

pendragon

Journal of the
Pendragon Society



Chroniclers

XXX No 4

Spring–Summer 2003

editorial

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Caerleon Round Table 2003

Easter being as late as it was this year, then Whitsun or Pentecost (from the Greek, meaning "fiftieth day" after Easter) was celebrated in June. What better time and place for the Pendragon Society to hold their Round Table, then, than at Caerleon, around Whitsun? For in the tale of *Geraint son of Erbin*, for example, we are told that "Arthur was accustomed to hold his court at Caerlleon upon Usk ... And once upon a time he held his court there at Whitsuntide."

Reports on the proceedings, and the marvels that we witnessed, are reported in this issue. Further feedback will have to wait till next issue, but Anita Loughrey, for one, declared that she really enjoyed herself: "I was made to feel very welcome and would like to thank everybody involved."

Feedback

Thanks are due to all those who took the time to complete and return the questionnaire included with the Camelot issue. Your very full responses have been analysed and a report is enclosed with this issue. Already you will see that some of the more frequent comments regarding the journal are being acted upon!

Embarrassment

This edition was nearly called "An Embarrassment of Riches", so great is the material waiting for publication. Instead it is entitled *Chroniclers* and is – yes, you've

guessed it! – a "heap of all I have found" (in the best Nennius tradition). We have, for example, an extended overview on two Geoffreys – Ashe being one of them – a translated extract from an early versifier of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work, and possible mysteries in the pages of John of Glastonbury. With the usual letters, news, reports and reviews in abundance, it only remains for you to settle down and enjoy turning the pages on past deeds and ideas.

Perceval still remains a theme, now planned for the next issue, with *Arthur and the UK* due after. Both of these already have a sizeable number of contributions already on file or promised, but this doesn't of course exclude further submissions on these or other themes. If submitting electronically, please provide items as Word Documents (.doc) or as .txt documents on floppy disk, or in the main body of e-mail text, not as an attachment.

Another embarrassment

You may already be aware of our esteemed education secretary's view of the place of *medieval historians* in further education – he doesn't mind there being some medievalists around for ornamental purposes, but he sees no reason for the state to pay for them. Notwithstanding this wise pronouncement – and Charles Clarke is an honourable man – we still welcome all miscellaneous Arthuriana, medieval or otherwise, for *Old News*, *The Board* and *BookWorm*, however trivial it may seem.

The journal is concerned with Arthurian Studies in the broadest sense, in the areas of *Arthurian history and archaeology, legend, myth and folklore, and Arthurian literature, arts and popular culture*. If your subscription is due, a reminder will be enclosed or a cross [X] may even appear in the box above.

PENDRAGON

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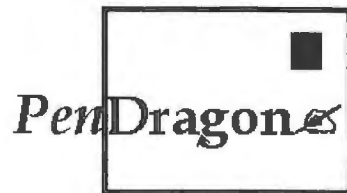
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Letters



FROM AEA TO EDEN

Congratulations to the Editor for producing, under difficult circumstances, the magnificent gala double issue [The Bard]. As usual all the contributions were interesting and enjoyable. The Editor's fiendishly circumstantial tale nearly had me believing in it as non-fiction, an experience I've only had once before, with Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*. And after Ian Brown's cartoon strip, the Sword in the Stone will never be quite the same! The following Camelot issue was also full of good things, with the amazingly long list of candidates for Arthur's city presented by the Editor, Nick Grant, Simon Rouse, the *Old News* section, and especially Steve Sneyd.

Alistair McBeath's pieces about Aea in both issues were very interesting. Aea is an evocative name – it just means *the land*, and Aeetes means *the man of the land*.¹ I have noted one parallel between Medea and Morgan le Fay – their sending presents of garments which burst into flame when put on.² After killing her children by Jason, Medea had a son by Aegeus called Medus: 'the country was thereafter called Media'.³ This tale told by Hyginus is geographically muddled: Media was some distance from

Colchis, just south-west of the Caspian. So McBeath may be right in calling the Lazi her descendants. Lazica is already mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, two centuries before Procopius.⁴

The iron pillar of Mehrauli, mentioned in *Old News* in the gala issue, was erected on a hill near Ambala in the 5th century AD, probably in honour of King Candragupta II, and later moved to its present location in Delhi. Its surviving over 1500 monsoons without rusting was formerly ascribed to its extreme purity, so it was interesting to learn in this issue that the pillar was actually protected by a phosphorus compound. This need not reduce our admiration for the wonderful work of Classical India. The pillar 'is over twenty-three feet high, and consists of a single piece of iron, of a size and weight which could not have been produced by the best European ironfounders until about one hundred years ago'.⁵

