of a ceremony," he suggested. "It ties in with the later Arthurian legend of **the Lady in the Lake**, and the shield being thrown in may be the ceremony that inspired this."

The museum's archaeological director is rather more prosaic: "It could have been to appease a pagan god," she said, but then went on to postulate, rather fancifully, that "it could have been lost in a fight and the warrior decided to save himself from the bog rather than die trying to retrieve his shield." The article reported that the thinness of "undoubtedly the finest ever example found in Europe before the 20th century" suggested that it was ceremonial and not utilitarian.

- Adrian Worsley "Mystery of shield rescued from bog" *The Northern Echo* December 3 2001
- Richard Bradley (1998) *The Passage of Arms* [Oxbow Books, Oxford and Oakville] *passim*

ANCIENT MESSAGES (1)

Faint scratches on wooden tablets from Roman **Vindolanda** near Hadrian's Wall have been recently started to be deciphered. Normally, messages were made with a metal stylus on the surface of wax coating the tablets, then scraped off when no longer needed. However, a high-resolution digital camera taking pictures of the tablets from different angles has produced images which, when analysed using software developed at Oxford University, has picked out the faint stylus marks which came through the wax. Using a technique called phase congruence one of the tablets revealed "a transaction involving a slave who was sent on a mission or possibly sold".

Wax tablets continued to be used into Late Antiquity. Some of the most attractive art objects remaining to us from this period are ivory diptychs (given as special presentations when figures in the Imperial circle reached high office such as the consulship), higher status versions of the more humble Vindolanda tablets (see also "New lines on old texts", *Old News* in *29/2*).

- Greg Miller "Frontier society: Roman Britain is laid bare on a wooden tablet" *New Scientist 2308* September 15 2001, 13

ANCIENT MESSAGES (2)

Merlin was heir to a very ancient tradition of soothsayers foretelling the future after going into a trance. Recent research has however suggested that the messages given out by the famous **Delphic oracle** might not have been as divine in inspiration as was claimed.

Founded in the Bronze Age as a shrine to the goddess Gaia, Delphi according to legend was then taken over in the Geometric period by Apollo – who slew the serpent-god Python and made the priestess Pythia, the Pythoness, serve him instead.

To communicate with Apollo, the Pythia entered a small chamber – the *adyton* – located below the Temple of Apollo, and, seated on a tripod and chewing laurel leaves, inhaled the fumes – the *pneuma* – emanating from either a crack in the ground or from natural spring waters. In a semi-delirious state she then returned to the Temple to answer visitors' questions.

Plutarch, himself a priest of Pythian Apollo, believed that the fumes were geological in origin, but 19th century excavators could find no traces of a "sacred chasm" or gases and it was concluded that Plutarch was at fault or that another site was intended.

American archaeologists now suggest otherwise. A fault line, the Delphi Fault, is known to run east-west across the site, covered by the detritus of erosion. This is

crossed by a previously unknown fault – the Kerna Fault – running north-south and appearing to intersect the Delphi Fault just under the Temple of Apollo. Though only two springs are now present at Delphi, Kerna and Kastalia, other springs are known to have existed. Moreover, one of the temple walls is covered with travertine deposits, a carbonate mineral formed by hydrothermal activity.

When the Kerna spring water and the travertine deposits were analysed, traces of methane, ethane and other light hydrocarbon gases were found, plus ethylene. Ethylene gas affects the central nervous system, producing light-headedness and euphoria, and was once used as an anaesthetic; in higher doses it can cause violent frenzies, delirium and, ultimately, death. Plutarch recounts the death of one Pythoness and reports that the *pneuma* had a sweet perfume-like smell – just like ethylene.

The limestone in the Peistos Valley is made up of bitumen-rich strata; local seismic activity would heat up the rocks by friction and vaporise lighter petrochemicals in the bitumen, escaping as *pneuma* in the rocks above.

- Philip Ball "Gassing with the Gods" *New Scientist 2306* September 1 2001, 40–42
- Basil Chr Petracos (1971) *Delphi* [Hesperus Editions, Athens]

QUESTS ANCIENT AND MODERN

As Camelot is to the Holy Grail, so **Iolcus** is to the Golden Fleece – both are starting points of quests for a mythical object. Like Camelot, the site of Iolcus (strictly, Iolkos in Greek) has never been certainly identified. Until now, perhaps.

Traditionally, Iolcus was placed somewhere in Magnesia, the strip of land along the coast of Thessaly in northern Greece. From here Jason set sail in the Argo with his Argonauts to find the Golden Fleece. On his successful return he brought with him the sorceress Medea.

The site of **Dimini** has long been known as an important Neolithic settlement and a source of distinctive pottery two millennia and more before Christ's birth. But archaeologist Vasso Adrimi discovered that there also existed a large Bronze Age settlement based around a distinctive Mycenaean *tholos* tomb, and over the space of a quarter of a century she has come to believe it is the city of Iolcus.

The legends of Jason, she suggests, may have been based on the deeds of a "pioneering seafaring people who navigated the Black Sea," operating from a "sophisticated" palace complex. This not only had all mod cons but also supported the industries for making jewellery, weapons and tools founded on the import of raw materials like gold. It may even be that tests on some of the pottery being conducted at Bristol University will show that it was used to make herbal potions – perhaps like those of Medea.

- Helena Smith "Greek heroes: archaeologist strikes a golden legend" *The Guardian* September 15 2001, 17

AVALON FINALLY LOCATED

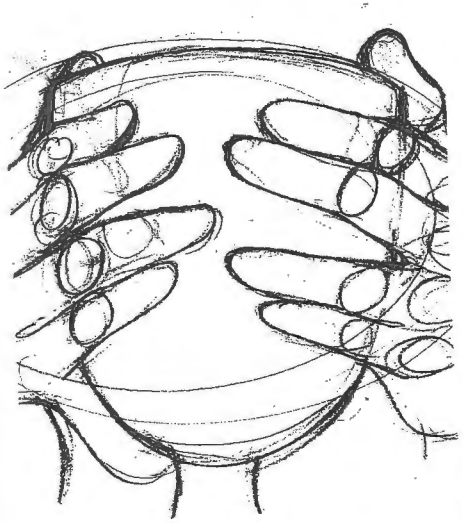
And now, some *really* old news. Geologists have long given fanciful names to the ancient land masses of prehistoric Earth before the continents received their present shapes and positions. One of the best-known of these is the supercontinent called Gondwana from around half a billion years ago (500 million years BP). Readers may however not have hitherto been aware of the area now known as **Avalonia**. This was made up of parts of present-day New England, Nova Scotia and Britain, and was one of several **terranes** in existence at the time.

According to plate tectonic theories, continents grow by amassing terranes around their edges, these terranes originally being "mid-ocean islands or fragments of older continents". Where exactly in Gondwana Avalonia originated from is unclear, but it is agreed that it drifted west before splitting up into its constituent parts. Rather appropriate for a land mass named from a mythical Land to the West.

- Jeff Hecht "Argentina part of Texas" *New Scientist* August 17 1996, 17 *[Dr John Light]*

Making *In Pursuit of the Holy Grail*

Colin Thomas



From storyboard for In Pursuit of the Holy Grail © *Teliesyn TV Co-operative*

It began with an article in *Pendragon*. I had thought that, with the transmission of the two-part programmes *Excalibur – the Search for Arthur* that I had directed for the BBC in 1995 and the death soon after of its much loved presenter, Professor Gwyn Alf Williams, that I would not return to Arthurian territory.

But I kept up my subscription to *Pendragon* and in 1997 there was a fascinating article by Fred Stedman-Jones on the Nanteos Cup. The claim made by some for the Cup was an extraordinary one – not merely that it was an ancient healing Cup but that it was the Holy Grail itself. Fred concluded his article with the words "Many say the Nanteos Cup should return to the mansion of that name, but if it is the Holy Grail, and many say it is, whom should the grail serve in the 21st century?"[1]

I was intrigued and, through my work with another presenter Dr Marion Löffler, another new angle was emerging. Marion was born and brought up in Germany and whilst we were working on a film on the Sorbs (an ancient linguistic minority in Germany) I read in translation *Parsifal* by Wolfram von Eschenbach.

It was clear that Wolfram was influenced by previous versions of Arthurian stories – Chrétien de Troyes and perhaps, earlier still, *The Mabinogion* – and I was delighted by its reference to the hero as a Welshman. Impressed too by his respect for Muslim culture at a time when Christianity was at war with Islam. It made a striking contrast to the nauseating racism and anti-semiticism of Robert de Boron's *Joseph of Arimathea*.

