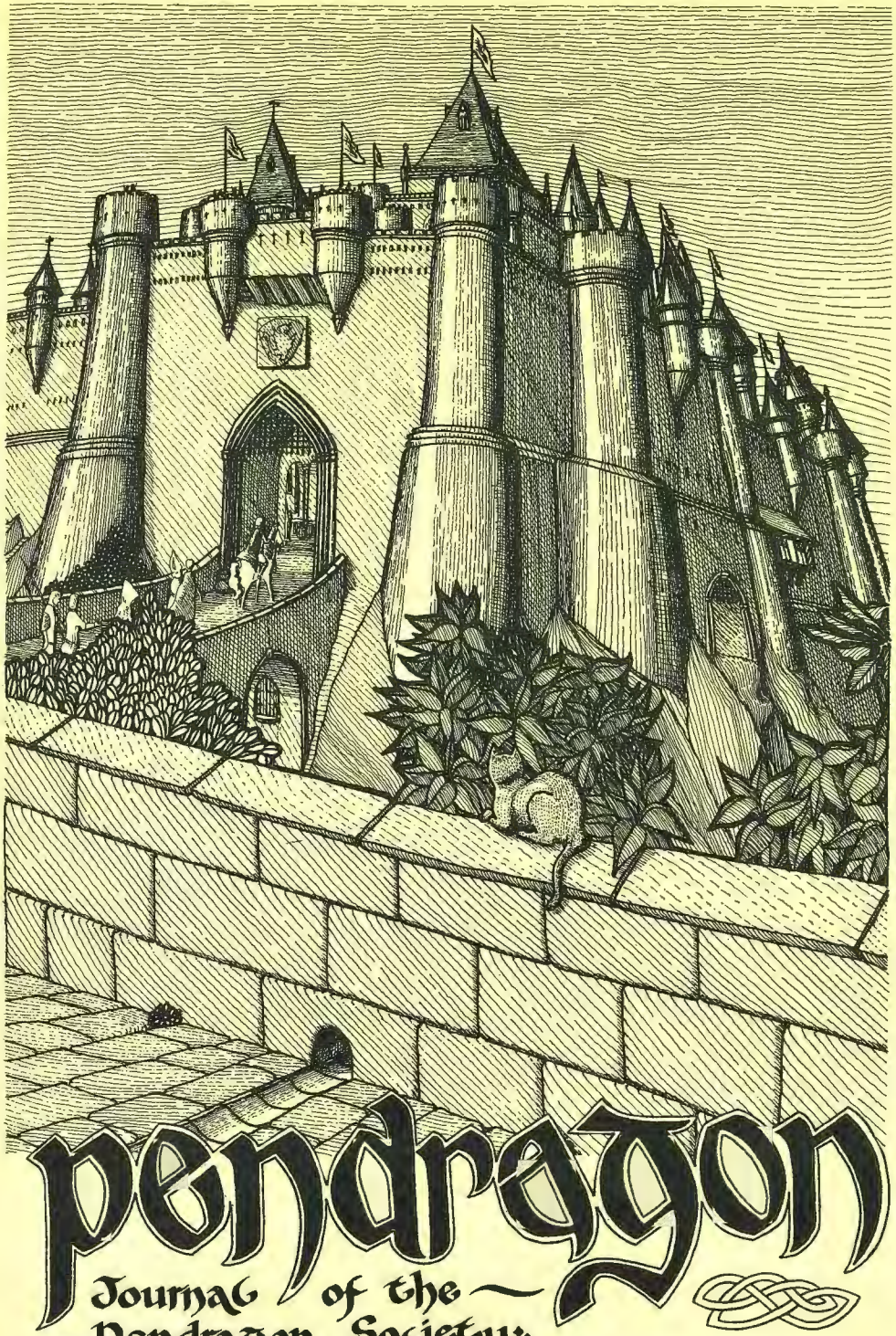
pendragon
Journal of the
Pendragon Society

Editorial

Vol XXX No 3 Autumn–Winter 2002–3

Caerwent

Camelot

"Here is a city of enchanters, built by fairy kings ... There is no such city anywhere, but all a vision." These assessments from Gareth's awed companions in Tennyson's 'Gareth and Lynette' were in response to their first view of Camelot:

At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets halfway down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below ...
And there was no gate like it under heaven.

For many, Camelot was Arthur's chief residence *par excellence* during chivalry's Golden Age, a city bustling with confidence and activity but which, ironically, held within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Yet its allure is such that the brevity of its heyday doesn't put off the many claimants for its title: Caerleon, Caerwent, Carlisle, Chester, Colchester, Kelso, Llanmelin, Montgomery, South Cadbury, Winchester and Wroxeter (to name but a few). Nor does the possible attraction of *hubris* dissuade others from naming their enterprises after it.

As well as the multi-faceted and multi-layered city the usual regular features appear, many also reflecting the same theme (including *Talking Head*, making a welcome return). The letters pages contain reactions to recent editions (particularly *Avalon*), while the reviews highlight the vast number of recent books, many of which include Arthur somewhere in their title.

We have lost contact with Andrew H W Smith, who was originally due to have guest-edited this edition. If anyone has any news regarding Andrew we would be pleased to hear from them. Meanwhile, to any contributor who sent in material for inclusion in this issue but which doesn't appear, deep apologies are due. If it's possible to re-submit any relevant items we will try to publish them in a future issue.

Diversity

Cardinal Cox has had a variety of pieces published in a number of small-press titles, written reviews for the British Fantasy Society, was a finalist in the Manchester Festival of Fantastic Films and has been appointed Poet Laureate of Peterborough; his two poems were inspired by tales in *The Mabinogion*.

After a hiatus spent researching the Nanteos Cup, Fred Stedman-Jones resurrects his *Talking Head* feature, picking up topics from past issues and expanding on general Arthurian themes. The column's reference is to the story of Bran's head in *The Mabinogion* (not TV pundits or the US band) which in legend served to safeguard Britain until King Arthur got rid of it!

Every issue represents the combined efforts of a number of people, and this one is no exception. Thanks are due to the various contributors, and in particular to Ian Brown, Simon and Anne Rouse, Bill Russell, Steve Sneyd and Fred Stedman-Jones; and to Marilyn Bechely, author of *Gawain the White Hawk*, who wrote "I am enjoying [*Pendragon*] very much; there is so much diversity in the articles" – a review of her book, other reviews, articles on the Glastonbury Cross, Tennyson, Macbeth and much else are all in the pipeline for future issues to testify to that diversity! Do note that **Perceval** is the next theme – contributions by the end of April please!

The aims of the Pendragon Society are to investigate Arthurian *history and archaeology – legend, myth and folklore – literature, arts and popular culture*.

Finally, if your subscription is now due, a cross in the box above or an enclosed slip will be a reminder.

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Illustrations *Ian Brown* cover and line illustrations
Other illustrations and picture research *Editor*

President Professor W M S Russell **Publicity** Fred Stedman-Jones, Smithy House, Kingsley Road, Newton-by-Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX
Enquiries and subscriptions Simon and Anne Rouse, 7 Verlon Close, Montgomery, Powys SY15 6SH, Wales **Annual subscription** £7.50 for three issues UK *Sample* £2.00 Cheques payable to **The Pendragon Society**.
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Editor Chris Lovegrove, 125 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5QG
edpendragon@yahoo.co.uk
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FLOODS, DOCTORS, SNAKES ...

The Avalon issue was another great success, with the beautiful cover by Anna-Marie Ferguson. I am delighted that the articles on the Lake Lady by Beryl Mercer, the Editor and me gave rise to such a lively and informative correspondence. The size of these letters encourage me to write a very long one myself.

Beryl Mercer asks for details of the Lake Syfadon inundation. This lake was the subject of another legend, in which it housed an *afanc* (specifically Celtic monster), which nobody succeeded in dragging out of the lake. On the inundation legend, Rhys has this to say:[1]

'The people of the neighbourhood have a story that all the land now covered by the lake belonged to a princess, who had an admirer to whom she would not be married unless he procured plenty of gold; she did not care how. So he one day murdered and robbed a man who had money, and the princess then accepted the murderer's suit, but she felt uneasy on account of reports as to the murdered man's ghost haunting the place where his body had been buried. So she made her admirer go at night to interview the ghost and lay it.

Whilst he waited near the grave he heard a voice inquiring whether the innocent man was not to be avenged, and another replying that it would not be avenged till the ninth generation. The princess and her lover felt safe enough and were married: they multipled and became numerous, while their town grew to be as it were another Sodom; and the original pair lived on so astonishingly long that they saw their descendants of the ninth generation. They exulted in their prosperity, and one day held a great feast to celebrate it; and when their descendants were banqueting with them, and the gaiety and mirth were at their zenith, ancestors and descendents were one and all drowned in a mighty cataclysm which produced the present lake.'

In response to Beryl Mercer's comment on Cantre'r Gwaelod, rape is certainly an abominable crime, but I don't think I was unduly harsh in calling the drowning of all the men, women and children of sixteen towns 'an appalling vengeance' for it!

My thanks to Charles Evans-Günther for putting me (and Rhys!) right about the Physicians of Myddfai. It is interesting that these real people were linked so recently to the legend. A similar case from Central Europe is Judah Rosenberg's book of so-called legends about Rabbi Loew (a real and distinguished person of the sixteenth century), which linked him with the legend of the golem; this linkage caught on.[2]

Since he is interested in Japanese snakes, I recommend to him a superb essay on the Japanese Snake Woman by Carmen Blacker.[3]

... AUBREY, PALESTINE AND APPLES ...

My thanks also to Geoff Sawers for producing the passage from Aubrey about Prince Charles practising the *Sortes Virgilianae* in Paris with Cowley. When I wrote of his father doing it in the Bodleian I couldn't remember my source, but it certainly wasn't Aubrey. His account is very circumstantial, and since he got it from Cowley's writings it is surely authentic. What a pity – it would be so much more dramatic if the king himself read Dido's terrible words! But probably somebody else had this point of view, and improved on the story, producing the spurious version I had come across. I was astonished that the Stuart prince couldn't construe a few lines of Virgil. What a contrast with the superbly educated Tudor princes and princesses.

Beryl Mercer also writes about ancient trials, and asks about the powers occupying Palestine. Unless they caught the eye of historians or jurists, ancient trial records generally succumbed to the ravages of the millennia. For instance, we have quite a lot of court speeches by the Attic orators in Athens and by Cicero in Rome, but we rarely know the verdict.

As for Palestine, it remained in the Roman Empire, until AD 614, when it was briefly conquered by the Sassanian Persians. In 629, the Emperor Heraclius recovered it, but in 640 it was permanently lost to the Byzantines when the Arabs conquered it.

In the late 11th century the Seljuk Turks took over Palestine. From then to the late 13th century was the era of the Crusades. At first the Europeans occupied most of Palestine, but over the two centuries they gradually lost it again to the Moslems. In 1187 the Kurdish Sultan Saladin drove them back to the coast, and by 1291 the Mameluke ruler of Egypt, Baibars, and his successors, drove them into the sea and back to Europe. The Mamelukes retained Palestine until 1516, when the Ottoman Turks brought it into their Empire. It remained Turkish until 1920, when the Turks lost it for being on the wrong side in the First World War. From then until 1948 it was a British Protectorate, but in that year it became the State of Israel.

Finally, since both the Editor and Beryl Mercer discussed apples (appropriately) in the Avalon issue [4] [5] – I liked her apple-blossom-time interpretation of Blancheland! – I may note that the apples of the Tree of Knowledge have made two appearances in modern English literature – H G Wells's short story 'The Apple', and David Lindsay's novel *The Violet Apple*.

W M S Russell, Reading, Berkshire

• *It may also be appropriate here to recommend the last part of Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials fantasy trilogy,* The Amber Spyglass, *a powerfully-told variation of the Garden of Eden story – but as Redemption rather than Fall.*

... WALES, THE MIDDLE EAST ...

Enjoyed the Avalon edition of *Pendragon* and was inspired to write a bit about an Eastern Earthly Paradise. But found both Professor Russell's and Chris Lovegrove's articles excellent. Also was intrigued by Colin Thomas's piece about the Grail TV programme. Missed the Welsh one, though I was home at the time, and will be unlikely to see the English one, unless someone records it and then I won't see it until the end of the year. Meanwhile ...

Firstly, I found Ian Brown's "name game" completely unconvincing. *Llan* is certainly used to mean a holy place but *llwch*, as far as I am aware, means "dust" not a lake (*llyn* is Welsh for lake). Many have tried to put Lancelot into a Welsh context but all, in my opinion, have failed. I think Lancelot is purely the creation of Chrétien de Troyes.

Beryl Mercer asks about Roman rule – well I think they continued to control Palestine until the empire split into two in 395 CE. After that it was part of the Eastern or Byzantine Empire until 640 CE when it was invaded by the Moslems.

As for Geoff Sawers' comments about the trial by Sanhedrin – if that was so then Jesus would have been stoned to death rather than crucified. I don't think Pontius Pilate would have given two figs about what a Jewish crowd shouted but if Jesus was preaching rebellion he certainly would have had him nailed to a tree! However, the Gospels seem to me to be very pro-Roman, giving Pilate a good press and putting the blame on the Jews. Personally, I don't believe the story and am sure that it was all written to fit in with Old Testament prophecies.

As for the Old Testament, according to Professor Moriya Akio, the oldest extant copy of it is the early 11th century *Leningrad Codex*. Only fragments, such as those found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, are older and not quite the same. I am also

[1] Rhys, Sir J (1980) *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx* (2 vols, London: Wildwood) Vol 1, 73–4.

[2] Russell, W M S (1982) "Folktales and Science Fiction" *Folklore 93*, 3–30, especially 23.

[3] Blacker, C (1978) "The Snake Woman in Japanese Myth and Legend" in Potter, J R and Russell, W M S eds *Animals in Folklore* (Ipswich and Cambridge: Brewer for The Folklore Society) 113–125, 256–257

[4] Lovegrove, C (2001–2) "An Earthly Paradise" *Pendragon 29* No 4, 22–26.

[5] Mercer, B (2001–2) "Avalon: the Cornish Connection" *Pendragon 29* No 4, 27–28.

sure that both the Old Testament and Judaism owes a lot to Assyria and Babylonia, composing most, if not all, of their earlier religious works during the Exile period before 538 BCE. I think the story of the Garden of Eden was probably adopted at this period.

As for the Garden of Eden....

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

• *Recording a death in New Testament Palestine could take several forms. An item in* The Daily Telegraph *which caught my eye began, 'The words "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus" inscribed on an empty 1st century ossuary have provoked excitement in the world of biblical archaeology.'*

The inscription in Aramaic is from a 20-inch-long limestone box from a Jerusalem suburb dated to AD 63, thirty years after the traditional date of Christ's crucifixion, and close in time to the date – AD 62 – when St James was reported by Jewish historian Josephus to have been stoned to death.

A palaeographer from the Sorbonne estimates that "only twenty men called James in the city had a brother called Jesus and a father named Joseph at the time". Further, the use of ossuaries being so rare, and the citing of both a brother and a father so unusual, the implication is that the Jesus mentioned must have been "exceptional".

"The James ossuary may be the most important find in the history of New Testament archaeology," the editor of the Biblical Archaeology Review *is reported to have declared. Though all three names – Yakov, Yosef and Yeshua – were "very common" in ancient times, palaeographer Dr André Lemaire said that the statistical probability of them appearing in that combination was "slim".*

• Marcus Warren "'Earliest mention' of Jesus is found on 1st century ossuary" *The Daily Telegraph* October 23 2002.