In a book review, Laurence Main mentions the legend of Arthur reaching the New World. In this connection it is interesting that in 1577 the great cartographer Mercator sent John Dee a transcript of part of a 14th century manuscript by one Jacob Cnoyen, which described Arthur's conquest of the Northern islands including Iceland and Greenland. Cnoyen claimed he had got this information from a priest in the service of the King of Norway in 1364. Dee was greatly excited, and in 1580 claimed all these islands for his British Empire, but Elizabeth and Burghley had enough on their plates without pursuing this Northern enterprise. Alas, the Cnoyen manuscript later disappeared!^{6,7}

In *The Board*, there is mention of the new chief of the Clan Arthur, and of his shield with Arthur's blazon. This clan branched off from the Campbells in the 14th

¹ Russell, W M S (2000) "Introduction" in Guerber, H A *The Myths of Greece and Rome* (Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Editions, in association with the Folklore Society) 9–13, especially 10

² Russell, W M S (1998) "Henry Kuttner and Morgan le Fay" *Pendragon* 27 No 1, 4–10, especially 5

³ Hammond, N G L and Scullard, H H eds (1970) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 660

⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, 27.12. 11 and 17

⁵ Basham, A L (1971) *The Wonder that was India* (London: Fontana Collins) 221–2

⁶ Crane, N (2002) *Mercator: the Man who Mapped the Planet* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) 209, 242–244, 247

⁷ Kendrick, R D (1970) *British Antiquity* (London: Methuen) 37, 43

BARDS ...

Thank you for ... the latest *Pendragon*, which arrived on my doormat yesterday with an impressive thump. "The Bard" edition looks very good, and I am looking forward to reading it when the Xmas rush is over! I can't think of a better way to spend the break than having a nice quiet read with a good malt whiskey to hand!

You have really pulled out the stops this time and must have worked long hours to get it done! I want you to know that it is appreciated. I will of course be re-subscribing

Shelley Turner, Eastbourne, E Sussex
♦ Thank you for your kind words (thanks are also due to Jeffrey Griffiths for his appreciation). Hope the wait was worth it! The double bumper edition was intended as a catch-up to the nominal dates of issue, spring and summer (with the Camelot issue being closer to its intended autumn-winter timing). For subscription purposes, however, it counted as one issue, not two.

I would like to say a few words about Shelley Turner's "Being Human: *The Beguiling of Merlin*" [XXX 1–2, 36f]. I have a full-page, black and white illustration of the Burne-Jones painting (page 205) in my copy of *The Mystery of King Arthur* by Elizabeth Jenkins, and I regret to tell Ms Turner that B-J's Merlin is nothing like my own mental image of him. For one thing, I have always visualised Merlin as bearded; also, I much prefer Mary Stewart's version of this love story, in which Merlin accepts his 'fate' with love, and does not wear "a defeated, haunted look". There is no tragedy in the ending of Mrs Stewart's *The Last Enchantment*.

Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall
♦ Hmm, Merlin isn't always portrayed with a beard – Beardsley, for example, certainly depicted him clean-shaven. Do other readers have a problem with a beardless, tragic Merlin? I've always felt that some traditional images of him made him look like a skinny, miserable, Father Christmas ...

I did indeed receive my contributor's copy of *Pendragon*, and enjoyed it very much. I particularly liked the illustrations

century.⁸ According to five early genealogies, ranging from the 15th to the 18th centuries, the whole great Clan Campbell itself claimed descent from Arthur, through a variously named son by a second wife, Elisabeth, daughter of a king of France.⁹

Turning to the Camelot issue, I was amused by the Editor's examples of people named in accordance with their professions. As a zoologist, I have come across an ornithologist called Bird and an ichthyologist called Fish. I once had a letter from a Dr Wing. Ah, I thought, another ornithologist. Not a bit of it, he was in aeronautics!

Since Eden is mentioned by both Alastair McBeath and Charles Evans-Günther, I must note the brilliant and completely convincing work of R A Walker.¹⁰

¹¹ He has located Eden in the region of Lakes Van and Urmia, in the water-shed between the sources of four rivers that can be identified with the four flowing from Eden in *Genesis* 2. Since God 'planted a garden eastward in Eden', Walker locates the actual garden in the basin of Lake Urmia, specifically in the fertile plain of Meidan in the Azdhi valley. Just to the East of the Urmia basin is a little town still called Nodi (literally meaning 'of Nod') – 'And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden' (*Genesis* 4.16). As Walker observes, the garden he has located must be 'the earliest Neolithic site of which we have any written record'.¹²

In view of all this, I am amazed by the insight of Charles Lederer and Luther Davis, authors of the musical based on Edward Knoblock's play *Kismet* (with Borodin's music). For Lalume's superb song about Baghdad begins: 'Due South of the Garden of Eden' ...