Pursuit

When I got back to the UK, I proposed to Sianel Pedwar Cymru a television programme to be entitled "In Pursuit of the Holy Grail" and, soon after the proposal was accepted, thought I had stumbled on another new angle on the often told story. The notion that Wagner had visited Nanteos and perhaps even been inspired to write his opera *Parsifal* by his visit has been discounted long ago – he visited London but never came near Aberystwyth. But what if the influence had been the other way round?

George Powell, the then owner of Nanteos, was a big Wagner fan and had had dinner with the composer in Bayreuth whilst he was writing *Parsifal*. Surely Powell would have told him that the Grail which had eluded the brightest and best for

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[1] Fred Stedman-Jones "The Grail in Wales? The Nanteos Cup" *Pendragon XXVI* No 2 Spring 1997

generations was now sitting in his home. So convinced was I by this new angle that I wrote a scene dramatising it into my first treatment for the programme.

But, alas, it was not true. When Marion and I excitedly told Fred about our brilliant new insight in a restaurant meeting point, he pointed out that it couldn't possibly have happened. Powell would have known about the Cup with healing powers at his home but Fred assured us that the connection with the Holy Grail wasn't made until some fifty years later.

It was a disappointment (we television people don't like to have our ideas spoilt by mere facts!) but soon another new perspective emerged. In reading up about Wagner's *Parsifal*, it was becoming clear that that it was a long way from Wolfram von Eschenbach's version. Wagner apparently went back as close as he could get to original sources whilst writing the libretto and had definitely read a French translation of *The Mabinogion*.

But there were other influences on Wagner's version of *Parsifal*. The music he wrote for the opera is stunningly beautiful but his ideology was anything but. I came across a quote from Nietzche about the opera: "Christianity arranged for Wagnerians ... a work of malice, of vindictiveness ... an outrage on morality." Wagner was virulently anti-Semitic and his obsessions seeped through into his operas.

In his essay "Judaism in Music" Wagner writes of "the involuntary repellence possessed for us by the nature and personality of the Jews." He even seems to call for a war on Jews, writing of "the necessity of fighting for emancipation from the Jews ... we must hold it weighty above all to prove our forces for this war of liberation."[2]

It's hardly surprising that Wagner was the Nazis' favourite composer and a 30s painting of Hitler, now in an American military museum, portrays him in silver armour as Parsifal himself. But on our preparatory visit to Germany, Marion and I tracked down a more direct connection between the Nazis and the search for the Holy Grail.

On a bleak winter's day we drove up to Wewelsburg Castle, the "spiritual centre" of the SS. It seems that Himmler, the head of the SS, was inspired by the Holy Grail tales and saw the inner core of his death-dealing elite as the contemporary equivalent of the Arthurian knights. Our footsteps echoed through the crypt of the castle, a swastika in the ceiling still clearly visible. No-one now knows for sure what would have gone on here in the past but this, apparently, was where the urns containing the ashes of the 'elite of the elite' were to stand

The brutal reality behind the Wewelsburg rituals became apparent in the SS's records held in the Castle's museum. Amongst the millions murdered by the Nazis was a Jewish boy from a nearby village, hung for throwing a snowball at Aryan girls.

Journey

The German visit enabled us to move on to the script of the programme we planned. The various versions of the Holy Grail would appear on screen in animation, and the work on this, by two talented young animators, Ed Talfan Davies and Paul Coombes, had to begin a year before the programme was transmitted. In the summer of 2001, we began the filming of what is called the "live action" element of the programme.

It was to follow the form of a journey, beginning at sea in a boat heading towards Glastonbury, with a re-telling of the most familiar version of the Holy Grail story – that associated with Joseph of Arimathea. Then we suggested that the story may have had pagan pre-Christian origins in *The Mabinogion* and that Celtic sources provided the basis of Chrétien de Troyes' version. This, in tum, influenced Wolfram von Eschenbach's version and, as the sun set on a glorious summer's day, we filmed Marion climbing up to the top of the castle where Wolfram's patron once lived. This is

[2] *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* (1894) Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co, 80, 82

where we decided to end Part 1 – any non-BBC programme has to plan carefully the placing of the commercial breaks.

As the Church turned against the Knights Templar, the Holy Grail which had inspired them went out of favour. "In Germany, " as Marion put it in her piece to camera, "the trail goes cold," and the pursuit of the Grail moved back to Glastonbury. According to the traditional story which Fred recounted in his *Pendragon* article, the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII lead to it being carried by seven monks to Ystrad Fleur, the Abbey of Strata Florida in mid Wales.

Here we learnt that the notion that there was a Cup with healing powers at the former Abbey was given credibility by local experts, although the idea that this Cup came from Glastonbury was treated more sceptically. David Austin, Professor of Archaeology at University College Lampeter, believes that, after the dissolution of Ystrad Fleur, the Cup may have been moved to a remarkably well preserved farmhouse nearby, owned by the Stedman family.

From there, when the Powell family inherited the estate, the Cup moved to Nanteos. As our film followed a geographical journey, it was also following a chronological trail, on now to where it once resided – Nanteos House – and, in time, on to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We decided to stay the night there with our film crew and had the delightful company of Fred (whom we interviewed for the English language version of our film) and his wife Marilyn.

But Marion and others of our group found the overnight stay a disturbing one and just before I came down to breakfast Fred had the alarming experience of a massive warming pan sliding off a shelf and just missing him. The Cup is now no longer at Nanteos and, elegant though the house is and ample its breakfasts, we were glad to be on our way.

At the conclusion of Part Two of our three part programme, we see the Nanteos Cup for the first time. Assiduous readers of *Pendragon* will know the identity of the present keeper but, as she was reluctant to reveal her identity to television viewers, I will respect her wishes in this article. Part Two ended with Marion, whilst expressing her respect for the faith of those who see the Cup she touched as the Holy Grail, asking whether the whole point about the Holy Grail wasn't that it was unattainable in this life.

In Part Three, we return to Germany and follow through the Wagner-to-Nazis connection I outlined earlier. It included the glories of a Bayreuth performance of *Parsifal* and Weimar's architectural gems on a sparkling summer's day. But I had remembered what Marion had said when the crew had had a day off during the Sorbs filming: "You should go to Weimar; it represents both the best and worst of Germany."

The best and worst of Europe, the best and worst of mankind. For a couple of miles from the Weimar where Goethe wrote his poetry is Buchenwald. During our preparatory visit, I had suggested to Marion that I should go alone to the former concentration camp so that her piece to camera would convey the intensity of the horror that a visitor to that place feels when we returned to film.

There seemed to be a chilling logic about the journey we had undertaken, to the end result of the object we had pursued. Once legend represented those who sought the Holy Grail as the finest and the best, with only the purest able to touch that venerated object. But an idealism that divides the world into the good and the bad, the chosen and the damned, the racially pure and the contaminated, becomes capable of monstrosities.

We end the programme with a deliberately provocative image – a zoom into one of the ovens in the Buchenwald crematorium, a mix into intense flames and finally, as Wagner's music reaches a glorious climax, a mix into Parsifal's glowing Grail held aloft.

Transmitted December 22nd 2001 in Welsh on Sianel Pedwar Cymru – the Welsh Fourth Channel – and awaiting transmission date for the English language version.

– Colin Thomas, January 2002

The Arthurian Centre, Cornwall

Forrester Roberts

The *Lands of Arthur* exhibition at The Arthurian Centre at Slaughterbridge – down near Camelford, Cornwall – is up and running and open for most of the year. It was a tremendously exciting exercise putting it all together. Joe and Sam Parsons, who own the site, are real enthusiasts and deserve a big hand – it took a lot of courage to embark on a dream such as theirs, and a lot of hard cash too. They still have a long way to go, but they have made the essential start. When the project of an Arthurian centre was first discussed, the site was nothing more than a bare windswept knoll on the edge of Bodmin Moor. It had nothing to commend it but a legend and an old stone in a river bed. Nevertheless they made an act of faith, and decided to create a Centre.

It was agreed that the first part of the scheme should be an exhibition hall, so they put down a large concrete base, dismantled a timber fish house down in the valley, transported it to the site, and beavered away night and day until they had transformed it into an impressive timber hall. Then they carpeted it, brought in the power and electricity, and set about creating a display worthy of its subject matter.