RETURN TO AVALON

In response to a couple of the excellent features in the latest edition (29/4 Winter 2001-2, "Avalon" edition), I've just been perusing a few of my books for apparently coincidental references to a real place with kind of Avalonian attributes, with regards to climate, health and abundance. I'm not actually suggesting a direct connection here, although perhaps there might be some literary or traditional links. Anyway, I'll jot down my notes here, just in case they're any help.

My thoughts were inspired, here, by the fascinating articles by Professor Russell and Chris Lovegrove, "Fortunate Isles," and, "An Earthly Paradise," respectively. In particular, thoughts of a valley where the climate produced abundant crops, although it never rained, reminded me of comments in Herodotus' *Histories*.

Describing a certain valley kingdom, watered by a great central river, he speaks of the inhabitants and claims that, "At present ... they obtain the fruits of the field with less trouble than any other people in the world ... since they have no need to break up the ground with the plough, nor to use the hoe, nor to do any of the work which the rest of mankind find necessary if they are to get a crop ..." (*Histories* Book 2, chapter 14).

Herodotus is, naturally, speaking of Egypt; and, in particular, the Nile Delta. He is, in this section, discussing the idea that not only does the river provide abundance; but also that the source of water is more reliable than rain, and the unchanging climate is better for the health. In chapter 13, he reports the Egyptians' observation that the Greeks, relying on rain to provide their water, will one day suffer through disappointment and drought, whereas the river always provides (mind you, he does go on to offer a personal prediction that, some day, the land reclaimed by the Egyptians will be too far above the Nile to receive its regular inundation; but that is slightly at odds with the Egyptian confidence).

With regards to climate and health, in Book 2, chapter 75, Herodotus also comments that the Egyptians are "... next to the Libyans, the healthiest people in the

world – an effect of their climate, in my opinion, which has no sudden changes. Diseases almost always attack men when they are exposed to a change, and never more than during changes of the weather."

Now, these observations aren't noted here to claim any direct connection with Egypt and Avalon – there are far too many discrepancies in the traditions to really allow for that – but it is interesting how the traditions of an abundant valley, thriving, not only without rain, but because it receives no rain, are interesting with regards to the idea of a Vale of Avalon: to again refer to Tennyson's popular words:

"But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest - if indeed I go -
(For my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, nor rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea ..."

Very different to Egypt, indeed; but with a climate not dissimilar. I just thought it was another intriguing coincidence.

One more little coincidence, in closing: in *Histories* (Book 2, chapter 78), Herodotus recounts an Egyptian tradition whereby, after a rich people's banquet, "... a servant carries to the several guests a coffin, in which there is a wooden image of a corpse, carved and painted to resemble nature as nearly as possible, about a cubit or two cubits in length. As he shows it to each guest in turn, the servant says, 'Gaze here, and drink and be merry; for when you die, such will you be.' " Now, am I stretching a point to much to find a slight resemblance to a Grail procession there, with the body being carried before the guests at a meal?

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

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AEAVALON?

Various items in the "Avalon" issue of *Pendragon* (*XXIX* No 4) reminded me of Apollonius Rhodius' description of the city of Aea in Colchis in his "Argonautica" (3.200-248), at the extreme eastern end of the Black Sea, the goal of Jason's quest for the golden fleece of Phrixus' magical, flying ram.

The city is noted as near the mouth of the River Phasis, by the lofty Caucasus Mountains, with the Plain of Ares, the sacred grove, magical fleece and its guardian dragon on the south bank, the rising ground of the Plain of Circe with its willow trees hung with male corpses (females were buried) leading to the city on the north.

The city itself is described as a wonderful place, especially King Aeetes' palace, near the entrance to which are rich vines and foliage overhanging four fountains, that flow with milk, wine, fragrant oil and fresh water. This latter warms as the Pleiades set, but bubbles up cold when they rise again. Aeetes of course is the son of the Sun-god Helios. The city is built on a hill sacred to Helios, and is where he stables his chariot horses. Parts of the city and some of its marvellous contents, such as the two bronze-hooved, fire-breathing bulls, were created by Hephaestos.

Aeetes' daughter, the sorceress and high priestess of Hecate, Medea, is able to heal, kill and renew fertility amongst other things, all using herbal drugs. She is never mentioned as dying in Greek myths, but in some is noted as becoming an immortal and reigning over the Elysian Fields, occasionally here replacing Helen of Troy as Achilles' wife, or with both of them moving on to the nearby Fortunate Islands instead.

Definite elements of Arthuriana here, with the hints of immortality, the magical land of the sunrise in the far east, the "faerie" sorceress, and the four fountains especially Avalonian. However, the descriptions of both Avalon and Aea perhaps were influenced by the biblical Eden (although the events in the *Argonautica* predate, and some are mentioned in, Homer, Apollonius Rhodius

was writing in the late 3rd to early 2nd centuries BC). No apples in Aea though. Or are there?

As commented by both Palaephatus ("On Unbelievable Tales" 18) and Diodorus Siculus (4.26.2-4.27.2) in regard to Herakles and his retrieval of the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides, a tree with another guardian dragon, but set at the western or evening end of the world, the Greek *melon* means both "apple" and "sheep". Both authors rationalise Herakles' exploits as stealing sheep from a fierce shepherd named "Drakon". Can we take for Aea a similarity between a golden fleece hung from a dragon-guarded tree and golden apples hanging from a dragon-guarded tree perhaps?

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

COMFORT ME WITH APPLES

In the same way that Ken Dark is a Dark Age archaeologist and Ross Arthur is an Arthurian scholar, and British television gardeners seem to have names like Flowerdew, Greenwood and Titchmarsh, so it may be inevitable that Gail Vines seems to write mainly about horticultural science in *New Scientist*. A recent article by her ("First fruit" in No 2338 13 April 2002, 46-47) suggests that an assumption of mine in the Avalon issue's "An Earthly Paradise" was misfounded, and that the origins of the edible apple are otherwise than I supposed. Ongoing DNA analysis by an emeritus fellow at Oxford, Barrie Juniper (can he help his calling either?) might ultimately provide answers.

The technique of grafting edibles onto a inedible stock may have begun in Mesopotamia about 3800 years ago, but the usual guess is that the original edible apple came from "somewhere in Central Asia" as a hybrid, "the result of chance crosses among wild species growing along ... the Silk Road" (as I indeed suggested).

To test this guess Juniper travelled in 1998 east through the now bare landscapes of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (until 1997 the capital of the latter was Almaty, "Land of the Apples") to the more fruitful Heavenly Mountains of Tien Shan in Kyrgyzstan; and in 1999 to the southern Chinese Ili Valley and back into Kyrgyzstan. Juniper extracted DNA from the leaves of wild apples he found there and discovered that *all* modern apples "share genetic sequences with only one Central Asian species, *Malus sieversii*," thus implying that they are all descended from the Tien Shan forest species and *not* from wild hybrids.

Juniper suggests that this proto-apple evolved over some 10 million years, isolated in the Tien Shan mountains because they have never been glaciated. Over time *Malus sieversii* adapted to the diet of large animals like deer, wild pig and bears, becoming large, juicy and mammal-friendly, with seed that would pass unscathed through the gut, so that "emerging in a nutrient-rich bear dropping gave the pips an excellent start in life."

This scenario doesn't find favour with all experts yet, but the idea that the Earthly Paradise, and maybe even Avalon, is really due east, and that the Bear is responsible for the propagation of its fruit, has at least a poetic ring. And was it not Solomon's love who sang, "Comfort me with apples: for I am lovesick"? Was Paradise not the original Love-Grove?

Chris Lovegrove, Bristol

◆ *This letter was originally directed to Andrew Smith as Camelot guest-editor – it seemed simpler to leave it in this format even if it's odd to write a letter to oneself!*

So, is the archetypal Avalon in Egypt, the Caucasus or Central Asia? Take your pick!

Letters to the Editor for inclusion in *Pen*Dragon may be sent to 125 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5QG or to edpendragon@yahoo.co.uk
Please include a SAE if a reply is required. If your letter is not for publication, please indicate this at the time of writing.

A brief history of Camelot

Chris Lovegrove

Mention Camelot to a modern passer-by in the street and the images evoked will not be far distant from Tennyson's "many-tower'd" city in *The Lady of Shalott*:

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot.

And even though these images will have recently been often moulded by Hollywood films or television mini-series the archetype of the ideal medieval city has inspired artists, architects and writers for some centuries now, as this brief history will attempt to chronicle.

The classical city

In Britain, the concept of a town or city was scarcely evident before the arrival of the Romans. The hillforts of the insular Iron Age Celts (the *oppida* of Caesar's writings) have been described as "enclosures with ramparts built (mostly) by prehistoric man to protect his settlements or stock" (Hogg 1984 xi), a bare definition that hardly begins to conjure up the vast range of hillfort types let alone the image of Camelot. Nevertheless, to some authorities British hillforts are merely "evidence of a constant state of vendetta and feud" lacking "the permanent populations or the commercial nature of their European analogues", even if a number of them, the *oppida*, were "large nucleated settlements ... operating as regional centres of authority and trade" (Bennett 2001, 8–9).

With the Claudian invasion, things had to change, based on the Roman aims of maintaining peace and collecting taxes. To achieve these aims, self-governing regions based on urban communities were created; these communities were the *colonia* of legionary veterans and the *municipium* and *civitas* often formed from the *oppidum* of an existing tribal grouping. (The development of the *vicus*, an unofficial civilian settlement near towns and roads, must however remain outside our discussion.)

Within a grid of streets – a novelty for insular Celts – were disposed a number of public buildings and amenities. These typically included a *forum* or market area, a *basilica* or civic offices, leisure facilities like *thermae* (baths), amphitheatre, theatre or stadium, together with the infrastructure necessary for essentials such as sanitation. Other features would however have been familiar from before the Roman invasion – housing, establishments for industry and trade, and religious buildings (though structures were now mostly right-angled instead of round) – with surrounding walls, especially from the 4th century, reinforcing the hillfort stereotype of a defended enclosure.

This idealised Roman city in Britain survived, with the evolutionary changes one might expect over the centuries of imperial rule, into the fifth century. Town life did not necessarily collapse in 410, despite some evidence of decline during the 4th century. Ken Dark has argued (from for example so-called "dark earth" layers in late Roman towns) that they had become industrial production centres with their working populations living in insubstantial structures – of timber frames, and wattle and daub – alongside the stone-built mansions and palaces of the rich (Dark 1999 13–25). Evidence for continued occupation may be found at Canterbury, Cirencester, Exeter, Gloucester, Lincoln, London, Southwark, Verulamium and, especially, Wroxeter (Esmonde Cleary 1989 147ff). In this and other ways, the Classical City had given

way to the Late Antique town. But only briefly.

Changes

The city began to transform itself in further ways. For example, King Caradog ab Ynyr – Caratacus son of Honorius in classical Latin – reportedly gave 6th-century Caerwent to the Irish saint Tatheus and moved to Portskewett on the Bristol Channel; Christian burials of this date within the town walls tentatively suggest a basis to this story (Brewer 1997). Elsewhere too the ideal of the city moves, back up to the hills and their pre-Roman defended enclosures.

The evidence for the occupation of hill-forts in the post-Roman period has been substantial for some decades now. The best known include the Mote of Mark, Trusty's Hill, Dunadd and Woden Law in the north, Dinas Emrys, Dinas Powys and Garn Boduan in Wales, Castle Dore and Tintagel in the far west, and Cadbury-Congresbury and South Cadbury in the west. It may be significant that legendary personal names – Mark, Tristan (Trusty) and Ambrosius (Emrys) for example – have attached themselves to some of these sites, before archaeology confirmed their Dark Age use.

Arthur's Palace

South Cadbury in Somerset had a heavy investment in labour with new defences, at least one rebuilt gateway and a substantial timber-framed aisled hall building. While there is evidence for some Roman occupation (probably a hilltop temple), the hall is typical of what might be expected of "heroic" living in the Migration Period (Evans 1997, especially chapter 7). Nevertheless, there is the intriguing idea that the inhabitants of nearby Roman Ilchester may have tried to "retain their civic identity by movement ... to a safer location" – Cadbury – building a "centre of civic activities, law courts and the like" – a post-Roman *basilica* in fact (Burrow 1982, 98). Against this is the fact that the other requirements of a Roman town – a street grid, baths and so on – remain to be located (if they ever existed). The "fundations and rudera of walles" visible to Leland in the 16th century had, sadly, disappeared two centuries later (Alcock 1972, 173), so further speculation may be pointless.

What the name of South Cadbury was at this time is not known. When it appears in written history, in the late Saxon period, it is known as Cadanbyrig – as were several other sites in the West Country. Many Celtic chieftains had names including the element *cad* "battle" (*eg* Cadafael, "Battle Chief"), and it is possible that South Cadbury was originally named from some such individual.

Cadanbyrig was briefly the site of a Saxon mint in the 11th century, but its new defensive walls were subsequently dismantled. In King John's time a castle at the summit of *Cadebir* was begun but not completed (Alcock 1972, 202–3; the present writer was in the 60s a volunteer digging precisely these remains).

It is around this time, in the 13th century that a Cadbury connection with Arthur may have been first made explicit. On the Hereford Cathedral World Map two of the few West Country sites marked are *Glaston* and *Cadan*. If, as Harvey suggests, these must be Glastonbury and South Cadbury, "a tribute to fashionable interest in the legends of King Arthur," attempts to identify *Cadan* as a misplaced Caen or a miscopied Salisbury must then be wide of the mark (Harvey 1996, 53).

Leaving Glastonbury aside, surely we must conclude that, before the second half of the 13th century, an otherwise deserted hilltop in Somerset was associated with the name and legend of Arthur, long before John Leland claimed that in the 1540s the locals "can telle nothing ther but that they have hard say that Arture much resortid to Camalat" (Alcock 1972, 11).

Even if Leland jumped to unwarranted conclusions from the unrelated etymology of local villages called Camel, his contemporary Elis Gruffydd certainly had knowledge of an unnamed hill – possibly Cadbury – near Glastonbury with a cave where Arthur was supposed to lie sleeping. William Camden soon after reported that "the local people call it Arthur's Palace" (though it is possible that Leland may have unwittingly planted this identification in their minds).

Camelot

Chrétien de Troyes is usually acknowledged as the first writer, in the 12th century, to associate the place-name Camelot with Arthur. He may have taken it from Pliny the Elder's reference to *Camalodunum* or Colchester, but in *The Knight of the Cart* he envisages Arthur leaving Caerleon one Ascension Day and holding a magnificent court at Camelot the same day, so – even allowing for his hazy geographical sense – Colchester is clearly not meant. But where it actually is Chrétien never makes clear. In fact, the name occurs in only one manuscript reading, and this may be a much later interpolation, so even this first mention is doubtful.

Nevertheless, over the next couple of centuries or so Camelot became the site of Arthur's palace *par excellence*. Geoffrey of Monmouth, followed by Wace, had identified two uneventful periods in Arthur's reign: "the first is a period of twelve peaceful years, which occur after Arthur has crushed all opposition in the British Isles; the second is one of nine years in which Arthur consolidates his rule in France after many conquests in Europe" (Putter 1994). These two otherwise unchronicled periods of Arthurian metahistory were soon "appropriated as the story-time of romance," with Camelot often as the focus of adventures and quests in Britain, where the Round Table is usually housed.