W M S Russell, Reading, Berkshire

⁸ Campbell, A (2000) *A History of Clan Campbell. Vol 1. From Origins to Flodden* (Edinburgh: Polygon) 70–71

⁹ *Ibid.*, xx, 6–13

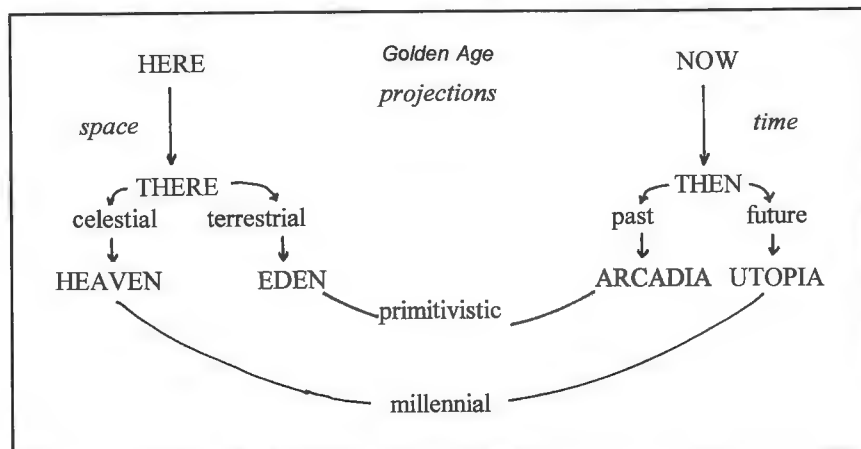
¹⁰ Walker, R A (1986) "The Real Land of Eden" *Still Trowelling* No 11

¹¹ Walker, R A (1987) *The Land of Eden* (Rhyl, Clwyd: Voxov)

¹² *Ibid.*, 13



Merlin and Vivien from a drawing by George W Rhead reproduced in *Newport News*, USA



After Henry Levin (1970) *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (Faber). At the height of its success – for one brief moment – which ideal did Camelot fit? And Avalon?

accompanying my story ["Sword and Scabbard" XXX Nos 1–2], which I felt captured the mood exactly. I'd be very grateful to hear of any responses you might receive.

Michael O'Connor, Gillingham, Kent

We saw the article about Camelot Castle in the Summer 2002 *Pendragon* ["Why artists stay for free at Camelot Castle"] and thought "We're artists, and holidays are just a fantasy to us. It's so long since we did any of 'our own' work, as opposed to commissions, we could do with being inspired!" So emails whizzed back and forth, and we were invited to Camelot Castle at the end of January 2003.

We had a wonderful time. The owners were away for most of our stay, but we were made very welcome, although we were often the only guests. We were free to explore the beauty of the coastline by day, lulled to sleep by Atlantic gales at night, Tintagel village empty of visitors, it was magic.

And strangely, although we expected resonances with Igraine, Uther and the birth of Arthur, it was the spirit of the Round Table we felt most strongly, and of fellowship even when no-one was there.

Were we inspired? That's not for us to say, our work will have to speak for itself. But we were refreshed and renewed, and will not forget the hospitality of Camelot Castle – thanks to all who made it possible.

Johan and Wolfe van Brussel, Oswestry
 • Johan and Wolfe write that their exhibition of stained glass work, "Mythical Beasts", is open during July at Oswestry Heritage Centre, and that all are welcome!

... BOOKS ...

The magazine remains an excellent read ... I was enormously pleased to be judged the winner in the Desert Island Arthurian books competition – as a validation from my Arthurian peers it counts for a lot. I was especially grateful as, despite having quite a lot of personal luck, I rarely win anything in formal competitions. You will be pleased to hear that you rank well above former winnings such as:

- an annual subscription to the London listings magazine *Time Out* (won while I was living in Leicester and not, needless to say, the whale watching holiday I was trying to win!)
- a tin of inedible peas via a church fete tombola
- a bottle of wine at the local folk club raffle, when the attendance was so low that even my five tickets constituted a potentially winning offering

Finding prize books for an Arthurian buff must be an especial nightmare but you managed to score 2 out of 4. The Kevin Crossley-Holland is particularly welcome as I enjoyed the first so much and the children's book [Michael Murpurgo's latest] is new to me and looks good. The others will go to good homes to spread the word.

Alison Skinner, Leicester

Very sorry to hear Excalibur Books has closed down – in my limited dealings (at one time Ronan Coghlan stocked my Arthurian poetry collection) I found him both courteous and efficient to deal with, not something always true of bookdealers!

Re Silchester [*PenDragon* letters, The Bard], several of the later versions, derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth to a great degree, nevertheless replace Silchester as the site of Arthur's coronation with Cirencester – going on local surviving tradition, perhaps? Cirencester was a still functioning centre of the Britons till the battle of Dyrham, and the largest urban centre still in their hands, having been the second largest city of Roman Britain, so if there was some "official installation" of Arthur in whatever leadership capacity it would seem a plausible location.