The exhibition is located by Worthyvale Manor, on the River Cam, just upstream of Slaughterbridge and beside the traditional site of Arthur's legendary last battle. The large inscribed stone lying in the river below the exhibition hall is described by Tennyson, who sought it out when researching his *Idylls of the King*. There is a lovely tree-lined walk from the exhibition hall, past the battle site to the Cam stream and the stone. The path is enhanced by timber walkways, all very pleasant, full of birdsong and that odd mix of natural beauty and myth that is so peculiar to Cornwall.

The exhibition itself follows the tales of the Celts from their mythical Trojan origins as narrated by Nennius and popularised by Geoffrey of Monmouth. The stories are illuminated by the dramatic paintings of George Sharp, an artist with a natural gift for imbuing ancient confrontations with a contemporary feel so that you slip easily into the picture and live the moment just as if you were there.

From the paintings of George Sharp it moves on to the illustrations of Julek Hellar, who follows the Malory version with all its nostalgia for a lost world of chivalry. The works of the two artists highlight the great shape-change that transformed Arthur from an obscure Celtic chieftain into the mythical paragon of nobility and virtue extolled by the medieval world. It was an image that would shape Victorian values and contribute to the reputation of Britain as a haven of tolerance and fair play. It also gave rise to a treasure trove of poetry and art which the exhibition takes full advantage of with works by Dicksie and the Pre-Raphaelites, as well as quotations from a wide range of poets.

The display goes on to illustrate how the displacement of the Celts was not just a physical invasion but a religious one as well. The old free and easy ways of worship were being suppressed and replaced all over Europe by the tight strictures of the Church of Rome. Close behind the Anglo-Saxon incursions came the Catholic version of Christianity with all its evangelistic intolerance. Celtic Christianity had proved a brief beacon of light to a largely pagan world, but it was unable to hold its own against the demands of Rome. The old Celtic saints were defrocked or ignored, and any movement that dared to contradict was simply wiped out. Some little known paintings by the French artist Jean Paul Laurens effectively illustrate aspects of the Roman Church as it spread its tentacles over the length and breadth of medieval society.

However, whilst the Pope's assassins were massacring their way through Palestine on their holy crusade towards Jerusalem, unorthodox religious ideas were

filtering back from the east into western society. The feverish intolerance engendered by the Church meant that these were ideas that dare not speak their name. Instead they found their expression in the most popular fictional stories of the day which happened to be the Arthurian legends. The exhibition suggests that it was this yearning for free religious expression that gave the Arthurian legends their unique and imperishable flavour. The point is arguable, but there is no doubt that the concept of the Holy Grail and several other Arthurian stories have eastern origins and that the Arthurian legends in general were regarded with deep suspicion by the Church.

One such story is Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*, which is probably the finest literary work to have blossomed from the medieval period. It is the story of a young man's growth from simplicity to maturity, in effect from selfishness to selflessness, and it is splendidly illustrated in the exhibition by the paintings of Courtney Davis, a friend of the Society.

A loop in the display's main story line digresses to the tale of Tristan and Iseult which is narrated in full, presumably because of its close connections with that part of Cornwall. It's all entertaining and absorbing stuff, and the Julek Hellar paintings are beautiful and evocative. They leave the viewer eager to go out and see for him- or herself the sites so deeply steeped in legend and romance.

In fact the whole tenor of the displays is a nice mixture of the serious and the not quite so. An eight foot high drum in the middle of the exhibition hall sets out the challenges of the Zodiac in light-hearted verses with Arthurian connotations. This is obviously a fun thing and not meant to be taken too seriously, but I stood there for a moment or two and watched groups of viewers reading out their companions' zodiacal verses and nodding in meaningful approval to each other at the supposed appropriateness of the message.

There is a unique three-dimensional centrepiece on the end wall entitled 'The Fisher King'. It depicts the blazons of the Round Table knights set in their appropriate places around the table, only the table has been transformed into the Zodiacal Life Wheel with the Christ figure overall. Each knight echoes his epigram, in the manner of Virgil's dead Greek heroes intoning their life lessons to Aeneas on his brief visit to Hades.

As for instance Sir Kay:

With sharpened tongue I squandered all my friends,
Then died alone, too late to make amends.

or Sir Ector:

Fortune is fickle, hope may change to tears,
Protect your seed corn for the future years.

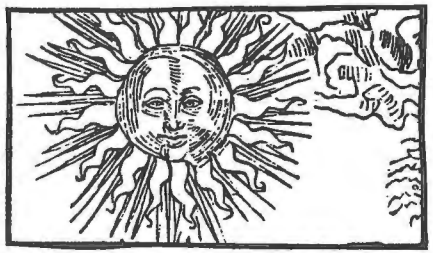
or that courtly tearaway Sir Lamorak:

I took my lusty pleasures without thought,
Then rued too late the miseries I'd wrought.

There's rather a nice touch in that the middle of this centrepiece has been cut away leaving a circular emptiness, in the manner of the Chinese symbol of heaven. This is represented by a circle with a hole in the centre implying that, whilst all the lessons of the Wheel of Life should be learned and assimilated, the central ego must be lost completely if transcendence is to be experienced after the manner of Sir Galahad. All in all it is an exhibition intended to give much food for thought, and I would complement the Parsons for having the courage to stage it.

The site is obviously deep in the throes of many changes, so it is difficult to predict what attractions are likely to be incorporated by next summer season. Thanks to the government's inept handling of the foot and mouth fiasco it's been a tough year for anyone involved in the tourist business, and the after-shocks of the New York disaster will continue to ripple outwards, affecting everyone's actions for many months to come. Nevertheless, I can see that the Arthurian Centre at Slaughterbridge is here is stay, and my guess is that it will grow each year and make a significant contribution to the Arthurian world.

• *Joe & Sam Parsons, 01840 212450* camlann@btinternet.com *www.kingarthur.co.uk*



Reviews

Willem P Gerritsen, Anthony G van Melle *eds*
A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes
trans Tanis Guest
Boydell Press 2000 £16.99
0 85 115 780 7 pb 336pp illus

Anglophone Arthurians should from time to time contemplate a different European perspective on the Matter of Britain and its contemporary analogues, and this *Dictionary of Medieval Heroes* by two Dutch academics gives just such an opportunity. Here we are introduced to such figures as Aiol, Berte aux Grands Pieds, Helmbrecht, Parthonopeus of Blois and Ruodlieb, heroes and heroines certainly previously unfamiliar to me but popular with a significant proportion of a medieval European readership, featuring in tales that certainly stand comparison with accounts of Arthur, Galahad, Gawain, Merlin or Perceval.

This is a very user-friendly edition for English-speakers. Each entry typically starts with a short introduction to place the character in a literary or historic context, followed by a synopsis of the principal events in his or her most familiar saga. There is then a critical discussion which also details the subsequent development of the narrative into more recent times, concluded by brief references to principal modern editions, translations and studies. The Lancelot section for example, one of the longest in this book, includes three illustrations from the 13th to the 19th century and discussion of artistic, poetic and novelistic responses to his adventures down to the 1980s, ending with the comment "there seems to be little danger of Lancelot soon losing his prominent position in Arthurian narrative". The entry for Arthur himself, by Frank Brandsma, is authoritative and very detailed, with modern developments in novels, theatre, music and other media extremely well documented.

Around a quarter of the characters listed are directly or indirectly linked with the Arthurian legends (*eg* Fergus and Yder among the former, Aeneas and Brut among the latter), and several have particularly English connections (*eg* Bevis of Hampton, Hengest and Horsa, Beowulf) with Cú Chulainn representing the Irish dimension.

The Netherlands, on the crossroads of literary peregrinations between Romance and Northern lands, figures largely as the origin of many of the quoted texts, correcting the rather Anglocentric view that tends to dominate populist literature on this subject here and emphasising that there was a cultural European Union of sorts long before the modern political set-up.

This Dutch A–Z of some ninety figures, originally published in 1993 as *Van Aiol tot de Zwaanridder*, first appeared in translation in hardback in 1998 with some changes to the original text, not least the addition of the entry on Robin Hood by Richard Barber. This is an extraordinarily stimulating book, whether your interest lies in plot summaries or folktale motifs, cross-cultural influences or native idiosyncrasies, or why some tales flourish in a great diversity of retellings while others disappear into a narrative cul-de-sac – certainly a volume that shouldn't remain on your shelves for long periods!