It is rarely easy to establish where the writers imagined the location of Camelot. In the late 15th century Malory surmised it was Winchester, where the late medieval Round Table was hung. (When in *King Lear* Kent rants, "Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain, I'ld drive ye cackling home to Camelot," we might assume that Shakespeare, too, had Winchester in mind.) Caxton, however, preferred Wales where, probably as Caerleon or Caerwent, "grete stones and mervayllous werkys of yron lyeng under the grounde, and ryal vautes" had been still visible within living memory (Vinaver 1954). The author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* might possibly have also envisioned "Camylot" in south-east Wales, considering Gawain's journey north.

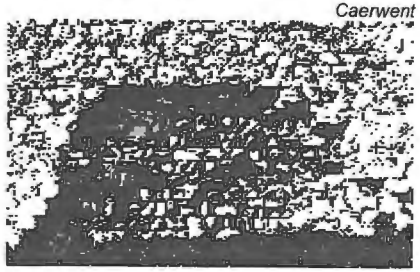
The image of the city

Nevertheless, it is not as an archaeological ruin but as a city of the imagination that Camelot persists to this day, and not as a Late Antique *civitas* but in its High Medieval guise. Charles Williams, in a 1940 essay "The Image of the City in English Verse", declares the best line describing an ideal earthly city as Shakespeare's bee simile, "The singing masons building roofs of gold" from *Henry V*. This image could equally represent romantic attempts to recreate Camelot, rather like the 19th-century attempt to restore the medieval city of Carcasonne in France.

Gustav Doré's monochrome image of Camelot epitomises one Victorian view of the ideal city. Ludwig II's Neuschwanstein Castle made the vision of the medieval royal court a reality in Bavaria (Fitch 2000); Tintagel's King Arthur's Castle Hotel (recently renamed Camelot Castle) and King Arthur's Great Halls were attempts to do the same in Cornwall, though on a less ambitious scale.

In the 20th century, the 60s film based on the musical *Camelot* used the 15th-century brick-built Castillo de Coca near Segovia in Spain as stand-in for Arthur's headquarters (with telephone poles disguised as trees), though a map in one scene clearly indicates Cadbury is its intended geographical location (*Cadbury's Coca*?). For Barr and Bolland, in their 80s graphic novel *Camelot 3000*, Camelot is re-created by Merlin for Arthur on the "orbiting asteroid retreat" of a reincarnated Lancelot. Though futuristic in design (in a late 20th century sort of way) their depiction of many-tower'd New Camelot is deliberately evocative of the old.

Caerwent



More recently, numerous role-playing games, succeeded by video and computer games and websites, seem also ultimately derived from a generalised 19th-century Romantic vision, not to mention fiction. Will the 21st century bring anything new? When the old order changeth will it yield place to new? Or will it be *plus la même chose*?

Ian Brown

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Those Camelot candidates – in full?

Steve Sneyd

We are all familiar with the best-known candidates for the site of Camelot, *primus inter pares* Cadbury Castle, with Caerleon as leading runner-up. But those two by no means exhaust the list of places that have been suggested, on bases ranging from the geographical to the nomenclatural, from folklore associations with the Arthurian court to the urgings of local patriotism. So this skeletal gazetteer, I am sure, does not outdo the list of those that someone, somewhere, has suggested at one time or another. (It is alphabetical accident, purely, that the first mentioned is only a mile or so from where I live!)

Almondbury Castle Hill, near Huddersfield. Iron Age hillfort incorporating later Norman castle. 19th century local historians identified it with the *Notitia*'s *Camulodunum*, and suggested that folklore of Captain Hudder's battle here referred to Uther. '90s resistivity survey indicated a possible Dark Age structure.

Arthuret. *The Scotsman*, August 7 1998, noted the suggestion that Camelot was here in Cumbria, "just off junction 44 of the M6"!

Cadbury Castle, Somerset. See above.

Caerleon, S Wales. See above.

Camelford, Cornwall. The *Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore*'s choice.

Camelon, Roman fort site near Antonine Wall. Structure known as Arthur's Oon (Oven), demolished 1743, probably Roman temple but traditionally where Round Table knights gathered. Robert McClean (*Daily Telegraph* November 6 1986) suggested it as Camelot.

Camlet. Christopher Street, in *Pendragon XXII* No 4, Autumn 1992, discussed thus-named moated site in Trent Park, North London.

Carlisle, seat of Arthur's court in numerous Arthurian stories and ballads. Fortified settlement through Dark Ages.

Colchester. John Morris' *The Age of Arthur* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1973) notes the Roman name *Camulodunum*, says location suitable focus for defense of coast.

Greenham Castle. Here in Ayrshire, the site of a ruined 1603 Kennedy tower house, was suggested as Camelot by Professor Goodrich in her *King Arthur* (Watts, Danbury 1986).

Kelliwic. Court of King Arthur in *The Welsh Triads*. Several hillforts in the Padstow area of Cornwall have been suggested as site of this, including Castle Killibury / Kelly Rounds.

Moel Arthur. This hillfort in the Clydians between Denbigh and Mold is claimed locally as the location of Arthur's court.

Montgomery. *The North Wales Borderland 2002* (Denbigh, Flints & Wrexham councils), in "Myths and legends", suggests this candidate. Re-use of the large Iron Age hillfort at Fridd Faldwayn, just west of the hilltop Norman castle, or the Roman fort of Forden Gaer? Both are near the strategic Severn crossing.

Sewingshields. This Hadrian's Wall location, northeast of Haltwhistle, is home to numerous folktales of Arthur's court.

Stafford. The AA's *Secret Britain* notes a local belief that here, below the huge castle, was the site of Camelot.

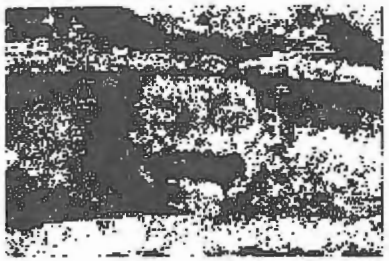
Warwick. John Rous in the 15th century identified this as Arthur's court.

Winchester. Malory: "the cite of Camelot that ys in English called Wynchester."

Wroxeter. Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman (*King Arthur – The True Story* 1992) suggest Viriconium as the seat of Arthur's administration.

CAMELOT WAS IN ENFIELD CHASE

Nick Grant



On the northern edge of Trent Country Park by Enfield Chase are the remains of a mediaeval moated site called Camlet Moat (TQ28809818). The moat itself is still filled with water; the enclosure interior is tree-covered but accessible from a bank across the moat on the east side. The moat measures approximately 90m x 75m externally and approximately 70m x 60m internally. In the north-east part of the enclosure are traces of raised banks which may relate to former internal structures.

Early forms of the site-name show clearly that the moat is named after the Camelot of Arthurian legend. Whilst it is unusual for a place-name to derive from a literary source, Pendragon Castle in Cumbria is another example (Gover *et al* 1942, xv and 72).

Documentary evidence

The earliest records we have of Camlet Moat are of its very end, from Duchy of Lancaster archives. In May 1439 it is noted that the manor of Camelot was to be taken down and its materials sold to raise money for repairs to Hertford Castle (Pam 1984, 22). It is not quite clear how quickly this was accomplished, however, as in 1439/40 and again in 1442/3 William Stallworth was appointed keeper of the Chase and Camlet Lodge (Pam 1984, 22 and 160).

When therefore might the site have been constructed and named? During the mediaeval period, the manor of Enfield was held successively by the Mandevilles, Earls of Essex, between 1086 and 1236; followed by the de Bohuns, Earls of Hereford and Essex, between 1236 and 1421; before becoming part of the Duchy of Lancaster, held by the crown, in 1421. In 1347, Humphrey de Bohun had obtained a royal licence to fortify his manor house at Enfield (Baker 1976, 224-5). Could this be relevant to the construction of Camlet Moat?

By the 16th century, the manor house of Enfield manor was at Enfield Green near the market place, the building later called Enfield Palace (Baker 1976, 225). However, there is a persistent tradition that the original site of the manor house was Camlet Moat. William Camden, writing in 1607, states that 'almost in the middle of the chase [i.e. Enfield Chase] are still the ruins of an ancient house, which the common people from tradition affirm to have belonged to the Mandevilles Earls of Essex' (Camden 1722, 398).

A Parliamentary Survey carried out between 1656-8 begins with an outline history of the Chase, noting that the Manor and Chase of Enfield had been in the possession of Geoffrey de Mandeville in the reign of William the Conquerer, whose 'seat and habitation, at that time called Camelot, was situated on the Chase near unto Potters Lodge, the ruins thereof are yet remaining, and being moated, is this day called Camelot' (Pam 1984, 70). Samuel Lysons (1800) notes the tradition, and adds that the moat is sited in a meadow suggestively called Oldbury, *ie* 'old manor' (Lysons 1800, 282).

Finally, in the site's second literary connection, Sir Walter Scott, in his 1822 novel *The Fortunes Of Nigel*, uses Camlet Moat as the scene of the murder of Lord Dalgarno, describing it as follows: 'the place ... was at this time little more than a mound, partly surrounded by a ditch, from which it derived the name of Camlet Moat. A few hewn stones there were, which had escaped the fate of many other that had been used in building different lodges in the forest for the royal keepers. These vestiges ... marked the ruins of the abode of a once-illustrious but long-forgotten family, the

Mandevilles, Earls of Essex' (Scott 1896, Vol II 360-1).

Conflicting data

Nevertheless there are difficulties with all of this.

Firstly, the name Camelot is a literary invention of the late 12th century, and only became prominent in the romances of the 13th century (Lacy 1986, 75). It cannot be as early as the late-11th century, as the Parliamentary Survey would have us believe.

Secondly, there is another 'Oldbury' place-name recorded as early as the mid-15th century, in the area to the east of Enfield parish church (Gover *et al* 1942, 76).

Thirdly, moated sites are not uncommon and neither were they necessarily manor houses; there are three other surviving moated sites within Enfield parish alone (RCHME 1937, 22; Page 1970, 5).

Fourthly, a house called the manor house was leased in 1439 on a 6-year lease, indicating that this was not the same site as Camlet Moat as the latter was demolished in the same year (Page 1970, 76).

Finally the early references to the site call it both a manor and a lodge. David Pam has suggested that Camlet Moat was the site of the original lodge of the Chase, which was enclosed as a chase, that is a lord's hunting ground, during the time of the Mandevilles around the mid-12th century (Pam 1984, 11). However, by *c*1420, the Chase had been divided into three walks, each with its own lodge – East, South and West Lodge – and Camlet Moat was demolished by the mid-15th century (Pam 1984, 22).

Archaeology and legends

So on the whole it seems safest to regard Camlet Moat as simply a hunting or forester's lodge, albeit a very grandly-named one. With so much conflicting documentary data, we are thrown back to archaeological evidence.

Two poorly-recorded excavations have taken place at the site. In the second of these, in the early part of the 20th century, the moat was drained and the remnants of the base of a probable bridge was discovered. In 1997 English Heritage reached agreement with the London Borough of Enfield to recondition and clear the site. During this process, another apparent bridge timber was raked out of the moat. Tree-ring dating assigned a felling date of after AD1357 (English Heritage 2000).

Naming a modest hunting lodge after the greatest and most famous literary royal castle and palace of the mediaeval period now seems to us the height of pretension, and we can only speculate about the choice of name. Nevertheless the name itself seems to have been sufficient to attract mystical and magical associations, and a series of local legends are now attached to the site.

A well at the Moat was the site of a treasure hoard and also where Geoffrey de Mandeville fell to his death on the night of a full moon (Street 1992, 52); the ghost of Geoffrey de Mandeville still walks the area every 6 years at Christmas, accompanied by a headless hound (Ritchie 2001).

Restoration

The final chapter in this story is a happy one. Enfield Council, with the countryside conservation group Groundforce, and with the support of an English Heritage grant of £4,000, has recently restored and cleared the site and erected an information plaque (Enfield Council 2001). The site is also passed by the route of the London Loop Walk, a long-distance path for ramblers. After so many years overgrown and in obscurity, Camlet Moat is now beginning to become known again, and that is surely what its mediaeval lords would have wanted when they gave the site its grandiose name.

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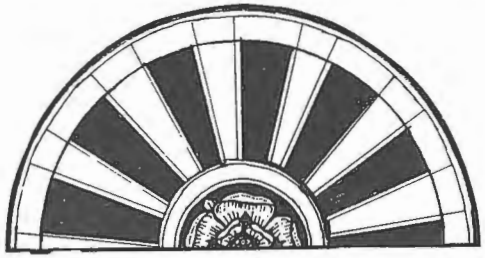
Nick Grant March 2002



Camelot

The green woods clothe the summit now; the green grass o'er it spreads;
On golden flowers of Autumn Stars the village maiden treads,
But knows that far beneath her feet, within the caverned hill,
King Arthur and his mail-clad knights are soundly sleeping still,
With golden lamps reflected in the polished marble floors,
And ever-watchful dragons who are guarding golden doors.
She knows that they who ne'er have sinned, nor caused a heart to grieve,
Whose faith is firm, and love is true, who kneel on St John's Eve
And lave their eyes in Arthur's Well, shall see the hill subside,
The passage open at their feet, the golden gates divide,
And Arthur couched amid his knights, each girded with his sword;
And by the trancèd monarch's head a priceless jewel-hoard.

Anon, in F J Snell (1927) King Arthur's Country *(Dent)*

The Purpose of Camelot Castle

John Mappin and Ted Stourton

Purpose
Our purpose in creating Camelot Castle is to have a place where anyone who agrees that life can be enhanced by natural beauty and art can come and experience that enhancement immediately and first hand.

Camelot has the purpose to provide a unique space where people can come to share both in the extraordinary natural beauty of our environment and in the extraordinary strength created when people of goodwill share their ideas and vision.

In *c* 800 AD Harrona Rachid, the supreme ruler of Baghdad, governed and administrated the entire Arab world. At that time, Harrona Rachid, the conceptual architect of the first "Golden Age", passed a law. That law stated, that every Thursday, every Master of every intellectual or physical discipline, be it Mathematics, Architecture, Religious, Political, or Creative must attend court and Rachid stated that, by law, they should and must share their ideas. This one act caused a ripple of innovation and new ideas that spread across the Arabic world and Mesopotamian culture up through Spain and half of Europe. Indeed, ideas that occurred then are still visible today across the civilised world.

What was only known by a handful of people until today was the fact that Haronna Rachid also issued every law and every order to his empire using Formal Arabic Poetry.

As early as 800 AD Harrona Rachid had isolated the power of the use of aesthetics and beauty in carrying a message across thousand of miles and great distances.

For this reason, the poets and artists of Baghdad were some of the greatest that the world has ever known. *The Arabian Nights* were written in his honour and Harrona is immortalized in them. Harrona Rachid was probably one of the greatest champions of creativity that the world has ever seen.

Round Table
There are two other well known non-religious occasions in recent history, when men have risen to this extraordinary level of responsibility and wisdom. The first was the formation of the Round Table at the Court of Arthur Pendragon on the advice of Merlin, which cracked the suppression of the dark ages across Europe. The other was the structure and codification of the American Constitution by the Founding Fathers.

The Founders of Camelot have been able to research deeper into the wisdoms of the east than ever before. They have been able to draw on the modern and workable wisdom embodied in the freedoms established and maintained by the United States. And, through unique access and friendships in the Middle East the Founders have isolated some previously unguessed-at importances, heralded by Arabic culture, that will effect the entire future of mankind.