[One] who set the coronation of Arthur there is Robert Mannyng of Brunne, in his *Chronicles* – he uses the name forms Cecestre / Cicestre, very near the local pronunciation as Cissester, which might indicate that he, or his source, got it from local tradition. He tends to stick very closely to sources – for example, his account of the Accursed Dancers of Colbeck (Kolbigk) is near identical to the much earlier German original ...

♦ *It is intriguing how Wace's Norman French version of Geoffrey's Historia swapped Cirencester for Silchester, and how Layamon's English version then restored Silchester as the site of Arthur's coronation.*

... BRITONS ...

... The mention of vaccaries in the north-west of England [*Old News*] was of great interest – I've come across mention of various Pennine upland hamlets, in the Calder Valley etc, as initially centres of vaccaries. There also have been suggestions that much earlier earthworks were recycled as protective enclosures for their cattle herds against wolves, human thieves and raids etc – as for example the enigmatic Meg Dyke near Barkisland, and the Iron Age hillfort at Castle Hill, Birdsedge – in the Middle Ages.

If there was continuity, and given that these were the areas where, judging from *Wal* names etc, a British population element continued after "political" control fell to the Angle invaders, it makes me wonder if there was some sort of division of labour – the remaining Celts as cattle-herders, whether still relatively free (and Birdsedge Castle Hill is near two Cumberworths, Upper and Lower, where the Cumber element implies Britons still free enough to have their own name for themselves, *Cymry*, accepted by their neighbours) or in a serf-like situation.

The Oxford Chilterns article ["Mother Hibblemere of Nettlebed"] was intriguing – I'll be in the area next July for a poetry weekend in Oxford itself, and will try to get a look at the places discussed.

You probably heard the first of "The Dark Origins of Britain" [BBC Radio 4] – pretty impressionistic and, I suppose because of media love of conflict, full of, to me, a false antithesis argument between the peaceful, culturally dynamic, and violent, ethnic cleansing, narratives of the Anglo-Saxon Conquest. Surely in "real life" the picture will have varied across time and from place to place, and depended on the social level and gender of the defeated etc.

Couple of intriguing things struck me, though – the Y-chromosome near-identity between Friesland and English Midland market towns, implying a strong presence of

Friesians among the settlers, despite their lack of mention in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*; and the description of a high-status Dark Age hall find in one of the Hadrian's Wall forts, maddeningly without saying which fort! ...

♦ *The Dark Age timber hall, of 5th century date, was from Birdoswald fort, built on the site of one of two stone Roman granaries (see Guy de la Bédoyère's 1998 Hadrian's Wall: history and guide, published by Tempus, 104f, and this issue's Old News).*

Birdoswald used to be identified as Camboglanna – Camlann perhaps? – but is more likely to be the Roman fort of Banna, so any scenarios involving Arthur and Medraut are out! Charles Thomas believes, however, that this Banna is near St Patrick's birthplace, called by the saint vicus Banna Venta Berniae – "the settlement of Banna, market of Bernia". See his 1981 Christianity in Roman Britain published by Batsford, 311ff. "Dark Origins" details in The Board.

... AND BOGUSNESS

... A tiny point that struck me about *Merlin's Prediction* – in the last two lines, if "Till Hapsburge makyth them" (the "hedes") "but twayne" is a reference to the double-headed eagle symbol the dynasty used – the prophecy could not be older than the use of that symbol, and in any case could not be older than the rise to power of the dynasty in the 13th century.

Your Etna journey ["The Bishop's Groom's Tale"] is a lovely (and convincing) tale – I suspect you may well in future have the experience of it turning up as a true account in the mystery / conspiracy community – that happened to David Langford when he had published a spoof account of a Victorian UFO encounter, even to getting threatening letters from believers when he published his authorship and the bogosity of the supposed eyewitness account.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

Quick note about the butterfly ["The Bishop's Groom's Story"] – you didn't by any chance have a cut or something on your hand, did you? It's just that Purple Emperors have this very unusual liking for

blood...! I've no idea why. Victorian collectors, who nearly wiped them out, used to put out slabs of meat in the summer to attract them.

Geoff Sawers, Swansea

♦ *Jonathan Swift probably expected some gullible readers to believe the prophecy to be authentic; time alone will tell, however, whether or not The Bishop's Groom's Tale becomes, for example, a latterday Angel of Mons story. The butterfly incident did really happen, but several years ago, not recently. I don't actually recall if it really was a Purple Emperor (poetic licence operated here) but I don't think there was any cut on the back of my hand or elsewhere.*

BULLS, BEARS AND DRAGONS ...