Chris Lovegrove

Michael Foss
People of the First Crusade
Michael O'Mara Books 1997 £12.99
1854792989 hb

This book makes fascinating and often grim reading, telling the story of the First Crusade from its motivation to its execution and its consequences. Relying heavily upon contemporary accounts, it paints an ugly picture of invasion and warfare, stripping away any idealised views of knights in shining armour galloping across the land to

rescue the Holy City from the Saracens. This is the story of political motivation, theological idealism, fanaticism and bigotry taken to extremes. It is an unsettling account of the inhumanity of which humanity is capable, even in the name of the supposedly highest cause.

Yet, within all this dreadful turmoil, intriguing insights into political machinations and opposing views of the world come readily to light; and the description of the gradual settling of the Holy Land adds what could have been a note of hope for the integration of different societies.

The story told is simply that of a dream gone wrong: of an ideal distorted by the intrusion of the real world, and of the depths of barbarism to which civilisation can so easily fall. In the worlds of the author, reflecting on the dreadful losses to both main sides in this unholy war, "God – Allah – is not best served, if at all, by fighting."

The book is written in straightforward, plain yet riveting language. As an insight into the life and times of the First Crusade, it is most enlightening and a memorable work.

Ian Brown

Richard White
King Arthur's Greatest Battle: is 2003 the 1500th anniversary?
King Arthur Publications 2001 £3.20 UK £3.60 overseas 0 9517062 8 4 40pp

The siege of Mount Badon has, since the sixth century, been seen as a significant event in the great Age of Migrations and, from at least the early ninth century, associated with the name of Arthur. And yet arguments have raged over every aspect of it – when and where it occurred, who the protagonists were, what exactly went on, what it achieved and, indeed, if it really happened as we perceive it. Here is another attempt to answer some of these difficult questions, with mixed results.

The drawback of including a question in a title of course is that it encourages a facetious answer – usually negative! "Chariots of the Gods?" *Certainly not!* "Will the real King Arthur stand up?" *Not today, thank you.* According to Richard White, "I am no longer so confident that the 1500th anniversary of the battle of Badon Hill can be tied down to a particular year. It now appears that 1991, 1992, 1993, 1997, 1998 and 2003 at least are all possibilities." So, *Maybe not...*

White has however done his homework, having puzzled away at the ambiguities that surround, not only this topic, but the nature of the evidence over a number of years (in fact the first version of this booklet appeared in 1992). He outlines hypotheses and indicates their problems, particularly the difficulties with dates as given in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and acknowledges the incongruity of investigating an issue "which is at least a part of Celtic history from English sources". This is not to say that he doesn't use British sources – there is discussion of the relationship between Gildas' text and Bede's use of it, for example, and of the date of Maelgwn's death in the *Annales Cambriae* as a means of calibrating the general period when Badon may have occurred – but there is much debate on the possible re-calibration of *Chronicle* dates to arrive at his suggestion that the battle of Badon was located at Adam's Grave on the Wiltshire Downs.

This is not a conclusion that will appeal to many. To give White his due, this is only a tentative hypothesis, with many *if*s and *but*s, and, one suspects, certainly not his last word on the subject. An interesting foray, nevertheless, with lots of challenging speculation as, for instance, in the discussion of dykes on the Icknield Way (also familiar perhaps to readers of Michael Holmes' *King Arthur: a Military History*).

On the minus side, I wish the publisher in White would submit to the 21st century and not insist on a format which went out with Gestetners (remember them?). A bibliography, too, would have been welcome, rather than the reader having to garner titles from the text. And I was mildly irritated with his insistence on referring to the *Old English Chronicle* (instead of the more modern convention of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*)

and to the indigenous Britons of the time as Welsh, thus anachronistically making them strangers in their own country.

King Arthur's Greatest Battle is available from 106 Roding Lane North, Woodford Bridge, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 8LJ (see also *BookWorm*).

Chris Lovegrove

Paul Devereux
Haunted Land:
investigations into ancient mysteries and modern day phenomena
Piatkus 2001 £17.99
0 7499 2207 9 hb 230pp illus

If you've visited Cirencester Museum, you'll be familiar with the *Genii Cucullati* or Hooded Spirits. Read this book and you'll at least feel able to muster an appropriate greeting next time you meet them, if not to sustain and a conversation. The vast experience and original research undertaken by Paul Devereux, not to mention travels all around the globe, shine through this absorbing book. Where others have excited the curious with wonders, this respected researcher has investigated thoroughly and presented a cohesive narrative. The Arthurian archetype who rides out along the causeway from Cadbury Castle to Glastonbury Tor is here, prompting *Pendragon* readers to cast their nets much further back than the sixth century, at least to the Bronze Age.

But what is time? Ancient goddesses are as likely to appear as modern hitchhikers. If it's all in the mind, then what is the mind? Consciousness, the spirit within the land, is a mighty thing to grasp. Read this book and your aim will be clearer.

Laurence Main

Paul Devereux
Haunted Land:
investigations into ancient mysteries and modern day phenomena
Piatkus 2001 £17.99
0 7499 2207 9 hb 230pp illus

Paul Devereux is well known in the Earth Mysteries field, with 20 years as editor of *The Ley Hunter* and a host of books on geomantic studies to his credit. With this latest volume he goes in search of spirits in the landscape, travelling from sacred sites in the New World to some of the ancient ceremonial and holy places of the Old.

The book was born from some of the lines of enquiry that had evolved from researches in *The Ley Hunter*, and developed into the idea that the common thread linking many ancient sites, pathways through the landscape and 'native to place' stories was shamanism. From this starting point Paul travels from sites of rock art in New Mexico to the corpse roads of Old Europe in search of answers. The various spirits and energies that he encounters along these landscape paths are thoughtfully examined, putting them into context of their placement within the land. As well as some familiar personages and places such as Gwyn ap Nudd and Arthur, as inhabitants of the Wild Hunt, and Avalon, many other figures from different spiritual and mythical traditions are revealed. We are brought up to date with eye-witness accounts of modern ghost encounters, and an exploration of people's responses to folklore traditions concerning their awareness of beings, benign and malicious, who reside within the land.

The conclusions reached are that the physical and the spiritual / non-physical worlds are but two sides of the same coin, born from the same quantum sea that everything comes from, be it matter or consciousness. As Joni Mitchell sang, "We are stardust ..." This may not be an entirely new concept but Paul engagingly draws the reader along with him on his journey of discovery, for this is what the book is – one person's journey in trying to find out some of the answers of who and where we come from and our interaction with the spirits of the land and the world we all share.

The book is a success in that it made me think more deeply about landscapes and its myriad inhabitants than previously. I'm always conscious of the living spirit of the land (who couldn't be, residing in Wales?), but it's valuable to be reminded that occasionally it's all too easy to see only what is before our eyes and to be unaware

of the deeper levels of existence that surround us. It's fair to say that our ancestors, and the remaining indigenous peoples the world over, had and have a much greater symbiotic relationship with the land which we, as the current inheritors of what we call civilisation, have sadly misplaced in so many ways. *Haunted Land* is a book that I can thoroughly recommend to anyone who has an interest in the greater whole.

Simon Rouse

Paul Devereux
Stone Age Soundtracks
Chrysalis Books / Vega 2001 £12.99
1 843333 019 9 pb illus 160pp

By the time you read this review, you may have watched Channel 4's new TV series *Secrets of the Dead*, for which this is a companion book. The importance of the acoustic archaeology of ancient sites was brought home to me whilst engaged in the dreaming project organised by Paul Devereux at Chun Quoit in 1992. The walls of the dolmen suddenly reverberated with an impressive sound around midnight. So much so, that I tape-recorded the sound and was so amazed that I expected Old Merlin himself to materialise before me. After a few minutes, I crept outside this megalithic monument and realised that a nearby foghorn was operating. The sound (and its nature) was much greater within the stone chamber. Bearing in mind tales of mighty capstones being raised by Merlin's ancestors making the right sounds, this is a subject crying out for research. Step forward Paul Devereux, ever courageously inquiring where the establishment have feared to tread. Enter the subject at the embryonic stage by reading his fine book.