So when you visit us at Camelot and share your ideas here at our round table realise that you are being and becoming part of a purpose line that is indeed both ancient and of the future. For these purposes are woven through the very fabric and the structure of our societies.

They are the woof and warp of creativity. Truthfully, there has never been a time in the world when the sharing of ideas across the world is more important than right here right now.

The importance of our artists to our society has been grossly underestimated and it is time that we began to value the contribution that our own creativity can make. Camelot is here today so that you can experience, tap into and be your creativity. Even the greatest barriers surrender to the creativity of man. Our purpose is for you to create yourself and, thus, to enhance all life.

For more detail and additional information: http://www.camelotcastle.com/

This way lies not Camelot

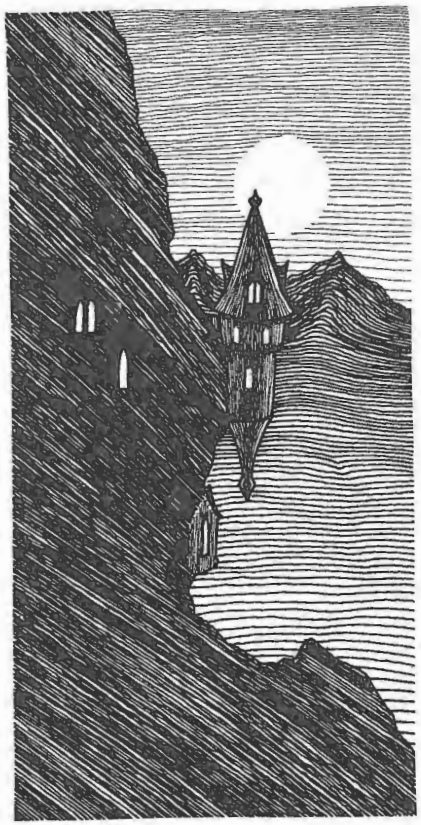
Ian Brown

Plenty of people, it would seem, were most intrigued to learn, through the media, that the old King Arthur's Castle Hotel in Tintagel, Cornwall, had been bought by John Mappin. I was delighted to be invited down there, early in 2000, and, when I was told by Ted Stourton and John (apparently co-owners) that they had big and benevolent plans for the place, to encourage creativity, the arts and healing, naturally I was only too keen to offer my help for such a worthy cause.

Ah, but what manner of words spoken within such a noble folly can be taken on their own merit?

The history of the building itself is one of romanticism and blatant commercialism, the hotel having been completed in 1899 (designed by one Sylvanus Trevaille, who had designed many public buildings in the county) as a terminus hotel for the Camelford railway line, which never materialised. From then on, although the hotel did enjoy a splendid reputation in its brief heyday, it was doomed to a slow decline. Apparently, many writers, artists, poets and even Hollywood actors stayed there, over the years; but financial adversity hit as hard as a winter's wasteland and, eventually, the hotel was auctioned and purchased by one Pat Rundle, a well-known person in Tintagel, who divides most of his time between the old hotel and King Arthur's Great Hall; and, I must say, a most likeable host, especially when he holds court in the Excali-bar (yes, really, that's what the bar is called!).

Pat ran the hotel for over forty-five years, but eventually (so I've heard), decided that he needed to sell up, as it was gradually running at a steadily greater loss. Then along came John Mappin and Ted Stourton; and the rest, as they say, is history.



Ian Brown

Direction

So, what were their plans for this quaint hotel? (And it is a lovely place: a Victorian folly with a cosy personality of faded magnificence, like an aged aunt who still remembers the dwindling dreams of youth.) What were their plans? What are their plans? Does anybody know?

Within a day of arriving at the newly-named Camelot, I was delighted to be welcomed by Ted as their first Artist-in-Residence; and this indeed seemed an

honour for, so I was told, we were to put together a programme of many artists-in-residence, from around the world; and poets, writers and musicians, too, encouraging the arts and creativity. It seemed a splendid idea.

Many folk were drawn to Camelot, by invitation or through curiosity; and Ted and John soon had a good number to choose from. If they had intended to encourage the arts, they only had to give those who were interested half a chance, and the world would soon be singing Camelot's praises.

Then, well, it didn't quite happen like that.

The idea of healing was quashed very quickly, although traces of a strange pseudo-mysticism continued to raise their head from time to time. Was the aim of Camelot to find the reincarnated knights of the Round Table (I'm serious: I've been privy to some pretty interesting conversations!)? Or, was it perhaps to find the descendants of those knights (all, incidentally, apparently based on Malory)? Those ideas, and other mystical pretensions (such as the time when John Mappin was talking about the mystic emanations coming from the walls, and one wag – who shall remain nameless – riposted with, "Oh, that's just rising damp") also dwindled, as the months went by, and a more practical approach gradually seemed to emerge.

But, even then, the direction of Camelot continued to be vague.

Those who know me are well aware that I thoroughly dislike saying anything which is not completely positive. If one cannot say something kind, then it's best not to say it at all. Nevertheless, the idea of Camelot is naturally of interest to all members of Pendragon – and, as John Mappin has said, all publicity is good.

There has been much talk, within the walls of Camelot, of communication and avoiding any confusion; but the reverse is unfortunately true. If anyone knows the direction that Camelot is supposed to be going in, then they are keeping quiet about it. I have never seen anywhere so confused. The renaming of the hotel, by the way, would seem to come from nothing more than an unfortunate ignorance of the Arthurian legends. The hotel was based upon an Arthurian theme, so the new owners named it Camelot, because it is supposed to be a castle.

Constant new directions and contradictions emerge on a fairly regular basis, in the old hotel. Bandwagons are ridden as long as they are convenient, and claims of purpose are twisted and belied in a vagary of intent as dense as the mists of Avalon. It's such a shame, because there is potential in that place: from an aesthetic point of view alone, the hotel is positioned perfectly to inspire the most unimaginative amongst us.

I wish everyone well. I really do. Ted is such a likeable person: a true eccentric, who changes his hat to suit the moment: supposedly an art collector, then an artist, then goodness knows what else; but he is an excellent raconteur, and most people who meet him do like him. I'd certainly be more than happy to see him do well, whatever he's trying to do in Camelot. John can be good company, too. He's kind of come out of the closet as a Scientologist, with which philosophy I don't really hold; but again, if that works for him, then all well and good. Pat is such good company, with an excellent sense of humour; and I could go on. The characters I've had the pleasure to meet in Camelot are varied and fascinating, and there's no-one there for whom I wouldn't wish every success.

If only someone would come out and say exactly what they do want to do, then I'd be happy to either help them, or, if it's not my cup of tea, to simply wish them well and walk away.

One member of staff there, who has since left, referred to the place as "King Arthur meets Fawlty Towers," so frustrated was he with this constant tightrope walk of chaos; and so the name of "Fawlty Camelot" kind of stuck.

The locals still refer to the place as the old Castle Hotel; and, quite frankly, I like that name better, because that's exactly what it is. It's a quirky, loveable old building, badly in need of renovation: a monument to British eccentricity, standing upon a beautiful promontory in one of the most magical and inspirational coastlines in this

country. One can gaze out of the windows at the weather-carved natural simulacrum of Merlin's face in the cliff below Tintagel Castle, or across to Lundy Island, where some of the locals claim Merlin retired to. Only a few miles away is Saint Nechtan's Glen, a stunningly evocative waterfall cascading through a natural granite cauldron in the heart of a ferny forest. It's an artist's paradise, and nobody could fail to be thoroughly captivated by the beauty of North Cornwall. King Arthur's Castle Hotel was built amidst the perfect setting, a mock castle overlooking a ruined castle which was never even King Arthur's (even if he was born there, he never actually claimed it as his own: if anything, perhaps it could be called Uther's).

I would really like to be able to give a full account to all Pendragon members of everything that has been happening in Camelot, and of the aims of the owners, and the direction in which it is going; but considering the manipulation and smoke and mirrors of confusion, I couldn't be clear, and I certainly don't wish to betray any confidences: not unless or until I can offer some concrete news, and say something positive about what is happening there.

I will say this, though. Apart from the uncertainty of its future (leaving any machinations aside), I thoroughly enjoy the time I spend in Camelot, especially on those occasions when there is nobody else there and I have the place all to myself. I've put together some large painted panels (up to eight feet across), simply letting the creativity flow (and the other artists I've spoken with there – and there have been a few, who have come and gone – do agree that it is an excellent site to stimulate the imagination); and I've wandered about the castle grounds by day or night, and sat alone in the great hall, in the small hours of the morning, listening to the sighing of the Atlantic, admiring the dreams of those romantic Victorians who thought to recreate a dream of King Arthur's Castle over a century ago.

Indeed, there is a replica of the Round Table there: a smaller version of the great table at Winchester. For years, it hung upon the wall, within the great hall; but, a couple of months ago, it was taken down again, although it really should be protected as a valuable antique.

The vast majority of people who have visited the hotel are captivated by its own magic. It doesn't need anyone to spout about creativity and mysticism. It speaks for itself.

Folly

And this is the point I'm trying to make.

Call it what you will, it's not Camelot. It's the old Castle Hotel. It's a slightly crumbling, surprisingly humble establishment: an old hotel with a colourful history and a personality fit for dreams. As such, it is a marvellous place to visit; and, if the arts were to be truly represented there, they could have a wonderful home.

But the directionless confusion that is going on in Camelot, right now – the self-aggrandisement and half-truths – are doing it no good at all. Perhaps, eventually, a plain direction will become clear, either good or bad; and, as soon as it does, I'll gladly let you know.

For now, though, it is a strange place, watched by all the locals, although not really by the world at large; and most of those locals (amongst whom are some wonderful friends I've grown to know), are just waiting to see if it will become as bright a place as it was once promised to be, or if it will continue with the decline in which it has languished for years.

I hope not, because the building is worth preserving, as a monument to another interpretation of Arthuriana. Whether, in the future, it is owned by John Mappin, Ted Stourton, the Scientologists or Old Uncle Tom Cobbley, it would be good to see the old Castle Hotel stand for at least another century, a solid tribute to a landscape full of dreams.

I'm keeping in touch with my friends in Cornwall, and will no doubt be visiting the old hotel again; so, as soon as there's more news to share, I'll gladly let you know. Until such time, I wouldn't watch this space. There's plenty of inspiration in the world, and there are plenty of more worthy Arthurian sites. What one Englishman does with his folly is pretty much by the by.

Montgomery – the *real* Camelot?

Simon Rouse

Ian Brown

In 1999 we relocated from the flatlands of East Anglia to the Welsh Marches, the borderland between Wales and England. As my Celtic artwork had been developing over the years, it became more and more a dream to head west and particularly to put down some roots in Welsh soil, until we were lucky enough to make the dream became reality. We settled in the small county town of Montgomery, about twenty miles south west of Shrewsbury.

Living and working in Wales is very inspiring, which I think has become evident in my artwork. I have a real feeling that the work has been brought "home". The awareness of all things Celtic and Arthurian is far greater here, and so naturally I also began to feel a greater connection to Arthur himself. Travelling through the land here has brought the histories and legends to life in a much brighter way than before. So you can imagine how pleased and intrigued I was when *The Keys to Avalon* was published, citing Montgomery as the original inspiration for Arthur's court of Camelot.

The entrance to Logres

For those unfamiliar with Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd's book, very briefly, they place Arthur firmly in the Llangollen/Ruthin area of Wales, calling into question all that has previously been written about Arthurian locations. I am in no way qualified to appraise the book for confirmations or inaccuracies, although Andrew H W Smith's review in *Pendragon XXVIII* No 3 and Charles Evans-Günther's review in *XXVIII* No 4 are good places to start. Also in edition *XXVIII* 3 is Steve and Scott's article "Where is Britannia? The Arthurian Crux" which provides an introduction to the in-depth contents of the book. I thought instead I would give you a small glimpse of Montgomery as Camelot from a resident's perspective, with no axe (or pen) to grind as regards the true location of the heart of Arthur's kingdom.

To paraphrase Steve and Scott: the owner of the original manuscript of *Perlesvaus* was Earl Thomas of Arundel, one of the Marcher lords, whose main residence was at Oswestry, north of Montgomery, in Shropshire. Had the author of *Perlesvaus* written the tale while at the court of Thomas? The similarity between *Perlesvaus* and *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, another 13th century French tale set in the vicinity of Oswestry and Llangollen has been noted by scholars before. Steve and Scott's conclusion was that Camelot was invented at the close of the 12th century, based upon the border town of Montgomery, and was subsequently passed down into almost every romance and story ever since.

So how does the real Montgomery of the 21st century fit the description of the "Home of Chivalry"? Well, according to *the Brut y Brenhinedd*, Camelot was situated at the entrance to the Kingdom of Logres, the area bounded by the River Severn and the

coast. The River Severn flows just a few miles north of Montgomery, running eastwards from its source on the upper reaches of Plynlimon. To the east of the town one mile away is Offa's Dyke and the border with England. It is this proximity to England that has made the Montgomery area such a strategically important place, guarding the entrance to the Severn Valley at the ford of Rhydwhyman at Caerhowel. Arthur's Celtic ancestors must have thought the same, building the Iron Age hill-fort of Ffridd Faldwyn, about half a mile to the west of the remains of the 13th century castle, providing themselves with good defence and wonderful views down the valley.

My favourite way to approach Montgomery is heading southwards from Welshpool. As you leave Forden the land drops away revealing a cluster of hills ahead. Nestled on the eastern side of these hills is the town. The castle can just be made out from this distance, perched on a rocky crag, with the town sheltering underneath it. It doesn't take a great leap of the imagination to envisage coming down from Forden on foot or horseback and getting your first sight of Camelot, Arthur's famous citadel, its towers glistening in the sunlight and banners flapping in the breeze. The castle itself was originally painted entirely in white which must have been dazzling in full sun – probably just as Camelot looks in our imaginations. As the road drops down in an almost dead straight line to Montgomery, it crosses the river Camlad winding its way through the valley. The similarity in sound between Camlad and Camelot is obvious – one of the older names for the Camlad being Camalet.

Castle

As you enter the town limits you pass a cul-de-sac of houses called Arthur's Gate, the site of one of four (now disappeared) gates providing entrance to the once walled town (the other three being Chirbury, Ceri and Cedewain). Follow the road as it rises towards the town and at the junction of Chirbury Road and Princes Street is Arthur's Street. These two references to Arthur are alluring but disappointingly nothing to do with our man. I remember reading that they are a corruption of another name but this, in typically unscholarly fashion, currently eludes me (Fred, maybe you can help on this one!).

Halfway up Arthur's Street is a footpath through the trees that leads you up to the castle itself (although there is easier access via the castle car park – just follow the signs in the centre of the town).

Montgomery Castle was begun by Henry III in 1223, overshadowing the older Norman motte and bailey castle at Hen Domen, one mile to the north west. It started out as a wooden defence, later being rebuilt in stone. Whereas a number of castles in Wales have had mixed fortunes, Montgomery's fortifications held firm, withstanding two sieges by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (Llywelyn the Great) in 1228 and 1231 (although on the second attempt he did burn the town), and another by Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1245, and the remains today give a solid idea of the castle's strength. Walking around on the grass underneath the ramparts provides a good sense of how difficult it would be to take the castle and also how it could shape up as an ideal of Arthur's Camelot. The views from the remaining walls are excellent; the valley stretches away before you, guarded by the high ground of Long Mountain, Corndon Hill and the Kerry Ridgeway. Shropshire's Long Mynd can be seen in the distance between Corndon and the Ridgeway, reinforcing the importance of the castle as a border post. After an exploration of the castle, what better than to follow the lane down into the town to refresh yourself at the appropriately named Dragon Hotel, where the beer is rather excellent (sampled strictly for research purposes, you understand).