I wonder if Michael Bayley ["Mother Hibblemere of Nettlebed" The Bard issue] is the son, or grandson, of Harold Bayley who wrote *The Lost Language of Symbolism and Archaic Britain*, and various other titles in the early part of the 20th century. Living in the Bucks Chilterns, not too distant from Nettlebed (ref his article on page 31), I was intrigued by some of the points he made. For example, Grims Ditch between Wallingford and Henley was used as a boundary for summer pasturage, he says, and makes the faint addition that the Hampden Grims Ditch had a similar role. This is an area where I regularly take my dog for a walk and I have often wondered why it was constructed, with great effort, high on the hills above two steep sided valleys. It's not the orthodox interpretation and I feel his claim needs a little elaboration, or clarification. Likewise, his translation of place names differs from orthodox place name studies and resembles very much the kind of thing written by Harold Bayley in his various books. If so, Michael may have access to Harold's scribbles, some of which I feel need a little elaboration.

I'm thinking in particular of a legend associated with Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter, long before it was an upmarket dormitory suburb for the well-to-do, a legend concerning the running of bulls with lighted torches between their horns. I read about it somewhere in one of Harold

Bayley's books but the source now eludes me, so Michael may be able to help. I had forgotten about it until a few years ago, when, after being made redundant I got a job as a taxi driver in Gerrards Cross for a year or so. An elderly lady who lived on Bull Lane, along which Bayley claimed the cattle were driven, en route to Gold Hill in Chalfont, told me about the same legend, and then I wondered if there might be something else in it. An alignment for example, or an ancient ceremony involving the running of cattle through fire, a particular custom recorded of Celts, or rather pastoral or herding people – the sort of people Michael Bayley claims inhabited the Chilterns.

Also, Michael came out with some other fantastical stuff that also intrigued me, and mirrors some material I have found elsewhere. For example, Draco, he says, was the dragon on whose back the Great Goddess rode around the heavens each night. Her nightly dragon ride, as a 'white lady' (light is white at night) in the night sky, is compounded by his translation of Ursa Major into Celtic Uther Medelwr = the Wondrous, and Terrible Reaper. The handle of the plough he associates with a sickle, and her right hand casts shooting stars in season.

The latter goddess at the North Pole is something I have also arrived at, but by different avenues. For example, Goldilocks might be the daytime form of the same goddess, yellow being the colour of light in daylight (the blue dispersed into the sky), and the legend of three bowls of porridge may represent tribute paid by farming communities across Europe, and the three bears being Ursa Minor (and so forth). This kind of tribute is outlined by Michael Dames in *Mythic Ireland*, as regards Tory Island and tribute made to the Fomorians, and Balor of the baleful eye etc.

Phillip Clapham, High Wycombe, Bucks

♦ *I would be wary of claiming Goldilocks as a goddess. Bruno Bettelheim's The Uses of Enchantment (1976) usefully chronicles the metamorphosis of Goldilocks via Golden-Hair, Silver-Hair, a little old woman and, probably, ultimately a vixen. This seemingly antique fairy tale is a transformed*

cautionary tale about respect for property and privacy, not the debris of an ancient myth. (But use Bettelheim with caution, too!)

On Nettlebed, Michael Bayley replies:

In answer to the query, I have come across Harold Bayley's works, but so far as I know I am not related. It would have to be before the 1700s if there was a connection.

On Grims Ditches – the ones around Hampden form an enclosure of nearly four square miles, surely a huge hillfort. From the family traditions, Bulstrode Camp at Gerrards Cross was the hillfort of the Bulstrode family of Upton, where they kept their herd of white cattle ... As for running cattle through or between fires, this may well have happened as local legend tells that The White Lady (like the Ladi Wen in Wales) presided over Hallowe'en bonfires on Winter Hill between Maidenhead and Marlow, which in Wales ended with such a scene.

As for the Great Goddess riding round the Pole on her Dragon, this is all explained in my two books on the Celtic night sky and its legends, *Caer Sidhi I* and *Caer Sidhi II* published by Capall Bann.

Michael Bayley, Maidenhead, Berkshire

... A BED OF NETTLES

I found the constellation and meteor shower comments by Michael Bayley in his piece "Mother Hiblemere of Nettlebed" (*Pendragon* XXX Nos 1-2, 31-34) rather confused and inaccurate.

Very few old British constellation names have survived in reliable texts, fewer still so they can be identified in the night sky today. The seven brighter stars of the Plough asterism in modern Ursa Major, were known in Wales as Arthur's Plough-tail. How long this name might have been used before Marie Trevelyan listed it in 1909 (*Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales*, Elliot Stock, 35-36; see also Gwilym ap Iorwerth's article "Arthur in the stars" in *Pendragon* XXVI No 2) is largely unknown, though her comments suggest it was called thus in Wales in the 19th and probably 18th centuries at least. There is no indication the constellation was perceived in Britain as a goddess of any kind.