Laurence Main

Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud
A Dictionary of English Folklore
Oxford University Press 2001 £8.99
0 19 860398 3 pb 412pp

This revised paperback reference book (first published as a hardback in 2000) is authored by two stalwarts of the Folklore Society, who should then know what they are talking about. Over 1,250 entries cover a wide range of topics including seasonal customs, traditional tales, superstitions and beliefs. Key figures involved in the recording of lore are noted here, and evidence presented that folklore is part of a continually evolving process. What makes this book particularly worthwhile is that not all so-called traditional lore is accorded uncritical acceptance. Fun just to dip into, this work also includes references and a bibliography as further reading for those who can't get enough lore.

Pendragon readers may be pleasantly surprised to find a number of detailed entries of Arthurian interest, including Alderley Edge, Arthur, Avalon, Camelot, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Merlin, the Round Table and the Wild Hunt, all themselves cross-referenced to other entries such as the raven, giants, the Grail, and so on.

Chris Lovegrove

Niall Macnamara
The Leprechaun Companion
Pavilion Books 1999 £14.99
1 86205 193 3 hb illus

This book is delightful. It's fun, bright, cheerful and incidentally quite informative. As the title suggests, it's something of a celebration and natural history of leprechauns, including, in Chapter 4, a description of various other creatures of Faerie. Cheerfully and richly illustrated by Wayne Anderson, the whole work has a friendly, amusing character and would be easily suitable for children of all ages between 8 and 80.

The introduction begins with a complete denial of the rumour that leprechauns are descended from the Tuatha de Danaan, claiming that they are a completely separate race; but it does acknowledge the influence of those people in the heritage of the leprechauns, including such folk as clurichauns, brownies, bogarts and others in its pages. *The Leprechaun Companion* is another of those wonderfully eccentric works which so happily inspire the imagination. Well, I enjoyed it, anyway!

Ian Brown

Robert Roberts
Tapestries at Trew
Pikestaff Pamphlets series 2001
1 900974 16 9 24pp
£3.00 from Pikestaff Press, Ellon House, Harpford, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 0N11

This long poem, which forms Book One of a four book series entitled *Lest We Forget: an island story in four books*, is divided into three parts. Parts 1, "Opening Up", and 3, "Closing Down", both set somewhere in modern times, frame a ten page central part 2, "Letting in Light", for which the setting is a winter camp of the British forces some months before Badon.

"Letting in Light" begins as survivors of a lost battle regroup at an improvised strongpoint, an Iron Age hillfort; after seven days, Artorius arrives, and the three commanders among the soldiers put forward their rival views as to what should be done next, whether a defeatist retreat Westwards, an immediate guerilla attack on the off-guard Saxons, or a winter of consolidation, aimed at achieving real victory later.

Artorius responds foresightedly (so foresighted is his view into the long-term future of Britain that prior briefing by the prophet Merlin has presumably been involved!). Then, having convinced the doubters by common sense and charisma, in dramatic symbolic reversal of the stone-withdrawing legend, he plunges his sword into the hilltop's earth as pledge of commitment by all to remain and prepare thoroughly for a future decisive conflict. The section ends with subdued but solid hope: "The mist at last had lifted. All the crows had gone."

In the first of the framing poems, rare visitors come to a remote castle, Trew; they wish to see the place's famous tapestries, and a caretaker allows them into the sealed room where they are kept, although not normally accessible due to poor preservation (due to the owners' impoverishment). In the second, final, framing poem, the tapestries prove to depict the Battle of Badon, subsequent civil war among the Britons, and last return to Trew of Arthur's body. At this point, there is interruption – new owners have sent agents to take possession of the castle; they begin at once burning the treasures of the building, ancient books, the tapestries *etc* (why? wny not sell them to collectors? the unexplained senselessness of this behaviour seems to me the poem's one real weakness) while holiday crowds, arrived from nowhere, cheer the spectacular bonfire from outside the gates.

Considering more closely the Artorius section, the warriors are effectively individualised; their setting, and physical condition, as they rally after defeat, are convincingly described – the reader feels present, at plausible scenes possessing "a local habitation and a name". The *ababcadcd* rhyme pattern of the poem's nine line stanzas provides a structure, which the poets's use of the freedom of near-rhyme and flexible enjambement prevents from becoming overbearing and clunking. The language is generally low key and workmanlike, not high-flown; this can be seen as soldiers' poetry, doing what it sets out to, needs to, do, with the minimum of unnecessary fuss. (The references forward to future military history – "all the Waterloos of waiting infantry" and so on – could seem overdone, but I could understand the author's wish to provide linkages to tie this book with later ones in the series.)

Roberts has been brave in choosing to set his narrative at a point so considerably prequelling the turning-point Arthurian battle; he overcomes this self-chosen challenge with, I think, considerable success, by focusing on believable men coping with believable decisionmaking in a believable setting, so that the reader is pulled in to share their dilemma and its resolution, and thus discover the drama inherent in what initially seems a moment of inaction. Even if *Pendragon* readers might find themselves inclined to argue about points of detail in Roberts' account – how, for example, insuch an *ad hoc* army, has an "ethnic" division come about so clear-cut that all the commanders have Roman names, the other ranks Celtic ones? – this picture of Arthur coping with the timeless dilemmas of military command is one which

"reconstructed history".

Steve Sneyd

Lindsay Clarke
Parzival and the Stone from Heaven
HarperCollins 2001 £14.99
hb 240pp

As an English Literature undergraduate, Lindsay Clarke successfully resisted the lure of more fashionable authors like James Joyce. Instead he decided to devote his energies to the study of medieval literature, and before long found himself hooked. Like many before him it was the legend of the Holy Grail which was to offer the most inspiration. At first he studied how other authors had been influenced by these early myths, but soon he felt compelled to begin his own writing.

Clarke's Whitbread Prize-winning first novel *The Chymical Wedding*, which presents a version of *Gawain and the Green Knight*, vacillates between the past and the present, and has been compared favourably to John Fowles. Clarke's latest novel, however, bears more similarity in style and tone to Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*.

Parzival and the Stone from Heaven borrows from and freely adapts Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parsifal*. Clarke's tale, however, is purely a grail romance, a more inward oriented quest for self-fulfilment. His writing is vivid and impressionistic. At its best it is as captivating as T H White's *Once and Future King* and succeeds in imbedding recent associations into an ancient framework. Just like T S Eliot in *The Wasteland*, Clarke links the symbolism of the wounded Fisher King to the sterility of the modern world. Parzival's quest is explored on more than one level. His story is an individual pilgrimage and an initiation with defined stages. Yet there is a grander study of chivalry and knighthood – the ultimate philosophical goal of mankind, a new religious order. This is a beautiful tale combining the epic and the personal with both wit and a profound sense of tragedy.

Dani Hall

Kevin Crossley-Holland
Arthur: the Seeing Stone
Orion Publishing 2001 £5.99
0 75284 429 6 pb illus 338pp

If you haven't read this yet, then you are in for a treat. Following its publication in 2000 in hardback it deservedly won the Smarties Prize bronze medal and was shortlisted for the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year in 2001. Everything that the reviewers quoted at the front of the book say is spot on. Now all you need to do is go out and get a copy!

This Arthur is living in the Welsh Marches as the 12th century turns into the 13th. His life is paralleled by the young Arthur of legend, though he little knows it, only gradually discovering the echoes for himself as he uses a polished obsidian stone as a speculum. In it he descries the Arthur of legend – in medieval garb, to be sure, but then we read this novel in the English of the 21st century, which is equally anachronistic but proves no less magical – and learns all manner of truths about himself and his destiny.

But this is no *roman à clef*, to be nodded at sagely purely by those in the know. This is very much a human portrait, of a life on a manor that straddles two linguistic cultures, two social strata and two countries (as well as two centuries) and which, for a sensitive adolscent, throws up profound questions at a stage of life when growing up is already difficult. This is also a portrait of medieval society, told with sensitivity by a scholar who nevertheless doesn't wear his learning on his sleeve.

A delightful gem, then – and the good news is that *The Seeing Stone*'s sequel, *At the Crossing Places*, is already available in hardback (and will be reviewed next issue), with *King of the Middle March* yet to come; for readers at least of the paperback edition of *The Seeing Stone* the first two chapters of *At the Crossing Places* are even given as a taster!

Chris Lovegrove

bookworm

FICTION

An eclectic selection of items begins *BookWorm*'s preview of Arthurian fiction, brought to our attention by Steve Sneyd.