So, does Montgomery shape up as Camelot? I hope there is no bias in this, but I think it does pretty well. Imagination doesn't have to be stretched too far to visualise our mythical scene, and no other site springs immediately to mind that is more fitting. But don't take my word for it, come and take a look for yourselves. The surrounding landscape is full of other historic sites of interest, from the megalith builders onwards, and the natives are friendly. *Croeso!*

talking head

Fred Stedman-Jones

A WINDOW TO CAMELOT?

In a previous article published in *Pendragon XXV* No 2 (Summer 1995) I described how an American author named Paul Johnstone claimed in articles written around 1967 that he had been in communication by dowsing board and pendulum with one Artorius, a historical person around whom the stories of King Arthur are based. During what must have been a very slow and laborious interchange of information Johnstone mentioned the excavations currently taking place at Cadbury Hill at that time. Artorius's reaction was interesting, especially to Pendragon members who had been part of the dig for Camelot at Cadbury. The pendulum spelled out: *So Carmael is discovered again ! It was a fort to hold the border of Dumnonie.* Artorius/Arthur went on to describe his hall there as being built of wood and *more like a hunting lodge than a palace.* Most intriguingly he revealed that Moderatus (Medrod) partly burned it while he himself was at sea in his ship Prituenna - to which he had responded by destroying Moderatus's fort in the North at Trapgrain Haill (Traprain Law near Edinburgh). During the interview Artorius agreed that the date of his birth was Anno Domini 459; unfortunately the date of his death was not revealed.

Hans Holzer

Browsing old books recently I came across a work in which Paul Johnstone's name suddenly leapt off the page to catch my attention afresh. First published in the USA in 1967 and reprinted in this country in 1970, the title of the book had intrigued me: *Window to the Past: Exploring History through Extra Sensory Perception.* I knew the author's name – Hans Holzer – from previous reading, and remembered that he described himself as 'a journalist with scientific training' who had been investigating psychic phenomena and written several books on ghosts that I had read – indeed in America he was known as 'the Ghost Hunter'. The thesis of this book was that an 'imprint' can remain in houses and areas where the long-departed have undergone intense emotional experiences and these may be detected by mediums or sensitives. Using tape-recorded transcripts of the immediate experiences of the medium and 'through trance and other psychic methods', Holzer claimed to have been able to bring to light hitherto unknown information. The book gains its impact from the choice of historical 'mysteries' he chooses to attempt to unravel by these methods; if he were writing them today each chapter would be a scenario for a Sky television programme (they may be for all I know!).

Four examples of his 'cases' will suffice: *The Assassination of President Lincoln*; *The Secret Adventure of Nell Gwyn*; *The Secret of Mayerling* and *The Search for Camelot* (the cue for this article). Unfortunately for us Arthurians, eager to know all, the Cadbury investigation is very inconclusive and puzzling to decipher. Let's look at Holzer's account, nevertheless.

Holzer first visited Glastonbury in 1965 and his understanding of the history of the Abbey and of Bligh Bond's work is confused – a bad start! In 1967 he was contacted by Paul Johnstone who had read one of his books. Johnstone himself had written *The Real King Arthur* in 1963 after 25 years' research along traditional lines. His mother had passed away and subsequently he had contacted her by using a 'fortune telling board'. On the other side she became a link

between Artorius and her son, informing him that the King's spirit wished to establish direct communication with him. Holzer refers to Johnstone's book as 'detailed and amazing' and refers to him as 'my Arthurian expert friend'.

A sudden climax arose when Johnstone wrote to tell him new digs were going on at what might be the true site of Camelot and suggested that Holzer conduct a psychic investigation there with a reliable medium. Paul had suggested Cadbury hillfort as the site of Camelot in his 1963 book but the 'professionals' such as Leslie Alcock had rejected this possibility then.

After the 1966 dig Alcock had expressed a different view. Paul decided he would not join the party, so that no one might accuse the medium of obtaining information from him, directly or from his subconscious mind. Holzer agreed and in early Autumn 1967 he arrived in the late afternoon at Cadbury with Sybil Leek, his 'psychic bloodhound'. With some difficulty they climbed the steep ramparts of the hillfort, established variously by Johnstone as *Cambalta*, *Dinas Catui*, or *Cantimailac* (*Camallt* being Welsh for a crooked slope). Curious cows observed their activities, crowding around them as they still do today!

Sybil Leek

Holzer's medium was Sybil Leek, a heavyweight in every sense, and she is the key figure in what follows. An Englishwoman, born in Staffordshire, she was 44 years old and a celebrity in the US where she had emigrated in 1964, living first in Texas and later in Florida. An exuberant but gifted woman, her trademarks were a cape, loose gown and a jackdaw named Mr Hotfoot Jackson who perched on her shoulder until his demise in 1969. She always wore a crystal necklace inherited from her psychic Russian grandmother. Psychic ability ran in all sides of her family – Southern Irish on her mother's and Czarist Russian on her father's side. Former head of a coven in the New Forest, she gained considerable fame in publicising the renaissance of witchcraft in the Western world, especially America. She ran classes in the occult and hosted a nightlife show on television.

To balance what may seem to be merely an extrovert, attention-seeking personality, it is interesting to learn that she wrote over 60 books, numerous magazine articles, short stories and poems – on antique collecting, dream interpretation and exorcism, dog care and children's stories; she claimed to have an IQ of 164. In later life (she died in 1980) she wrote and spoke of the mysteries of reincarnation and claimed to be guided by the spirit of Madame Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society. There is little reason to doubt her sincere approach to what she

had been engaged to do at Cadbury but it is also important to know that she had not been told the identity of the site nor its exact location, nor had she been told anything of its past associations – the name of Arthur was never mentioned to her. She was to act as a psychic vacuum, to be a receiver of – *what*?

Nothing is very clear, I'm afraid; many Questions were asked but the Answers were enigmatic. Perhaps Holzer was an inadequate recorder; we only have his interpretation of what was said and heard that day – he is our only medium to the mind of the true medium. I'll quote some of the questions and answers and paraphrase some of his conclusions.

Retreat

Coming up the hill at first she has the feeling of a monastery but then feels it is more a meeting place, not a war place but a place of strong friendship. Sybil felt the place to be a spiritual retreat, a good place, not a place of pure religion but a place of contemplation which ended with the breaking up of a friendship clan.

Q: *Is there some leader?*
A: *Abbot Erlaile, not necessarily in the same period.*
Q: *Are they male?*
A: *Not all male, but the friendship is male. Thirteen people ... tied together by friendship.*
Q: *Who were these men?*
A: *Gwaine is one.*
Q: *Do they have any name as a group?*
A: *Templars.*

It soon became clear that she was getting many impressions at once with varying degrees of intensity and could not possibly distinguish between the layers that cling to the place which become overlaid and fused in her mind. There seemed to be at least three, two probably from the 6th century, one of *Artorius* and one of *Gwaine* associations. The third layer was a much later period, that of Abbot Erlaile and the Templars: the time of the Crusades, of the Legend of the Holy Grail.

Q: *Can you visualise what stood here?*
A: *A friendship group, a meeting place. There was some link with the sea, they came here for sanctuary – tried to build up some meeting place.*

G-w-a-i-n-e-l-o-d was spelled out and he notes there are lots of Gwaine letters, as in *Gawain* and *Gwainevere*. He also conjectures she might be trying to say Camelot! .

Q: *What was the place called then?*
A: *B-r-y-n-w T-o-r*

She sees a man, a good man in chains, tied here with loss of freedom causing suffering – a Prisoner.

Q: *Do you sense any leader, any leader at all?*
A: *Two leaders, two men.*

He interprets this as Arthur ruling jointly with King *Cado*; later he ruled alone.

Q: *What does the place look like?*
A: There is a circle, the circle is important ... building, too, but there must be a circle ... the knights ... brave men ... Welsh names ... *Monserrey.*
Q: Is this *Monserrey*?
A: The place is here but the cavity is not here.
Q: Where is the cavity?
A: West ... towards the sun ...
Q: What is in the cavity?
A: The chains.
Q: What is kept here?
A: No one must know. Not ready. Not ready for knowledge. Before the circle ...
Q: Who is at the head of the circle?
A: He's dead. You should not look yet.
Q: What is the secret kept here?
A: I will not say the name.
Q: Who is the communicant?
A: The King.

He asks the name of the informant directly and is told *I'm a bird*, the voice coming from Sybil's lips, a little mockingly. He realises it is Merlin. He is told that *A stranger must come when the hawk flies in the sky like me ... when man flies in the sky.* He asks who the stranger will be and where he will come from and is told *Erfine*, a bird, and he will come out of the earth. He says, *You speak in riddles* and is told, *I know the answers.* His rejoinder, *Why not give them to me now?* elicits, *You are a man, there have to be 12 others ... the bird is the Secret.*

Then Merlin was gone and Sybil was back. He sees an incredible change in her face from the serene, wizened face of a timeless old man to Sybil Leek, merely standing on a dark cold hill she didn't know. They descended the hill to the warmth of a chauffeur driven car and returned to London and soon after to the US.

Impressions

In February 1968 he met Johnstone in St. Louis and discussed the results. Johnstone commented that he thought there were several periods there. The Templars were prominent in England in the 1200s, long after Arthur. To his knowledge Arthur built a fortress and a dwelling on the hilltop, not a sanctuary. Cado was a kinsman of Arthur after the Battle of Badon in AD 510, when he invited Arthur to share his kingdom with him. (This from his own dowsings, presumably.) Holzer's conclusions were that Camelot was at Cadbury and Sybil had established Arthur's presence there. He thought that the dual impression of a 6th century Arthur and a later Grail tradition at this spot is unique. From this place Arthur tried to stem the barbarian invasion while the Knights Templar later had a sanctuary there, perhaps inspired by the earlier Christian leadership of Arthur in a later turbulent time. Finally he admitted that unravelling the confused yarn was not an easy task but Mrs Leek had picked up real impressions of the past at Cadbury.

The jury is out!

Ian Brown

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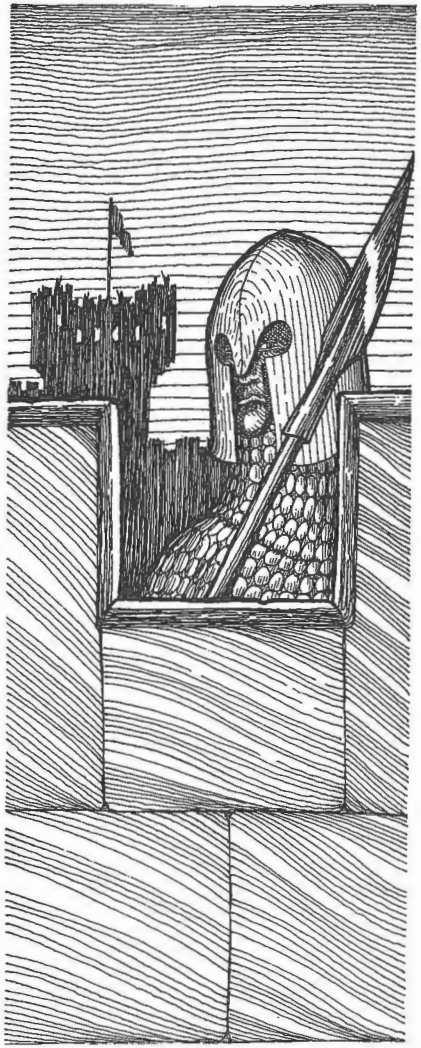


Talking Head

The head of Bran was taken by his seven companions to Harlech where they lived in happy contentment for seven years, and the birds of Rhiannon sang to them across the water. Then they journeyed on to Gwales and the head of Bran continued to converse pleasantly with them for eighty years at The Assembly of the Wondrous Head.

old news

HANGING BOWLS OR CRYPTO-GRAILS?

So-called Celtic hanging bowls are familiar enough objects from the early medieval period, but a British Museum curator reminds us that they still pose many questions.

First, their purpose. The misconception still lingers that they were hung over a fire. The evidence from archaeology and the delicate finishing of these bronze vessels argues against this, but their exact purpose – whether secular or sacred – is still a mystery. Weights-and-measures standard?

Second, provenance. Despite being often found in Anglo-Saxon contexts, they are not Germanic in style or manufacture. Nor, despite their generalised Celtic motifs, are they Irish, due to their scarcity in Ireland. It seems most likely they were made in the northern and western kingdoms of Britain, following a Roman tradition of the manufacture of similar vessels. Susan Youngs suggests that the term 'British' is "most useful as a cultural label for these bowls".

Third, their date. The discovery of "worn, patched or incomplete" bowls as grave furnishings in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries means we have a chronological context in which to place them. The most recent excavations at Sutton Hoo uncovered a cremation burial which had re-used one such bowl, in a cemetery dating as early as 525–550. Susan Youngs therefore suggests "a manufacturing date for this bowl and its distinctive fittings no later than, possibly well before, the end of the sixth century".

Pendragon readers will remember Anna-Marie Feguson's evocative Caridwen cover (2000) featuring a hanging bowl. No doubt the continued mystery of such vessels' purposes will for many help retain their image as a crypto-grail.

- Susan Youngs "The Sutton Hoo hanging bowl" *Current Archaeology 182* November 2002, 50; J N Briggs *ibid 183* December 2002, 138

WAS LONDON CAMELOT?

An Roman inscription on a plaque found recently in a pit at Tabard Square in Southwark has been described as the most important to be found in London for several years. The well carved plaque is about a foot square and reads in part:

NVM:AVGG
DEOMARTICA
MVLO:TIBERINI
VSCELERIANVS
C: BELL:
MORITIX:
LONDINIENSI
VM ⌀

Expanded and translated this becomes

"To the Powers of the Emperors
And to the god Mars Camulus
Tiberinius Celerianus,
A citizen of the Bellovaci,
Moritix of the Londoners ..."

Stylistically, the incription is dated to the first or second century AD, and Tiberinus Celerianus is surmised to be from near Beauvais in northern France, home of the Gaulish tribe of the Bellovaci. What job Tiberinus' title *Moritix* describes is however unknown. To have no reference to the *civitas* (town) or *vicus* (settlement) of *Londinium* but only to people, Londoners, is unusual, and it has therefore been suggested that London was not part of the official structure of Britannia but was in fact imperial domain. Indeed in the fourth century it was temporarily renamed Augusta, "the emperor's town".

Your eye may have been caught by **Camulus** or **Camulos**, a warrior god associated in Gaul with Mars (whose name reappears in Roman Colchester where Camulodunum means "the fortified town of Camulos"). Did Southwark, this suburb of Roman Londinium, commemorate Camulus because of Tiberinius' origins, or because Londoners had a special veneration for the god? Was London also *Camelot*?

- "Londoners" *Current Archaeology 182* November 2002, 48

... OR WAS IT CHESTER?

The notion that **Chester** was the City of the Legions where Arthur held court – and therefore the original Camelot – is not a new one, but it is currently enjoying a revival with the publication of a new book.