No casually-obvious meteor shower activity is visible from Britain near August 24 (St Bartholomew's Day) modernly. There are several meteor showers giving weak activity then, but these are detectable only by specialists making very careful observations. Meteor showers, and the concept that each emanates from a separate small area of sky (the shower's radiant), were not recognised as such prior to 1833. Before then, we find only irregular references to large numbers of meteors being seen overnight to indicate times when strong meteor showers may have been active, and little to suggest that some were understood to be annual events. There is no evidence to show a link between meteor activity and the ancient Roman one-day Opeconsiva festival on August 25.

Draco the Dragon's wings are noted in some ancient Greek sources as extending over the neighbouring constellation of Ursa Minor, the Little Bear. Only one modern meteor shower emanates yearly from Ursa Minor, the Ursids, casually-visible rarely around December 22. The Ursids were unknown as an annual event before the late 19th century. As for "shooting stars of rebirth in season" emanating from the side of the Plough opposite the three-star "handle" asterism, there are no strong meteor shower radiants presently active annually in Ursa Major at all.

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

THE SARMATIAN CONNECTION

In response to the letter by Andrew Smith of Oxford in *Pendragon* XXX Nos 1-2 and his criticism of the Sarmatian or steppe zone link to Arthur as outlined in *Arthur the Dragon King* – a book he definitely did not like – with tongue firmly in cheek I merely wish to point out that the Sarmatian connection to Arthur may really have a little credence, but only in a medieval context. In other words, Sarmatians may have influenced *Romance*.

I have lately been reading an interesting book about Zoroastrianism and its dissemination around the world by Iranian tribes. This does not contain them to Iran proper but investigates their original homelands in northern Afghanistan and the

steppe zone. It would seem that the Sarmatians were an Iranian tribe and that they were dispersed by the Huns and became part of the Gothic tribal confederation. In turn, the Goths were pushed over the Roman border to invade Europe, and many of them settled in southern France. Something of this sort is part of Reid's theory in *Arthur the Dragon King*.

Funny how a novel idea quickly spreads to other avenues of research. Paul Kriwaczek, in *Search of Zarathustra* (Weidenfield and Nicolson 2002) doesn't say very much about Zoroastrianism itself, but he does know a lot about Iran, Afghanistan and European religious history. He was employed for many years by the BBC, and has a host of anecdotes about the Iranian revolution, Afghan tribal society and so forth, which adds a little colour to his story. In one chapter he explores the Cathar heresy that broke out in Languedoc in SE France, and he traces its origins to the Sarmatian element amongst the invading Goths. Zoroastrianism, he declares, influenced Catharism. Hence, as many troubadours in the Norman era came from this region, and these troubadours spun tales that were later incorporated into *Romance*, an element of Sarmatian influence may really have infiltrated the French-speaking courts of France and England.

It is a point innocently made, and not with any vigour. Kriwaczek also made the interesting suggestion that the Bogomil heresy of the Balkans also had an Iranian tribal origin, by means of the Bulgars, a tribe that invaded the region, and held it for many years before finally being repulsed by Byzantium. The Greek Orthodox Church spent a considerable amount of time trying to suppress the Bogomil heresy, and the author brings it all up to date via the modern conflict in Bosnia.

Phillip Clapham, High Wycombe, Bucks

FASCINATING COMMENTS

Many thanks for your letter and ... back copy of the *Pendragon* journal. I was pleasantly surprised to see how many interests there are in all the different

aspects of Arthurian material, factual or fictional. The journal is a fascinating digest that sets to seek out all that is knowable about Arthur.

Terence F Dick, Worthing, W Sussex
♦ Thank you for your kind words! Your own article on the Glastonbury Cross appears elsewhere in these pages.

Many thanks for the latest edition of *Pendragon*. I have to admit that though I live quite near to Trent Park, Enfield, I did not know all the facts in Nick Grant's article ["Camelot was in Enfield Chase?"]. It was fascinating. Camelot is elusive, though. I wonder if it was in several places, and represents a place, rather like Avalon, where Heaven and Earth meet? As we all know, early peoples felt many places to be numinous, not merely of 'this world'. So do many Pagans of today, myself included. I see comparisons, too, between Arthur and Jesus (that was mentioned in a previous edition) ...

Pamela Harvey, Edmonton, London

I find the articles and information contained within the journal fascinating. I am currently working on a novel based on Arthur's childhood and would be interested in any information or sources that could help me clarify events. Through my own research, I have found information about this period of Arthur's life to be very limited. It may be a theme that the society could cover in a future issue.

During this research I used some of the e-mail addresses published in Vol XXIX No 1 Winter 2000-2001: *The Future of Arthur*, page 41. All of them were very useful. However, I would like to draw to your attention that Tom Green's website kept sending pornographic material to my e-mail address after visiting it, and consequently I have blocked the site.