Gwyneth Jones' ***Bold as Love*** (308pp, Gollancz £10.99) gained a positive review from Francis Spufford in *The Guardian* [Aug 26 2001]. Rooted in the festival scene of 1971, but set in the near future, *Bold as Love* recaptures the feeling that "festivals are our modern version of pastoral – the way we urban English can imagine ourselves reconnected to the ancestral earth." In a post-devolution Britain, a festival has swallowed up the whole country of England. The three-way relationship of the main characters, Ax, Fiorinda and Sage "begin (of course) to tread out the steps of Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot" in a world that Spufford describes as being "where the young Mick Jagger is always to be found jamming in the Hundred Acre Wood, his gun lying on the grass beside him among the forget-me-nots". While *Bold as Love* ends happily, the sequel *Castles Made of Sand* we suspect may not.

Stuart Lee gave an interview on BBC Radio 2 on July 18th about his book ***The Holy Fool*** (Fourth Estate paperback £10.00) which apparently sets the story of Perceval in modern times. The plot involves an amnesiac who thinks he's an astronaut involved in a plot to hide the Grail on the Moon; Steve notes that he wrote a poem in the 70s where the Grail too ended up on the Moon! Lee wanted to include quotes from Malory, but was told he'd have to pay £180.00 a time for each quote from a modern translation, so he taught himself enough Middle English to do his own translation of the bits he wanted. An odd synchronicity occurred when he left his publisher's office, having signed the contract: he was accosted by a beggar who sold him three poems for £1.00 – one was about Percival!

The next title features (in the words of the British Fantasy Society's reviewzine *PRISM*) "everyone's favourite flying rodent impersonator". ***Batman – The Chalice***, written by Chuck Dixon and illustrated by John Van Fleet (DC Comics £9.99, $14.95), "delves into Fortean territory" when Bruce Wayne receives a curious package addressed to his father; we are to understand that an ancestor of the Wayne family discovered its contents in the Holy Land centuries before, so no prizes for guessing what it must really be ...

Finally, Geoff Sawers has drawn our attention to Dani Stone's review of Lindsay Clarke's ***Parzival and the Stone from Heaven*** in *Waterstone's Book Quarterly* (No 2, page 70), a retelling of Wolfram's medieval epic which Dani has also reviewed for *Pendragon*. Incidentally, the *Quarterly* is itself a very good read at £2.00 for 100-odd pages of reviews, articles and offers.

FACTUAL

Leslie Alcock's ***Arthur's Britain*** was first published thirty years ago in the wake of his successful excavations at South Cadbury hillfort, a major site of the Arthurian period. Last revised in 1989, it is now republished as a Classic Penguin (0 141 39069 7 £5.99) for newcomers or conveniently for those whose Pelican paperbacks are falling to pieces.

Next, a couple of titles putting Dark Age Celtic Britain into context. From Thames & Hudson comes John Hayward's ***The Historical Atlas of the Celtic World*** (0 500 051097 £19.95 144pp), with full-colour maps covering 3000 years from Bronze Age origins to the present-day diaspora. Barry Cunliffe's well-illustrated ***Facing the Ocean: the Atlantic and its Peoples*** (OUP 0 19 924019 1 £25.00 608pp), which has been out for some time now, explores how cultures from Iceland to Portugal were shaped by living at the edge of the known world.

Barry Cunliffe has also written ***The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek*** (£12.99), one of *BBC History Magazine*'s November selection of history books: in the 4th century BC Pytheas

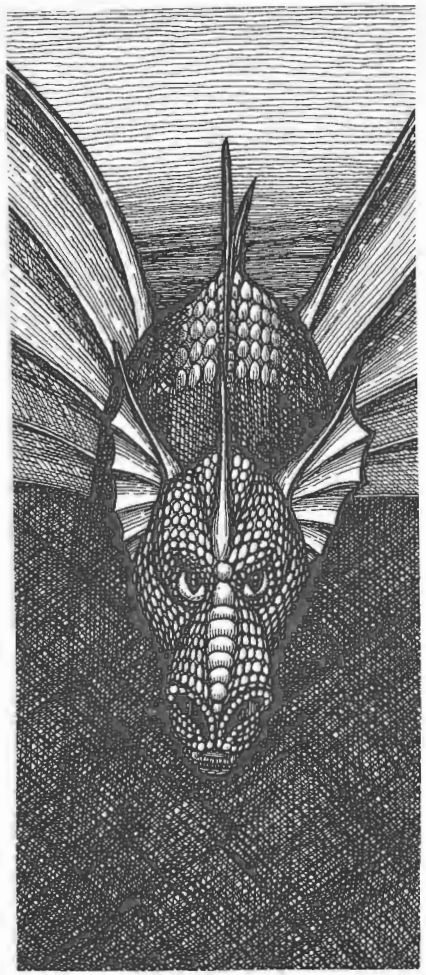
journeyed to Britain, Iceland and the edge of the Arctic, and was the first literate person to describe the British Isles. Also in the same selection is ***The Tempus History of Wales 25000 BC–AD 2000***, edited by Prys Morgan (Tempus Publishing £16.99).

Malcolm Todd's ***Migrants and Invaders*** (Tempus paperback, 0 7524 1437 2 £17.99) is subtitled *The Movement of Peoples in the Ancient World* and "looks at all aspects of population movement from the prehistoric era to the birth of modern Europe".

Forthcoming scholarly (though pricey) studies from Boydell & Brewer include at least four titles relating to the Matter of Britain. In the Arthurian Studies series, Neil Thomas' **Diu Crône *and the Medieval Arthurian Cycle*** (0 84991 636 7 £35.00, April 2002) examines Heinrich von dem Turlin's late medieval romance *The Crown* which, unusually, makes Gawain the successful Grail achiever. Meanwhile, in their Arthurian Archives series, Gloria Allaire's ***Italian Arthurian Literature 1:*** **Tristano Panciatichiano** is the first critical edition with English translation of the Tristan section of an Italian 14th-century prose compilation based on French models (0 85991 645 6 £50.00, May 2002).

The third title is Antonina Harbus' ***Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend*** (0 85991 625 1 £45.00, July 2002) which claims to be the first study to examine the origins, development, political exploitation and decline of the legend of St Helena from Anglo-Saxon times onwards. Then there is ***New Directions in Arthurian Studies*** edited by Alan Lupack (0 85991 642 1 £40.00, July 2002). another in the Arthurian Studies series, this collection of essays suggests paths that Arthurian studies must take to remain vital, ranging from the Middle Ages to the 21st century, from Arthur in African-American culture to modern Arthurian fiction and film.

Last, but not least, Anne Ross' **Folklore of Wales** (Tempus pb 0 7524 1935 8 £12.99 159pp illus) will be reviewed next time.



Featured Publishers

PENDRAGON PRESS

As promised last issue, here are details of some **Pendragon Press** publications, all available direct from Pendragon Press, Box 888, Launceston PL15 7YH.

First, Paul Broadhurst's 1992 opus ***Tintagel and the Arthurian Mythos***, which looks at the legends that have been the inspiration behind medieval and Victorian revivals and which are "again being recognised as having an archetypal power to touch and transform human minds": this costs £16.95 plus £1.50 postage for the 204- page paperback and £35.00 for the limited edition hardback.

Paul Broadhurst's own ***Secret Shrines*** (£22.50 plus £2.50 postage) is subtitled *In Search of the Old Holy Wells of Cornwall* and describes itself as "an entertaining and informative ramble" around these ancient sites. Lauded by John Michell and Colin Wilson, this new large-format paperback edition has several full-colour plates by the author, himself a professional photographer, with other photos and Victorian engravings printed in sepia.

The Sun and the Serpent is co-authored by Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst, and deals with secrets in the English landscape (0 9515183 1 3 – £12.95 plus £1.50 postage for the 224-page illustrated paperback). Finally, ***The Dance of the Dragon*** (2000) is Pendragon Press' most recent publication, authored by Paul Broadhurst and Hamish Miller, with Vivienne Shanley and Ba Russell; the subtitle, *An Odyssey into Earth Energies and Ancient Religion* succinctly details its subject matter. Among other things it expounds on an "Apollo–St Michael axis", 2500 miles long, "stretching from Ireland through Cornwall, France, Italy, Greece and Israel, marked by sanctuaries dedicated to the Archangel Michael and Apollo" and including Skellig Michael, St Michael's Mount, Mont St Michel, Monte Gargano, Delphi, Delos, Rhodes and Mount Carmel. The well-illustrated 400-page hardback retails at £28.00, and the paperback at £16.95.