In an item sent in by Mark Cooper, Alexander Winslow, "an historical author from Devon," pushes his claim for Roman Deva in his *Siege Perilous*, just as Robert Stoker did decades ago with *The Legacy of King Arthur's Chester*.

"Chester had the same legion for 300 years and became known as the City of the Legions for that reason. Unless someone could come forward with some hard evidence to the contrary I would stake my reputation on it," Winslow is quoted as saying.

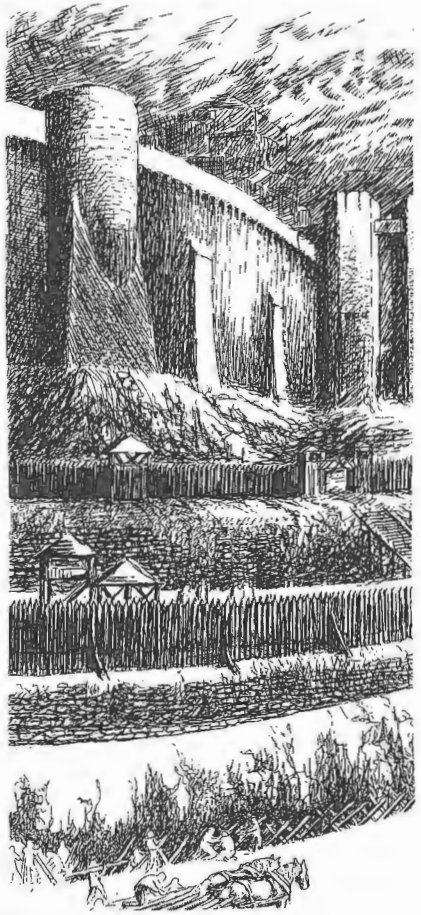
The Community Heritage co-ordinator at Chester agress that "Chester was at one time an influential and important administrative centre in England," but Emma Stuart goes on to stress "That Chester was Arthur's Camelot can't be proved, but neither should it [be] disregarded, for how would the truth ever be discovered if new theories are never examined?"

Interviewed by *The Chronicle* Chester MP Christine Russell declared, "I'd be delighted if Steven Spielberg chose to come and film in our area ... I don't know if Camelot was situated here or not, but Chester would certainly have been a good place for the King." Meanwhile, Winslow is convinced that the Round Table was "not actually a table but a list of civil and military administration of Britain," reports *The Chronicle*.

Meanwhile, **Carlisle** – traditional site of some of King Arthur's courts – provides evidence for occupation continuing down into the 5th and possibly 6th century, reportedly "one of the most important aspects" of recent excavations near the headquarters and armoury of the Roman fort there.

Like Wroxeter, several layers and post holes for timber buildings lay above fourth-century levels dated by coin deposits. Though no artefacts can be recognised as specifically from the early medieval period, an "extensive" bone deposit over the latest Roman military layers, similar to those found elsewhere in Carlisle and at Binchester Roman fort, may be "evidence for butchery or feasting taking place on a massive scale within the fort in the 5th or 6th centuries".

- Rachel Eaton "A city fit for King Arthur" *The Chronicle* November 15 2002
- "Carlisle" *Current Archaeology 183* December 2002, 133–137



Castle Perilious
Anna-Marie Ferguson
illustration for Malory's
Morte D'Arthur

Hunt for the White Hart

Tales told of a beast rare
Beast royal and true
Deep in the Forest of Dean.

Four squires of noble blood dress Arthur
Horns sound at the Head Groom
And sound again at the Master of Hounds
Gwenhwyvar and a maiden
Follow across the Wysg.

Gereint sleeping hears not the horses
Sun high before his saddle's filled.

Cardinal Cox

Arthur in Hell

The Giant wants the witch dead
(Black Hag, daughter of White Hag
From the headland of the Valley of Distress)
So Nine ride north from Kelli Wig
Four men struck down, left lame
Sharp Carnwennan cleaves the crone
Fill the flasks of Gwydolwyn
Blood to the brim of the Dwarf's bottles
Now sharpen the razor
The shaving will come
For when the witch is gone
The Giant's task is done

Cardinal Cox

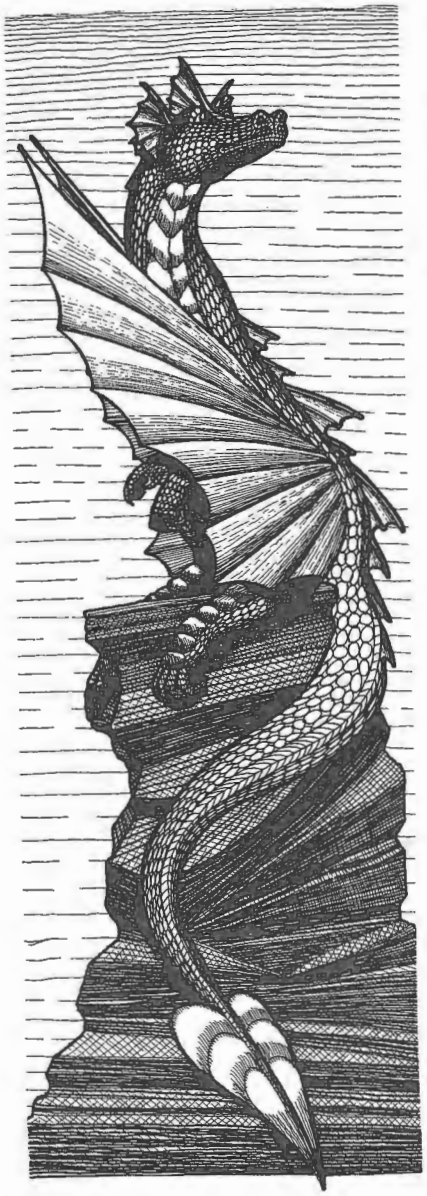
Of those who were never asked

Cursing high on green overlook hill old shepherd
And asked why that is blinded by white glare
Massed of painted towers walls king's place
Endless reminder of mastery of those with
Lives of pleasure, drink, sex, war games
Only interrupted when food runs short they
Turn to robbing sheep; daughter smiles memory.

Complaining under daisied barrow in darkness
All year save solstice lightshaft older gold-
Masked and bones already that no peace
Exists since tunnels beneath highside fort
Led endless burrowings onward as mad mile
Of ruler's wise man determined bent on
Taking control of all past to shapetwist time.

Steve Sneyd

Reviews



Alan Lupack *ed*
New Directions in Arthurian Studies
D S Brewer 2002 £40.00
0 85991 642 1 hb 168pp illus

This collection of essays arose from papers presented at *Camelot 2000: A Millennial Conference on the Arthurian Legends* at the University of Rochester, NY, and they amply fulfill their stated purposes of demonstrating the variety of scholarly approaches to Arthurian material and of suggesting new areas for examination.

As Alan Lupack's preface reminds us, Arthurian Studies is "a fascinating field in part because it is multi-disciplinary and it crosses linguistic, geographic, and temporal barriers", including in its academic range English, History, Art, Film, Religion, Classics and Cultural Studies (society, anthropology, politics, gender). The essays easily show that scholarly interest in Arthurian matters is no longer – as it was once perceived to be – solely concerned with dry literary or historical questions. So, while there are papers on Malory, the use of Latin to give authority to Arthurian texts, and the concept of Camelot in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, there are also contributions on religiosity in Tennyson, negativity in modern Arthurian novels, Black American views of Arthur, the Anglicization of Arthur, the cinematic Arthur and the modern transformations of Merlin.

The language of each of the studies is very individual. Bonnie Wheeler's ironic tone is barely obscured by her deliberately academic phraseology. Derek Brewer's elucidation of "the paradoxes of honour" in Malory ("You must never tell a lie. You must tell a lie ... Great honour is great sin. Great sin can be great honour.") sheds a bright light on the confusing morality of his great work. And Julian Wasserman draws interesting conclusions from the widely diverse views of the court of Camelot, from that of the Gawain poet to contrasting 20th century British and American attitudes.

These studies clearly show that, as Bonnie Wheeler notes, "Arthurian Studies have never been healthier or more vibrant than they are at present." Amen to that, I say.

Chris Lovegrove

Ian Brown

Emmet J Sweeney
Arthur and Stonehenge:
Britain's Lost History
Domra 2001 £6.95
0 9524417 9 9 pb 206pp illus
Available from Domra Publications,
65 Constable Road, Corby,
Northants NN18 0RT

Every now and then a book comes along that forces you to re-appraise and re-evaluate your accumulated knowledge of the origins and history of the inhabitants of these islands. In Emmet Sweeney's new book Arthur is removed from his now familiar place as Dark Age warrior, where quite a number of authors in recent years have firmly tried to root him, and is placed amongst the stars with the native tutelary deities of Britain. It makes a refreshing excursion from those seemingly endless trawls through old manuscripts in a desperate search for a name or genealogy that will give flesh and blood to the figure of Arthur. I'm not decrying this area of research in any way; it has its obvious value, bringing to light new ideas and information, but, unfortunately, I think it will be a rainy day in Tir-na-n'Og when the 'real' Arthur is found through the written records.

In *Arthur & Stonehenge* the whole process of how Europe and the Near East's megalithic culture has been dated is brought into question, amounting convincing evidence along the way that calls to account the validity of the answers the majority of textbooks and reference works give us about how our ancestors formed their mythologies and subsequently represented them in the outstanding megalithic structures that cover the lands in which they lived.

The inspiration behind *Arthur & Stonehenge* are the theories of Immanuel Velikovsky who, in the 1950s, wrote two books, *Worlds In Collision* and *Earth In Upheaval*. Velikovsky proposed that all of humanity's mythologies are derived from cataclysmic upheavals of nature, of cosmic origin, caused by comets and other planetary bodies colliding with the Earth, with the resulting floods and destruction that followed. We are all familiar with the now popular scenario that befell the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, but Velikovsky importantly and, at the time, outrageously, propounded that the last of these cataclysms happened only 3600 years ago. The human survivors and eye-witnesses to this destruction formed the beginnings of high civilisation, putting into the consciousness of humanity a mythological explanation of these events. Resistance to Velikovsky's theories was widespread and damning, the scientific and academic communities being renowned for their reluctance to embrace new ideas that go against accepted 'wisdom'.

As humanity's mythologies were being refined, fiery comets were revealed as vengeful deities and an intense phase of megalith building and blood sacrifice began in an attempt to calculate and avert any future cosmic events that would lead to further destruction. Through the work of Alexander Thom it has been shown that the people who created the stone circles already had enough understanding of mathematics, engineering and star lore to enable them to do this. So, instead of great megalithic complexes like Stonehenge, Avebury and Callanish being built by unknown and mysterious Stone Age peoples millennia ago, we now need to down-date the construction of these monuments to the last millennium BC, squarely within the Celtic world and, more controversially, the time of the Druids.

Unfeasible or unbelievable? Well, no. We have become so used to the idea of compartmentalised ages of Neolithic / Bronze / Iron, each neatly following the other that it is easy to forget that they did in fact overlap, by many hundreds of years. One area that is scrutinised here is the development of tools and weapons. Stone tools were still being manufactured and used in the Iron Age and, as Emmet Sweeney asserts, iron tools were actually made at the beginning of the Bronze Age. It is this overlap, and the resulting excavation of these artefacts at megalithic sites, that has added to a confused dating for many of the stone structures that cover Europe and the Mediterranean. This and other theories within the book are presented in a sympathetic and knowledgeable way that

make for ease of understanding. No wild flights of fancy, just a sensible presentation of ideas and accompanying evidence, a welcome alternative to many 'word-heavy' tomes.

If you approach this book with an open mind it answers many questions that have previously been either unanswered or answered unsatisfactorily. If we accept this information and the new time frame, it places us within the realms of native tradition and folklore. The building of Stonehenge is attributed in legend to Merlin and placing Merlin within this new time frame removes Arthur from his Dark Age surroundings also. It is generally accepted that the medieval Christianised versions of the Arthurian legends have their roots in ancient Celtic lore and wonder tales, an example of one of the most familiar being the search for the Holy Grail representing Arthur's quest to Annwn for the Celtic cauldron of rebirth. Emmet Sweeney argues that the god Arthur's many exploits from this developing store of Celtic myth placed him among the forefront of the pantheon of Celtic deities of the megalithic era. These exploits were so famous that they became well known throughout Europe and the Mediterranean, in their turn influencing and providing seed patterns for some of the myths of classical Greece. The Greeks were well aware of the British Isles as the land of the Hyperboreans – situated on the edge of the world, 'beyond the north wind', the dwelling place of Apollo and his sacred Round Temple. Emmet gives many examples of comparative figures from the Greek and Celtic worlds that serve to illustrate well how much common ground is shared by the two cultures' mythologies. That the Greek was heavily influenced by the British is illustrated by the major aspects of the prime characters. Hercules himself is shown to be an Arthur figure, while Merlin is revealed as similar to Hermes of Greek legend.

Britain was an important source of bronze and tin for the ancient world and the country's importance in the development of bronzeworking for weapons and tools is fully examined. A source for one of the Arthurian legends that is peculiarly British is found; the legend of the sword in the stone. Bronze swords were cast in stone or clay moulds, hence the sword being pulled from a stone. This later found its way, subtly adapted, into the story of Arthur gaining his rightful place as King of Britain. This is an idea that I hadn't previously considered, but the more thought I give to it, the more appropriate it becomes as a source for the legend. The ancient swordsmiths' craft would have been regarded as an act of magic and many wondrous stories would have undoubtedly grown up around it, Arthur's kingship test being the final flowering of these tales. Cornwall and the West Country, the source of quality bronze, has by tradition strong links with Arthur and his place and status in pre-history is also attested to by the number of standing stones and burial chambers that are associated with or named after him. These standing stones and barrows are not of Dark Age origin so is it credible that their names have come down to us through millennia old tradition, having been erected in praise of and to appease one of the great solar gods of these islands?

To do justice to this book within the space of a review is difficult. It deserves to be read by a wide audience and its themes examined and discussed by everyone with an interest in the many aspects of Arthur. *Arthur & Stonehenge* will, I hope, come to be viewed as an extremely important book in the field of Arthurian and megalithic studies that presents, in an approachable and intelligent way, a cohesive reappraisal of the pre-history and myths of these islands, putting them into a valued new perspective.

Well written and researched, it provides an impetus for re-examining our ancestors' view of their world, the heavens that surrounded them and the great stone monuments they left behind. If the textbooks and academic journals have to be re-written and the Druids get the credit for originating and developing a megalithic science that reached its apogee with Stonehenge, then so be it. I'm sure this would make dear old William Stukeley, for one, very happy indeed.

Simon Rouse

N J Higham
King Arthur: myth-making and history
Routledge 2002 £25.00
0 415 21305 3 hb 303pp illus

This is not one of those academic books that castigates and berates the lunatic fringe while simultaneously feeding from the hand it bites, but nevertheless it very definitely takes a minimalist view of the existence of Arthur, king or otherwise. Nick Higham is well-placed to examine authoritatively the historical contexts in which the Arthurian legend grew, and does so in very great detail; a short review such as this can only highlight one or two of the original contributions this study makes to the literature.

Higham believes the figure of Arthur springs Athene-like from the creative imagination of the anonymous 9th-century *Historia Brittonum* author. He makes a good case for "Nennius" (or whoever he was) coming from in or around Gwent but writing a sophisticated metahistory for the Gwynedd dynasty of Merfyn Frych (825–844). This composition, *inter alia*, portrayed Arthur as a Joshua figure to St Patrick's Moses, and a quasi-biblical view of British history – with one or other ethnic people as God's elect – permeates this author's vision as much as it did that of a Gildas or a Bede. To consider the chronicles, metahistories and poetry of the time as objective history in the modern sense is to fundamentally misjudge their purposes.