Anita Loughrey, Thatcham, Berkshire
♦ Thank you for the warning about the Tom Green website. On Arthur's infancy, there is of course no early documentary information of his early years, but much of the later medieval development of the legend seems to conform to the childhood stories of heroes generally – heavenly portents,

mysterious begetting, prodigious feats and so on. Can any reader help further? An issue on these theme may well be fruitful!

FROM AVALON TO CAMELOT

My thanks to Professor Russell for his kind remarks about my Avalon article, and to him and others for the information re the Roman occupation of Palestine, Jesus's trial, etc.

This issue illustrates perfectly my reasons for not producing a Camelot article – dozens of claimants! Steve Sneyd produces eighteen suggestions under the heading "Those Camelot candidates – in full?" ... Perhaps Camelot is not so much a place, but a state of mind – to be 'found' wherever one senses its essential ethos of love, light, truth, justice, mercy, compassion ... Until one of these many sites is proved beyond doubt to have been Arthur's Camelot, I'll stick to my own 'candidate': a now-sunken island in Lake Syfadden ...

I liked Ian Brown's 'name-game' re Lancelot [XXIX No 4]; it reminded me of a suggestion made by a long-ago correspondent of mine, that 'Caer)Leon-on-Usk' might have been contracted to become 'Lyonesse' ... same as Michael Moorcock's 'Lym-an-Esh'. (Mike has a real gift for what Archie called "scrumptious nomenclature".)

... Professor Russell's article ["Fortunate Isles"] was interesting, but I was rather surprised that he didn't mention the Isles of Scilly, which are known as the Fortunate Islands, or the Isles of the Blest. In fact I have a book entitled *The Fortunate Islands – a History of the Isles of Scilly* by R L Bowley (first published 1945, revised and rewritten in 1964, and 6th edition in 1968, which is the one I have). There is, of course, a long-standing Cornish legend about the 'lost land of Lyonesse' lying beneath the 26 miles of sea between Land's End and St Mary's, and in chapter two – 'Lyonesse and King Arthur' – Mr Bowley mentions that "The story of Lyonesse probably gained credence from Malory's romantic story of the knights of the Round Table and the story of King Arthur, later also used by Tennyson who visited Scilly for a few days on his 'Arthurian Journey'."

Beryl Mercer, Mount Hawke, Cornwall

WOUNDED KING ...

The Priory of Sion was founded in 1956 shortly after the death of Paul Le Cour in 1954, who believed in the formation of a new knighthood called a Prieuré. Pierre Plantard modelled his belief-system on Paul Le Cour's ideas and in particular those found in his 1937 book *Age of Aquarius*.

Where was the formation of the new knighthood going to take place? In Fontevraud Abbey! The Mausoleum of King Henry II and Richard the Lionheart – the key players in the formation of the Arthurian Myths at Glastonbury Abbey (as utilised by Henry de Sully, former promotions manager at the Abbey of Fécamp in Normandy).

Quoting Paul Le Cour from a revised 1949 edition of *Age of Aquarius*:

"The cycle of the romances of the Round Table tells us the story of the holy vessel, the Grail, which there is good reason to connect with that Ganymede (*ie* Aquarius).

Considered as containing all light and all knowledge, it is the object of a quest, a search to which the knights dedicate themselves. Their head is King Arthur, head of the legendary order of knighthood of the Grail, who is to return one day at the head of his knights to put the world back in order, and at that time all symbols will be explained. But such an order of knighthood will have to be placed under the patronage of St John, who is the head of knights and of initiates."

See also

<http://smithpp0.tripod.com/psp/id72.html>

Paul Smith, via e-mail

♦ Paul is a Rennes-le-Château veteran investigator and long-time Pendragon member. You can find out more at <http://uk.profiles.yahoo.com/smithpaul17>



... AND WOUNDED KNEE

I've just been watching a "Meet the Ancestors Special" on BBC2, documenting the excavation and research of a couple of burials not very far from Stonehenge. I don't know if you caught the programme, but it was pretty interesting.

I'm sure you've noticed by now my tendency to enjoy finding coincidences with the Arthurian legends, and there's indeed a tentative one here (not one which I'm suggesting for a moment is valid; but it's intriguing nevertheless, so I thought I'd share it with you).

The gist of the documentary was this: two burials were discovered, not far from Stonehenge. They were both late Neolithic, with some copper and gold (a surprising amount for their period), weapons and typical beakers in their graves: a rich amount of grave goods, in fact, including hints (such as a fastener shaped from bone) of their clothing, a bow and arrowheads. Both skeletons were subjected to detailed research, and it was shown that they were more or less contemporary and almost definitely related (perhaps brothers, or maybe father and son: something of that ilk). Both skeletons were male, and what was probably the eldest originally came from Europe, possibly Switzerland, whereas the one that was probably the younger came from Britain. Their grave goods included pottery from Europe and what is now Scotland. They each wore identical gold jewellery, although this jewellery was made at different times; and the probable eldest was shown to be a metal worker.