KING ARTHUR PUBLICATIONS

We have now received details from Richard White of **King Arthur Publications** of publications currently available, with prices. The first two titles are in A5, designed specifically for mail order, with discounts for *Pendragon* readers in the UK at least.

- ***How not to deal with a hoaxer*** £1.60 UK, £1.99 overseas. This has material about the Glastonbury Cross; the illustrated version will be issued until stocks, now very low, are exhausted.
- ***King Arthur's Greatest Battle: is 2003 the 1500th anniversary?*** £3.20 UK, £3.60 overseas. This is reviewed elsewhere.

Other publications available are *How not to pay your Poll Tax ... and your Council Tax* (£1.60 UK, £1.99 overseas), *The Roding Lane (and Environs) Book* (£4.99/£5.99), *Supplement to the Roding Lane (and Environs) Book* (£2.99/£3.99), and *The Catalogue of the Library of the Enfield Archaeological Society* (£3.50/$4.50). All cheques should be payable to "Richard White", and overseas payments should be made in sterling, and cover the cost of Air Mail. Write to Dr Richard White, 106 Roding Lane North, Woodford Bridge, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 8LJ.

CAPALL BANN PUBLISHING

Julia and Jon Day began **Capall Bann** in 1993 to publish titles on a "wide variety of spiritual paths and points of view". While many of these are primarily inspiritional in tone, a number deal with topics of direct or peripheral Arthurian interest.

New titles in print in 2001 include Rupert Ferguson's ***The Lay of the Last Minstrel: Sir Walter Scott and the Border minstrel tradition*** (186163 1189 – £17.95), which portrays Scott as "the true successor to the minstrel tradition which can be traced right back to the magician Merlin and the Dark Age poets of the Arthurian period," and ***The Complete Dictionary of European Gods and Goddesses*** by Janet & Stewart Farrar and Gavin Bone (186163 1227 – £11.95) which is described as "a highly useful sourcebook for both the academic and the

spiritually interested" and which also examines how heroic figures like Arthur function like divinities, whatever their origins.

Exchange magazine editor Michael Howard's ***Faery Beasts and Animals of Legend*** (186163 2061) details exactly what it says on the cover, including the belief that the last dragon was killed in West Wales as late as the 18th century, while A C Allen's intriguingly-titled (and rather idiosyncratically-spelled) ***Reflections from a snake sorceror's life: the true Arthurian legacy and confessions of a snake sorceror*** (186163 1383) claims to outline the esoteric origins of the Arthurian and Avalonian legends.

To finish, here are two titles from old Pendragon friend Nigel Pennick. ***Lost Cities and Sunken Lands*** (01898307 83 0 – £10.95) has been revised and updated and includes Cantref y Gwaelod, Lyonesse and Caer Arianrhod in its discussion, while ***The Power Within: the way of the warrior and the martial arts in the European tradition*** (186163 1537) is to be published in early 2002.

Capall Bann's 2002 catalogue of over 200 titles is available from Freshfields, Chieveley, Berks RG20 8TF (phone 01635 247050), or by e-mailing capallbann1@virginbiz.com. Or you can visit them on-line at

www.capallbann.co.uk

HALLOWQUEST

And now for some publishing news from **John and Caitlin Matthews**, two prolific authors who scarcely need any introduction here. John's ***Taliesin: Shamanism and the Bardic Mysteries in Britain and Ireland***, originally published in 1991 by The Aquarian Press, is due to be back in print in 2002 from Inner Traditions. Also due next year are John and Caitlin's ***Encyclopaedia of Celtic Myth and Legend***, with new translations of source texts, particularly Irish, and John's ***The Song of Arthur***, from Quest Books, a collection of completely new Arthurian stoies with a selection of older works in revised form.

The Song of Arthur is the follow-up to a recently revised and re-published *The Song of Taliesin: tales from King Arthur's Bard*, with illustrations from Stuart Littlejohn (Quest 2001). Finally, sets of their ***The Arthurian Tarot*** are once more available, based on the Dark Age Arthurian characters with "a fully pictorial minor arcana depicting the landscapes of Britain; the four suits are the Hallows of the Sword, Spear, Grail and Stone." Details of all these and other publications are available from Graal Publications, BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX and on their website

www.hallowquest.org.uk

BOYDELL & BREWER

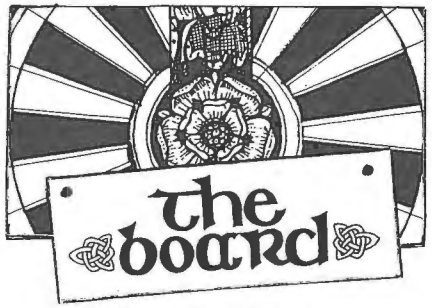
Last issue you will have received an insert with 25% off offers on selected Arthurian and related titles from **Boydell & Brewer** which we hope you found useful; the closing date was January 31st 2002. We trust you will have taken advantage of the offer, the success of which will help determine whether we run something similar in the future! We're grateful to Boydell & Brewer for setting up an arrangement that we hope is advantageous to all concerned.

www.boydell.co.uk

CASTLE BOOKSHOP

If you are having difficulty locating that elusive title in archaeology, local history, placenames or topography, you could do worse than try **Castle Bookshop**, who specialise in remaindered, second-hand and antiquarian books in these and related subjects. For example, *The Passage of arms: an archaeological analysis of prehistoric hoards and votive deposits* (with a cover showing Arthur receiving Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake) and Dent and Goodall's classic *A History of British Native Ponies: from the Bronze Age to the Present Day* (useful for evidence of Dark Age cavalry mounts) can be got for around half the published price. Further details from Castle Bookshop, The Old Rectory, Llandyssil, Montgomery, Powys SY15 6LQ 01686 668484 castlebooks@dial.pipex.com

www.archaeologybooks.co.uk



THE SMALL SCREEN

Fred Stedman-Jones' longterm research on "that intriguing artefact" the **Nanteos Cup** – sometimes called the Welsh Holy Grail – was featured on a TV programme directed by Pendragon member **Colin Thomas** of Teliesyn TV Co-operative – Teliesyn also produced *Excalibur: the Search for Arthur* (fronted by the late Gwyn Alf Williams) for S4C and the BBC. The Welsh-language version for S4C was shown on December 22 2001 as ***Ar Drywydd Y Greal Sanctaidd***, presented by Dr Marion Löffler who is a Welsh-speaking medievalist. The English-language version (in which Fred appears) which is due in the spring – with showings in the USA and in Germany – also traces the history of the Grail over two millennia (see Colin's article this issue).

Meanwhile, a company called **Pioneer Productions** was at the research stage when they contacted us recently – they plan to produce (yet another) programme on the subject of the **Holy Grail**, and were looking for people claiming to possess it (did *you* have it last?) or involved in ceremonies centred on it. The programme is aimed primarily at an American TV market, with worldwide distribution yet to be arranged.

Beryl Mercer draws our attention to a BBC-TV documentary entitled ***Arthur, King of the Britons*** currently in production (Jamie Smith "Harris reprises his role as King of the Britons" *Western Morning News* December 17 2001). Richard Harris, who played the king in the 1967 film musical *Camelot* (and later in stage revivals) was on location at Tintagel during filming of the documentary at Camelot Castle Hotel.

A BBC spokesperson said that "the programme will be looking at the truth behind the Arthurian legend and will be asking questions like 'Who was the real Arthur?'" I'm sure we will all be agog for the answers, to be revealed when the one-hour special is transmitted sometime in the spring.

Children's ITV has been regularly dishing up helpings of ***Merlin the Magical Puppy*** on Thursdays this autumn. This series of ten-minute programmes illustrates the continuing fascination with the presumed abilities of Arthur's professional mage and his ilk, as did ***Real Wizards: the Search for Harry's Ancestors*** (Lion Productions for Channel 4, 8.30–10.00 November 26).

In the wake of the phenomenally successful *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (*Sorcerer's Stone* in the US), and in anticipation of the first film of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *Real Wizards* looked at the evidence showing the historical, medical and scientific background on which fictional magicians' activities are based. Amongst the expert contributors to the programme were Nikolai Tolstoy, Ronald Hutton and Miranda Aldhouse-Green, dis-coursing on shapeshifting, wands, druids, cauldrons, divination, flying, spells and – of course – Merlin.