The crunch comes with the obvious question: Did the figure of Arthur then emerge *ex nihilo* into the legendary history of Britain? Higham suggests that "the most plausible conclusion is ... that the historicized Arthur of the central Middle Ages had his roots in a Roman *Artorius* who had been taken up and developed within British folk stories already widespread by the beginning of the ninth century ... The likeliest origin was a military leader of repute in Roman Britain who had become legendary" (page 97). Whether you agree or not with this conclusion this is certainly a challenging yet fascinating study which must effectively throw cold water on all those "real Arthur" and "true story" claims.

Chris Lovegrove

Graeme Fife
Arthur the King
BBC Books 1990

Reading some of the reviews of Arthurian subject matter in recent issues of *Pendragon*, I thought I might be cheeky and put my oar in and recommend a book from a stack I keep in a corner of the living room. I have dipped into it many times as I find it useful. It comes at the subject from a different angle, admittedly an assumption on the part of the author, but nevertheless it is presented in a pragmatic fashion.

Fife approaches Arthurian literature by concentrating on the role of Arthur as a king. Not just any king, but a perfection of kingliness, an example to be admired by other kings, an example to aspire to. Hence, the development of Romance is firmly placed in the medieval period, and at the time of the Crusades, of holy war, and personal sacrifice. A greater, quite noble thing had reared its head, a belief system taking precedence over human greed and materialism. Some historians might disagree with this in a fundamental manner, casting aspersions on the integrity of the crusaders, but the evidence from Romance suggests that they were not all motivated by the prospect of profit and plunder. Graeme Fife is a colourful writer too, and comes out with such gems as 'the long blade of Excalibur, leaning out from his hand like the dragons tongue licking the dark earth' or 'Tintagel, where the sea's white teeth gnaw relentlessly at the ankles of the cliff' *etc.*

However, it is where Fife takes *Arthur the king* that I find so intriguing. In Malory, for example, Arthur is not confined by the boundaries of Britain. He is active much further afield – in Scandinavia for example, with origins in the Viking roots of the Normans, and in France and Italy, where he defeats a Roman army in imitation of Clovis and the Franks. He takes the city of Rome, and campaigns in the Holy Land *etc.* He also campaigned relentlessly against the barbarians. Fife's premise is that Arthur is a composite figure, a compound of diverse French and Norman heroes such as Clovis, Charlemagne, and Rollo the Viking. These are medieval embellishments to a Celtic myth he claims, which have transformed

Arthur into something quite different than he was perceived in, for instance, the 6th century AD.

Fife, however, does not set out to be controversial. He was, after all, writing for the BBC. He therefore places the historical warlord of folk tale during the latter part of the 5th century, and appears to be influenced by Tolstoy and the Scottish roots of Arthur, popular at the time he was writing.

He quickly passes over the historical figure and looks at the sources available to Geoffrey of Monmouth when he was writing the Historia. He accepts that he made use of folklore, legend, and myth, but he was also open to non-Celtic influences via visiting scholars from the continent. They came to Oxford in quite large numbers, he says, as it had become a centre of learning in the 11th and 12th centuries.

In some respects Fife plays down the role of the Celtic peripheries, the bowl of sea that licked the shores of Brittany, Cornwall, coastal Wales, and southern Ireland. In Cunliffe's *Facing the Ocean*, great play is made on the cultural homogeneity of this region, that probably also included northern Spain, in the prehistoric period (before Christianity). This unity and connections were maintained during the dark ages when the barbarians had overrun the rest of Europe. The Vikings appear to have disrupted these interchanges, or perhaps they became part of them. In any case, the Normans frequented these waters. They expanded their power base into Ireland and southern Wales, building the cathedral of St David's and constructing a string of castles to contain the peoples of the interior. Hence, the Normans were in a position to inherit the traditions of Arthur from an almost pure Celtic source, little influenced by the Romans.

The question we might ask however, was Arthur human or supernatural? The early Church, especially the Celtic Church of the Irish missionaries that became active around the coasts of Britain in the 6th century AD, very often turned pagan gods into human enemies of the Saints. I mention this because it has occurred to me that the human exploits associated with Arthur can firmly be placed elsewhere if we should take Fife literally. He does not make that claim, I must hasten to add, but it is a possibility that could be surmised after reading this book. Many other figures of Celtic myth have been turned into human super heroes, such as Finn mac Cumhail, Cuchulainn, Taliesin, and Merlin, as a result of story telling. The same process seems to have transformed non-Celtic figures of European myth, such as Cinderella, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, and Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, into stories attractive to children.

It has been suggested that one of the reasons western Britain, from Cornwall to Strathclyde, remained Celtic in the 5th and 6th centuries, and has continued to remain culturally different to England and SE Scotland, is because Arthur repelled the Anglo-Saxons, pushing them back beyond the Severn. This is one of those little facts that get oft repeated, over and over again. However, a little niggle pops into my head as the Anglo-Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians came from lowland countryside. They settled in the lowland areas of eastern Britain, the territory most near to their lands of origin. Their farming practises were not adapted to the highland zone of Wales, the Pennines, the Peak District or even the Chilterns. This may have been the inhibitory factor, and not a suspected warlord by the name of Arthur. For example, it is thought that in the 5th century the Anglo-Saxons entered central England by way of the flooded Fen lands and the river Great Ouse and settled extensively in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Buckinghamshire, penetrating the Vale of Aylesbury and the Oxfordshire Vale of the White Horse. At this juncture they seem to have stopped, concentrating on bringing the soil under cultivation and establishing an enclave, but leaving the Berkshire Downs and the Cotswolds to the Celts. It was much later, towards the end of the 6th century, that pressure from many new immigrants from the other side of the North Sea, led to expansion and settlement further to the west.

It is true that Gildas seems to claim that the Saxons brought death and warfare even

to the shores of western Britain. However, it is well known that Saxon pirates were active in the Irish Sea, during the reign of Neill of the Nine Hostages for example, and they appear to have been an early manifestation of the Vikings and quite unlike the Anglo-Saxons that settled in eastern Britain during the second half of the 6th century, whose motivation appears to have been the availability of land.

Apart from Gildas there seems to be very little evidence of Saxons penetrating to the west in the 5th or early part of the 6th century, and therefore I suggest the real heroes of the Welsh are well-known historical figures that repulsed and rebelled against the inroads of the English and the Normans in the early medieval period. To appreciate how I arrived at this idea, and it is only an idea, it is necessary to read *Arthur the King* and Fife's evaluation of the motives of Geoffrey of Monmouth. These appear to have revolved around providing the Normans, his masters, with a genealogy that gave them entitlement to not only England but also the whole of Britain, and a just reason for the suppression of the English. In his story the British had been driven out of what became England, to Wales, Cornwall, and to Brittany. It is known that large numbers of people from what is now Dorset, Devon, and Somerset, fled across the Channel after a severe outbreak of the plague in the mid 6th century, and they settled in Brittany and what became, a few centuries afterwards, Normandy.

However, it is also known that Anglo-Saxons that had settled in Sussex and Kent also moved across the Channel into NE France at the very same moment in time (see John Morris, *The Age of Arthur*). They appear to have been absorbed into the Frankish kingdom, and allowed to settle in that part of France that appears to have been depopulated by the plague, or by people moving elsewhere to escape it. A sniff of suspicion is raised, as by claiming the British moved en masse across the Channel, Geoffrey is at once providing both justification for his own presence in England, in view of his suspected Breton ancestry, as well as an historical reason for the Norman conquest. He turned these events into a birthright, and one the Normans were only too happy to embrace.

Geoffrey was not only intent on providing William with a suitable legitimacy, but as a contemporary of the late reign of Henry I and the clash between Stephen and his sister, Mathilda, over the throne, he was also intent on providing Henry II, the Plantagenet, with a pedigree. Little bits of contemporary events appear in the *Historia* according to Fife, and not least those surrounding Eleanor the queen. He takes a look at Chrétien de Troyes and Wace and makes the point that the tale of Arthur was composed for a French-speaking court not only in England, but in France as well. He likens Arthur to a variety of French heroes, and most especially to Clovis the Merovingian bear.

Clovis was active on the continent at the very same time Arthur was reputed to have been active in Britain, the late 5th century. He defeated a Roman general, Syagrius, at the battle of Soissons, and claimed the title Rex Romanorum or King of the Romans. Clovis achieved in fact what Arthur did in legend, and Fife makes a clear connection between Geoffrey's Soissy and the Soissons of Clovis. In 496 Clovis was baptised a Christian, defeated the Germanic Visigoths, and thereafter campaigned under the banner of the Church. Clovis died in 511 and Fife notes the longhaired priest kings of the Merovingian dynasty claimed direct descent from the Trojans, exactly as Geoffrey did for the Kings of Britain via Brutus. Geoffrey also made a connection between Arthur the bear of Celtic myth, and Merovingian descent via Arkas the son of Kallisto the Bear. Another connection is made via Genevieve of Nanterre, who was installed as a virgin heroine of the Frankish kingdom. Her name is reminiscent of Guinevere, the French form of the Welsh *gwynhwyfar*, the white lady of folk tale and myth.

However, the parallels do not stop with Clovis but expand to other heroes of the French, such as Martel the Hammer, the Frankish king that stopped the Arab conquest of Europe in its tracks, and Charlemagne. The latter campaigned extensively and repeatedly against the

pagan Saxons of Germany, and this connection is drawn in order to illustrate the rightness of the Norman conquest and the subjugation of the Anglo-Saxons.

The idea was to demonise them and justify their disinheritance. It worked. Not for nothing was Arthur attributed with campaigning against the Anglo-Saxons. This simplification ignored the fact that large numbers of Danes, Norwegians, Scots, and the Celtic peoples of Britain were absorbed into the empire of the Normans. The question still begs, can we exclude Geoffrey's Arthur from a British theatre of war, and that tantalising possibility is what makes *Arthur the King* so absorbing a read.

Philip Clapham

Edward Donald Kennedy *ed*
King Arthur: A Casebook
Routledge 2002 £17.99
0 415 93912 7 pb 309pp 6 figures

Originally published by Garland Publishing in 1996, this volume in their Casebook series was the first of many devoted to Arthurian Characters and Themes, and is a mixture of new and previously published academic essays, some translated from their French or German originals. The essays are arranged in chronological order of their subject matter, starting with the relatively modern search for the "real" Dark Age Arthur and ending with 20th century responses to the figure of Arthur. What can this scholarly casebook offer to the general reader?

The principal message that comes across is that every age and *milieu* gets the Arthur it is looking for. We see in the 12th century a "great king [becoming] strangely diminished ... unworthy of his glorious reputation" (Barbara N Sargent-Baur), with spiritual values contrasting "Arthurian norms as having relative merit only" (William C McDonald). Medieval romances used the Arthurian legend "to make more vivid their ideological preoccupations" (Fanni Bogdanow) such as the figure of Fortuna, "with her duty to warn and punish in order to lead [Arthur] to salvation" (Karl Josef Höltgen). On the one hand Arthur's reaction to the Lancelot-Guenevere affair contrasts favourably with Mark's response to Tristan and Isode's liaison in Malory (Edward Donald Kennedy), on the other Arthur's legitimacy as king is increasingly questioned in successive Scottish chronicles (Karl Heinz Göller). Further tussles between fact, fiction and contemporary obsessions emerge in essays on treatments by Polydore Vergil and John Leland, Edmund Spenser, Tennyson and T H White.

Lest we moderns feel above it all, Raymond H Thompson reminds us that recent portrayals of Arthur give us "an idealized figure [or] an unscrupulous and brutal tyrant; ... a man of destiny [or] a struggling swimmer". And so on. There is no doubt that Arthur is a king for all seasons and all temperaments, and will long continue so.

Chris Lovegrove

Robert Leeson
The Song of Arthur
Walker 2000 £4.99
0 7445 7874 4 pb 142pp

Although aimed at younger readers, Robert Leeson's *The Song of Arthur* can be enjoyed by children and adults alike, and serves as an excellent introduction to the legends of the Arthurian world. Set in the fifth century, Britain is viewed through the eyes of the young Taliesin, recently orphaned and forced to find his own way in the world. His journey leads him to the court of the Boar of Cornwall, and the many achievements and downfalls that follow are brought to life through the young man's ever growing vision.

Through concise chapters we are introduced to the *dramatis personae* of our story and the trials they go through to achieve glory or face loss and despair. By cleverly weaving themes from different sources, Malory, *The Mabinogion* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* amongst

them, we have a near complete retelling of the major legends and a tale true to the Celtic spirit is told. Robert Leeson's writing evokes a wonderful imagery of Dark Age times and the story flows like the waters of a river, carrying you downstream to the last sad days at Camlann, tumbling over the rocks that are the battles and strife that fill Arthur's days.

It is the marvellous combination of uncomplicated language and descriptive flair that are the mark of a master storyteller and Robert Leeson proves he is among that company. The characters are very real and very human, although an air of myth and mystery is still retained, pervading the land of Logres. I initially approached *The Song of Arthur* purely as a children's book and had hoped to enjoy it as such, but I was happily surprised at how much more it became as I journeyed through it in the company of Taliesin. A handy bibliography is also provided to point newer followers of Arthur to some of the sources used. A book that I can warmly recommend to children of all ages.

Simon Rouse

Gordon Wardman
A Glass Mosaic:
poems from an Arthurian sequence
Oasis Books 2002 £1.00 *incl p&p*
1 900996 19 7
Oasis Broadsheet No 4 from Oasis Books, 12 Stevenage Road, London SW6 6ES (cheques payable to "I Robinson")

With a cover design showing the lost *Hic Sepultus* Glastonbury cross, this publication includes fourteen poems representative of a sequence, still growing, which the author, when I heard him read from it recently at the Albert Poets in Huddersfield, described as already running to several hundred. So it is a taster, but an effective collection in its own right.

The poems are short sharp pictures, through the eyes, often unnamed, of protagonists and others. In terms of how the story is treated, this is the Dark Age rather than chivalro-medieval Matter. As Wardman said when reading from these, his only change to the story, and that one which does not arise save once in this selection, is that, in his telling, Merlin's fate is to be transformed into a bear – which, given that Artos is also Bear, gives a teasing doubleness to the poem "the Bear's Last Words".

There is in these poems a real feeling of "being there", inside the heads of witnesses and participants. I felt this particularly strongly in "nos romani" – "never dreamed in latin ... boned their fishy tongue ... you woke up screaming in the night / and the words were suddenly new", an essence of a cusp of change, in "body count" at the aftermath of a skirmish – "a wild-cat / hissed defiance of usurpers – / turning round, Kay hissed back", that savage playfulness releasing battle tension, and "spring" – a nameless sentry, watching "the hares cavorting / in the made March moonlight" cannot forget the conflict, and feels, as in "body count", an echoing violence in nature – all the deadly moves / hidden in the folds of the dance."

Explanation is avoided (the only exception, "Lancelot at Din Guairi", is also both the longest and, to me, the least successful – after all, we do not need to context our own thoughts, not did dark Age Britons) – we are there with their eyes. Lent to us by the poet, that is enough. Recommended.

Steve Sneyd

Jeff Saward
Magical Paths:
labyrinths and mazes in the 21st century
Mitchell Beazley 2002 £25.00
1 84000 573 4

This is a splendidly assembled book marrying text and, on the basis that a picture is worth a thousand words, colour photographs and archive illustrations. The text, by the editor of exchange journal Caerdroia, is authoritative and full of fascinating titbits – for example, medieval clergy used to play pelota at Easter on the pavement labyrinth in Auxerre Cathedral, and the famous Saffron Walden turf maze is not ancient but was based on a design in Thomas Hyll's *The Gardener's Labyrinth* of the 1560s.

Following a brief history and a discussion of traditional mazes, Jeff launches into an

overview of the recent explosion of interest in winding paths which has seen an almost exponential increase in the creation of new examples at the end of the 20th century. These reflect the availability of modern materials, enthusiastic patrons and innovative designers. Above all, they "capture our modern imaginations as successfully as they did those of our ancient ancestors" with the result that the world seems to be in the grip of a maze craze without parallel.

Mazes and labyrinths work not only on a physical level: they can be symbolic of death and birth, journey and pilgrimage, and of course the quest. Glastonbury Tor features here too, and while question marks hang over its alleged antiquity there is no doubt that modern treadings of its supposed ancient route have created a genuine pathway.

The illustrations are a joy to peruse, and all credit is due to the editorial team for a sympathetic blend of visuals and text. Do search this title out to enjoy it to the full.

Chris Lovegrove

Paul Devereux
Living Ancient Wisdom: Understanding and Using its Principles Today
Rider 2002 £10.99
0 7126 1287 4 pb 240pp illus

Another highly recommendable title from Paul Devereux, *Living Ancient Wisdom* is an exploration of ancient cultures' perceptions of the world, the greater universe, their links to these bodies, and potential entry points to how we may connect with those perceptions today, involving ourselves more closely with the living planet around us. While a fair proportion of the subject matter may be at least familiar to students of the esoteric, as a starting point for new pilgrims on the path the book serves as an excellent guide to unlocking some of the keys to ancient wisdom hidden in ritual, landscape and myth.

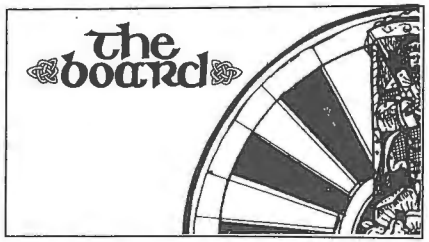
Intelligently divided into four parts – World Centres, Pilgrimage, Sacred Geography and Divination – the reader's initial access to each section is through a concise overview, giving background information to places and practices that illustrate the content. An in-depth analysis follows, with site examples that the more adventurous traveller may visit for his- or herself, although there is plenty to interest the armchair traveller also. Many avenues for further research are available within the scope of the wide ranging bibliography.

Each part ends with Principles and Practice, a rewarding and inspired section on how to interact with ancient sites and, in fact, any landscape through meditation, visualisation techniques and practices that facilitate both a greater sense of our place in the wider scheme of things and a connectedness to our immediate environs. We can appreciate the living land as did our ancestors and, although the vista may be different in the 21st century than it was in the 1st, the basic premise holds true; that we are all a part of the land in some way, often that we are seemingly unconscious of, and that recognising this is an important step to realising ourselves as complete human beings. *Living Ancient Wisdom* thus acts as a guide book for journeys of the spirit.

As with all of Paul's books, the writing is fluid, entertaining and informative, backed up by practical research, and he should be commended for packing in as much information as there is, without losing sight of the intention of imparting valuable knowledge. Whether you may just be taking your first steps into these realms or some way along the road, *Living Ancient Wisdom* will act as an inspiring and reliable travelling companion.

Simon Rouse

Next issue ...
features more reviews for which there was lack of space this time, including Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd's *Pendragon: the definitive account of the origins of Arthur*, Geoffrey Ashe's re-issued *Mythology of the British Isles*; Marilyn Bechely's *Gawain the White Hawk;* Nigel Pennick's *The Power Within: the way of the warrior*, a children's story by Michael Murpurgo, *The Sleeping Sword*, which features Arthur and the Isles of Scilly; and Margot Miller's novel *The Priestess of Ennor.*



COMING TO A SCREEN

Shock, horror! "No round table, no knights, no Camelot, no Excalibur and Arthur himself is just a humble blacksmith as Hollywood destroys a British myth," reported one British broadsheet. And no Merlin or Lancelot either! What is the world coming to?

This is **Steven Spielberg**'s planned TV series (noted last issue), costed at £85 million and due to be filmed in the West Country in Spring 2003. It will feature Artos, Gwenever, "Bwyr" (Bedwyr?) and a "brotherhood of companions" – the latter perhaps a reference to the origins of Cymru and the Cymry (and related words such as Modern Welsh *cymrodoriaeth*, a fellowship). A Dark Age *Band of Brothers* maybe?

The film's scriptwriter and director, David Leland (evocative name, this) declared he was "not interested in mysticism ... There's no point in making this film unless you get under the skin of it and to the reality as it would have been at that time."

Warner Brothers are reported to be bringing out a film based on T H White's ***The Once and Future King***. Yet another Hollywood director, **Jerry Bruckheimer**, is also due to start work on ***King Arthur***, this time in Ireland. "It happened much earlier than movies or the English have put it. They changed the way it was told," he stated. "Arthur was really Roman and the Knights of the Round Table were Russian and great horsemen." As Steve Sneyd points out, this is The Sarmatian Connection resurfacing – and with a vengeance! The next little while should prove interesting for public Arthurian consciousness.

From the Japanese director Mamoru Oshii comes ***Avalon*** (2001), described as "a pensive live-action future tale". Made in Poland, the film features the heroine's quest for a secret higher level in the program of an illegal computer game called *Avalon*, and is reportedly full of "parallel realities, retro field combat and cryptic plot turns".

Babylon 5 is an American space opera TV series set in the 23rd century which airs regularly on the SciFi Channel. Its interest for Pendragons comes from the name of its starship, ***Excalibur***, mentioned before in these pages (more at www.scifi.com/) – not to be confused with ***Legion: The Legend of Excalibur***. This is a PlayStation2 role-playing game (£39.99) where you get to play the young Arthur, but "murky graphics ... a small scale ... lack of save opportunities [and] execrable voice-acting skills" lead to one out of five stars from one reviewer.

- Catherine Milner "Spielberg puts the legend of King Arthur to the sword" *The Sunday Telegraph* October 6 2002
- *Avalon* notice in *Guardian Guide* November 9 2002
- Kieran Meeke "Legend falls short" *Metro* October 9 2002

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

More shock, horror! Architectural historian Dan Cruickshank suggests that the origins of the **Order of the Garter** lie "in a medieval cult of veneration of the genitalia of the Virgin Mary".

Founded by Edward III in the mid-14th century, the Order was a spin-off from his obsession with Arthurian-style **Round Table** tournaments (together with the remodelling of Windsor Castle and the commissioning of Winchester's Round Table).

But Cruickshank, in a programme in BBC2's *Britain's Best Buildings* series, postulates that the original garter shape is based on the *vesica piscis*, "a holy symbol representing the vagina of the Virgin Mary". The Italian contemporary Mondonus Belvaleti, in his *Tractatus Ordinis Serenissimi Domini Regiis Angliae Vulgariter Dicti la Gerratiere* ("Tract on the most serene Order ... in the common tongue called the Garter") explicitly wrote that that the Order "took its beginning from the female sex".

Cruickshank's claims for *vesica piscis* geometric symbolism in the architecture of Windsor's St George's Chapel – spiritual home of the Order – looks less relevant however when it is recalled that the chapel postdates the Order's founding by a century and that many other medieval buildings also include the symbol in their planning.

In another ecclesiastical building more secrets might be already exposed to view. John Ritchie is from a group calling themselves **Knights Templar**, and reported in *The Independent* for January 6 is their use of ultrasound and thermal imaging technology to search vaults beneath **Rosslyn Chapel** near Edinburgh. You'll know what they're looking for even before Ritchie is quoted: "We hope to find this burial place and maybe the **Holy Grail** itself."

- Maev Kennedy "Virgin Mary's clue to royal order mystery" *The Guardian* November 23 2002
- "Soundbites" in *New Scientist Vol 177* No 2377, 6

ARTHURIAN AUDIO-VISUAL

Further shock, horror! Did the Anglo-Saxons *really* invade Britain? Or was there "merely an upwardly mobile shift for the woad-clad bog-trotters of lowland Britain who began to learn to speak English and dress in the latest Anglo-Saxon fashions"?

Thus *The Guardian* Guide spin for ***The Dark Origins of Britain***, Tim Whewell's BBC Radio 4 series on the history of the Dark Ages which began on January 16 2003. "They're particularly dark because nobody really knows what actually happened," the Guide helpfully suggests. The first programme included the conflicting conclusions of analyses on DNA and tooth enamel, while the two later programmes covered the Picts, Anglo-Saxons, Britons – and the figure of 'arguably one of the first "Great Britons" – **King Arthur** himself' (thus Greg Neale in *Radio Times*).

On BBC R2, November 17 2002, Desmond Carrington played a track from a CD entitled ***Avalon Road***. This was middle-of-the-road folk by the **New Avalon Boys**, who said they take their name from the musicians who played on Laurel & Hardy films.

On "The Herd" programme of performance poetry (BBC R4, November 13 2002) a perfomer calling himself, if I got it right, Major Pantechnicon (!) did a poem called **"Lady of Shalott Day"**, *writes Steve Sneyd*. This was about an eight-hour **Shalottathon** at work with everyone dressed up appropriately, a window-cleaner playing "tirralirra", wagesheets filled out in a mirror and turned into a tapestry *etc.*

A Camelot-themed issue provides a good opportunity to mention the University of Rochester's **The Camelot Project** website:

www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot

Amongst several attractions it includes examples of artwork by our own **Ian Brown**, such as the picture which graces the current *Pendragon* – this is linked to a thumbnail description of Camelot, appropriately, at

www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cammenu.htm

Cinema Arthuriana is twenty essays, edited by Kevin J Harty, on the Arthurian legend in film and television from 1904 to 2001, some new, some revised. As well as familiar titles, essays cover the 2001 TV version of *The Mists of Avalon* as well as French and German films. The hardback (317pp 0 7864 1344 1 £31.50) is in the McFarland Film Studies series, available from 3 Henrietta St, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU.

TREADING THE BOARDS

Stuart Paterson specialises in Christmas plays, and the latest of this festive playwright's offerings was ***Merlin the Magnificent***, which showed at the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh from November 30 to December 29 2002. The plot concerns the young Arthur, "who must defeat the wicked Morgan le Fay if he is to fulfil his destiny and become king."

The Scottish capital seems to favour Arthurian drama: back in the summer, a new production of Wagner's music drama ***Parsifal*** played at the Festival Theatre, Edinburgh until August 18.

Peter Stein's staging impressed *The Guardian*'s critic, who approved of the exposing of "the work's innards and the dangerous ideology that informs it" through the consistent use of blood imagery. "Much of the opera," we are reminded, "rests on

the fact that the German language of salvation is linked to that of health. Being holy – *heilig* – equates with being whole – *heil*." Wounds are thus "emblematic of imperfection, though exposure to the blood of Christ, preserved in the Grail, ensures redemption. Add to this the fact that the blood that the Grail elite worship is of necessity pure and you have an appalling combination."

Despite vocal flaws from some of the principals the standards of conducting and orchestral playing were high, and the verdict was that "this is *Parsifal* as it should be – mystic, mesmeric and foul."

• Lyn Gardner "Merlin the Magnificent" *Guardian Guide* November 30 – December 6 2002

• Tim Ashley "Wagner opens wound ..." *The Guardian* August 14 2002

*BOOK*WORM

Two titles from Boydell & Brewer newly in paperback are due summer 2003: firstly Richard Barber's ***Legends of Arthur*** (488pp 0 85115 950 8 £14.99) where two versions of each hero's exploits are presented; and secondly Nigel Bryant's translation of Robert de Boron, ***Merlin and the Grail*** (180pp 0 85991 779 7 £14.99), presenting a trilogy of prose romances (*Joseph of Arimathea*, *Merlin* and *Perceval*) which together form the very first Arthurian cycle.

Other related titles to be issued in paperback are Andrew Jones' ***Medieval Ghost Stories: an anthology of miracles, marvels and prodigies*** from the 8th to the 14th centuries (176pp 0 85118 948 6 £9.99) and R I Page's classic ***An Introduction to English Runes*** (266pp 0 85115 946 X £14.99), reviewed in *Pendragon XXIX* No 1.

The American firm Daedalus Books offers compilations of the classic ***Prince Valiant*** comics at bargain prices – $3.98 each volume instead of the listed $16.95. A recent catalogue includes seventeen volumes (of 32 or more) of Hal Foster's Arthurian saga "in full color and in a large format, accommodating a full episode on each page," produced around 1997 by a number of publishers (including Carlsen of Denmark).

Daedalus can be contacted by writing to PO Box 6000, Columbia, MD 21095, USA or phoning 410-309-2705 (from outside the US, or 1-800-395-2665 from the US). These and thousands of other titles can also be viewed at www.salebooks.com

Peterborough poet Cardinal Cox, whose two Arthurian poems are published elsewhere in this edition, has had collections of his Gothic / Dark Romantic poetry published in the US. These include ***Amorous Gargoyles*** (subjects cover urban terror, black humour, monsters and so on), ***Chimerical Architecture*** and ***The Nightmare Abbey Psalter***. You can obtain these by sending a self-addressed envelope with two (loose) 45p stamps to Opossum Holler Tarot Press, 5094 North Country Road, 750 East, Orleans, IN 47452, USA.

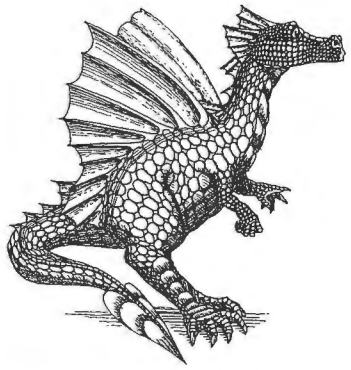
When Ronan Coghlan closed down **Excalibur Books** he passed his stock on to Lionel Beer of Spacelink Books, and some of the Arthurian and Grail legend titles, such as Blake & Lloyd's ***The Keys to Avalon*** (£9.95), are now available from this book business: Lionel Beer at 115 Hollybush Lane, Hampton, Middlesex TW12 2QY or phone 020 8979 3148.

LAST WORDS

Apologies for the several examples of sloppy editorial grammar last issue, embarrassingly too numerous to mention (*eg* page 48 "a biography of both primary sources ..." instead of "... both of primary sources ... and of secondary sources").

RAY TURLEY, poet, artist and musician, born in 1932, who died suddenly on May 6 following a short illness, lived in Caerleon, *writes Steve Sneyd*. The Arthurian connections of the area were a considerable influence on his work, particularly reflected by the poems in his collection *In Search of Camelot*, responding to echoes of that past in his own modern surroundings. As well as other collections, his poetry appeared in a variety of magazines and anthologies, and he performed it widely around South Wales as a member of the Barlwn Sounds poetry performance group.

Chris Lovegrove with Steve Sneyd



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Ian Brown

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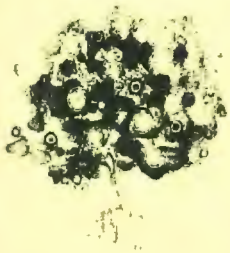

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