POPULAR CULTURE

Spotted by Kevin Byrne in *The Northern Echo* was an item on the first **Great Holy Grail Trail**, a walking treasure hunt around the city of York ("Take the Grail Trail" October 20 2001). This was devised by *The Northern Echo*'s walks writer Mark Reid in association with Black Sheep Brewery, inspired by their specially-commissioned bottled beer, **Mony Python's Holy Grail Ale**. The October fun day could have taken four hours for The Templars Search or a shorter two-hour trail for families; either way, adult participants were promised a bottle of the aforementioned ale, with goody bags for families and prizes for those raising the most sponsorship for local Marie Curie Nurses.

Still on an alcohol-related theme, recently spotted on Tesco's shelves was a limited edition red wine, 1998 vintage, from Casa Vinicola Firriato FIV srl in Sicily. Furnished with the name of **Camelot**, this Cabernet Merlot was supposedly inspired by the Arthurian legends embroidered on the marriage quilts of a 14th century Sicilian noblewoman. At £9.99 per bottle and 14.5% proof, this wine in the Indicazione Geographica Tipica category is perhaps not your usual *vino di tavola*, round or otherwise.

Maddy Prior is best known as lead singer of Steeleye Span, the group which in the 70s most brought electric folk music (sometimes disparagingly called "folk 'n' roll") to the public ear. As well as recently receiving an MBE for her services to folk music, the Cumbrian chanteuse has brought out a new album entitled ***Arthur The King***. Staying on a musical note, an interview with Andy Kershaw on BBC Radio 3 (December 21) revealed that the title of a new album by country singer Mary Gauche (spelling?) was to be called ***The Camelot Motel***.

TREADING THE BOARDS

A new musical play with Arthurian undertones has premiered in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia (November 10th–24th). Written by Sophie Masson and Christopher Ross-Smith, with music by Lesley Sly, ***The Green Prince*** was adapted from Sophie Masson's own fantasy novel (*The Green Prince*, naturally) published in 2000 by Hodder Headline Australia.

Sixteen-year-old Jack Fisher is an orphan from a small riverside village who discovers his true lineage and destiny as the next Champion of the Green Kingdom. Chosen by the Green Prince to fight the monstrous Grimlow of the Abyss, he journeys with a merman and a puckish spring-spirit into the underwater lands of river, lake and ocean where he meets the Green Prince and discovers who Grimlow really is.

The Green Prince was performed at the Arts Theatre of the University of New England by a local cast and presented by the Armidillos Theatre Company and the New England Writers' Centre. Co-writer **Sophie Masson** will be familiar to regular readers as the author of over thirty fantasy novels and President of the **Arthurian Association of Australia**. Ian Brown reports that Sophie reveals that the Green Prince of the title is "a woman called Lady Argante of Lyonesse", and that "Jack has elements of the Fisher King – but he's also a little like Perceval ... and a little like Lancelot too ..."

We reported in *The Board* (*28/2*) on **Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters**, who had performed ***Where's Merlin?*** during the summer of 1999 at various British venues, notably at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall during the solar eclipse. Recently there came news of Kesey's death, in November 2001, at the age of 66. During the 60s he was involved with the American LSD scene (before the drug became illegal) and became associated with the cult band The Grateful Dead before going on to write *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS

The British branch of the **International Arthurian Society** held its annual get-together for 2001 at the University of Bristol in September. A full timetable of events included an excursion to Caerleon and Chepstow Castle as well as the usual range of presentations on medieval Arthurian themes, some of the more intriguing being "Body Language in *Layamon*", "Lancelot in Nottingham" and "Magic and the Limits of the Will in Malory". Unfortunately your Editor's previous commitments precluded sampling any of these delights.

The International Arthurian Society's **International Congress** takes place at the University of Wales, **Bangor** from July 21st to July 28th 2002. The three plenary sessions feature

- Dr Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan of the National Library of Wales on a Celtic topic (in English)
- Prof Laurence Harf-Lancner of l'Université de Paris III on a French topic (in French)

- Prof Volker Mertens of the Freie Universität, Berlin on "Gawein Männlichkeitsbilder im höfischen Roman" (in German)

More details can be had from
www.bangor.ac.uk/arthur/ias.htm

The **Isle of Avalon Foundation** in Glastonbury is involved in a project to consecrate a new Goddess temple in Glastonbury in 2002. Claimed as the first permanent temple of the Goddess built in Britain, perhaps in Europe, for millennia, it opened on February 1, the pagan festival of Imbolc, and was dedicated to **Our Lady of Avalon**. For further details phone 01458 831518 or 830698 (item in Bristol-based *The Spark* No 27 Jan-March 2002).

A note in *The Western Mail* for July 21st drew attention to what must have been an exhibition though, as member Dr Terence Rees notes, the wording was rather vague. ***The Adventures of King Arthur in Snowdonia and Anglesey*** was "an original look at the legend and a must for those interested in visual art and the sights of North Wales." Showing at the Bulkeley Hotel in Beaumaris, Anglesey from the end of July until September 3rd, the exhibition, described as an "18-piece set of work[s]", was "set against local tourist attractions such as Penmon Priory and Lake Padarn" and retold the legends "with a unique Welsh twist".

A review of the Edinburgh exhibition ***The Quest for Camelot*** highlighted last issue will appear (appropriately) in the forthcoming Camelot edition of *Pendragon*.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Apologies to Anna-Marie Ferguson and Daphne Phillips for the garbled appearance of their names last issue (pages 43 and 48 respectively). Beryl Mercer writes that she was wryly amused by the comparison between Anna-Marie Ferguson's remark on page 7 ("Please note it is Anna and not Anne") and the typo in Ian Brown's review ("... in Annan-Maire's own words ...").

In "The Lake" the date of Susan Chitty's *The Beast and the Monk* (Hodder & Stoughton) was mysteriously truncated – it should be 1974; and Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*, after serialisation in *Macmillan's Magazine*, appeared in 1863 (no date was given in the article). The 1889 edition has wonderful illustrations by Linley Sambourne, while a modern critical edition is available in Oxford World Classics, edited by Brian Alderson (1995).

The site labelled **B** in Fig 2 page 27 was in fact Banvou. Other minor errors, too numerous to mention, are the inevitable result of last-minute editing prior to despatching the journal to the printers – deep apologies if they affected your contribution!

FEATURED JOURNALS

"The Magazine for the New Antiquarian," ***3rd Stone***, is returning to four issues per year (details in the exchange journals listing). Always readable, *3rd Stone*'s 41st issue doesn't feature anything specifically Arthurian but does include contributions from Jeremy Harte, Alby Stone, Alastair McBeath and Ian Brown, all of whom have appeared in the pages of *Pendragon* over the years.

Steve Pollington has edited ***Wiðowinde*** for nearly a decade, but sadly with No 126 has decided to call it a day with a typically witty "Signing off" piece, ending *So long, and thanks for all the disks.* His swansong issue includes Geri Wendelwulf's entertaining "Hengest" (subtitled "How Hengest was exiled from Daneland and won a kingdom from the Wælas"), Karl Wittwer's Anglo-Saxon news digest with a handful of Arthurian items, and a continuing debate in the letters section on English identity and the nature of the relict British population in the east.

Also signing off as editor is Andrew H W Smith of ***Ceridwen's Cauldron***, but he will be just swapping hats when he guest-edits *Pendragon* next issue. We still await the re-appearance of the magazine of the Oxford Arthurian Society (edited by Hannah E Means) but, don't despair, a double issue is promised imminently; it will be interesting to view again this different take on Arthuriana.

Chris Lovegrove, with Steve Sneyd

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 *E-mail* info@labyrinthos.net
www.labyrinthos.net

The Cauldron Paganism, earth mysteries, folklore *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
E-mail mike@the-cauldron.fsnet.co.uk
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 *E-mail* 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 *Sample* £2.00 *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
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

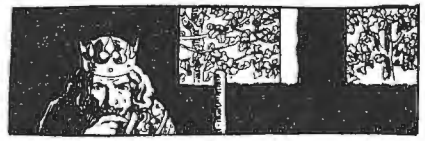
Northern Earth Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group *Editor* John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W Yorks HX7 5NP *Sample* £1.70 *Four issues* £6.50 *Cheques* Northern Earth Mysteries Group *E-mail* ne_editor@annexe.org.uk
www.northernearth.co.uk

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 *Editor* Neil Mortimer *Sample* £5.95 *Four issues* £24.00 from PO Box 961, Devizes, Wilts SN10 2TS *Cheques* 3rd Stone
www.thirdstone.demon.co.uk

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



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