The eldest also had a remarkable wound in his leg. His knee cap had been sheared off, possibly in a fall or some kind of assault; and it had never healed. It was suggested that he would have limped and suffered great pain for perhaps a couple of years before he died. And, with all that in mind, here are the tentative coincidences:

- We have two related male adults.
- Their grave goods show them to be wealthy and influential people.
- One of them has an unhealing wound in his leg.
- They are buried close to somewhere of possibly religious significance.

The whole scenario seems strangely reminiscent to the Wounded King, with his unhealing thigh wound, and his descendant Galahad (or Perceval) coming to heal him or take his place as guardian of the Holy Grail. I know, it's a tentative coincidence, and I'm sure there's no connection whatsoever; but, then again, the stories had to start somewhere. Hey, wouldn't it be an astounding coincidence if one of those beakers in the grave turned out to be a certain cup which was in the king's keeping?

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough

♦ Further details of this unparalleled burial are in A P Fitzpatrick's *"The Amesbury Archer"* (Current Archaeology 184, February 2003, 146-152, and at wessexarch.co.uk After a display over the summer at Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, a temporary exhibition (*'Treasure: finding our past'*) will include the Archer's grave treasures at the British Museum November – February 2004

New [Camelot] issue received; as always, much of interest ... Very intriguing recent reports that the "King of Stonehenge" (high status burial from about the time of the first stones on site) has been shown as having spent his childhood in the Alps – like white-cliffed Albion, a place associated with the "realm of the dead" – leaves me wondering if he was a missionary (as well as a trader?) spreading a cult of the dead.

The account of Sybil Leek's seance on Cadbury ["Window to Camelot"] was wonderfully picturesque – pity none of the Pre-Raphaelites were still around to paint the scene! I was very intrigued to learn ["A Brief History of Camelot"] that you were present during ... the portion of the dig there that involved the medieval level. Renn's *Norman Castles* source the castle work to a payment noted in the 1209 *Rotulide Liberate*; Hogg's *Hill Forts of Britain* says the medieval work consisted solely of a foundation trench for an unbuilt fortification, and drystone wall revetting of the inner face of the rampart – sounds as though money ran out, and a temporary arrangement was done on the cheap!

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield

Caerleon Round Table

14th–15th June 2003



Geoffrey of Monmouth tells us (ix.12) that Arthur held high court at Whitsuntide, "to set the crown of the kingdom upon his head, to convene the kings and dukes that were his vassals ... and renew his peace ...". His choice fell upon Caerleon, the City of Legions, where the golden-roofed palaces vied with those of contemporary Rome. And so it was that in the year of Our Lord two thousand and three the Pendragon Society likewise chose Caerleon for its plenary session.

The celebrations marking the Society's forty-fourth year began with a rendezvous at Ffwrwm by the site of the south gate, appropriately as the various meanings of Welsh *ffwrwm* ("bench"), Latin *forum* ("market-place") and English *forum* all coalesced to ensure opportunities for refreshment, retail therapy and repartee. Here Dr Russell Rhys gave us an entertaining guided tour of the courtyard

garden and Arthurian and Mabinogion-inspired sculptures before the feasting began at the Oriel Restaurant.

Around thirty members attended the AGM held at nearby Llanhennock in the beautifully situated village hall, a venue arranged by the kind offices of Ad Hoc theatre company. Proceedings also included the investiture of young squire Ben Rouse and a tribute to Anne Tooke in recognition of the crucial role played by the Tookes in keeping the Society alive at a low ebb in its fortunes. By such tokens can we gratefully celebrate the contributions made by different generations to ensure the Society's continuity. Business was followed by three highly distinctive presentations, interspersed with refreshments and opportunities to peruse and buy music CDs, books and artwork (by Catherine Fisher, Anne Lister, Simon Rouse and Tom Byrne) plus second-hand books and raffle tickets!



We were fortunate to have Pendragon member Colin Thomas playing extracts from his TV film *In Pursuit of the Holy Grail*. The chance to view two versions, the first in Welsh, pointed up the regrettable requirement that international versions dispense with a presenter. The tale of the grail was traced through the familiar Christianised version associated with Glastonbury, the "unholy" pagan aspects of the Celtic sources, and the increasing significance it attracted due to the 19th century Arthurian revival in Britain, Germany and elsewhere. The intriguing tasters, with their animations, live action and location filming, increase the mystery as to why the English version has still not been screened in the UK. Until then, we will have to wait to see how the strands of the Nanteos Cup and the Buchenwald ovens are woven in.



Catherine Fisher – former member and reviewer for *Pendragon* – is a poet and accomplished writer of novels for young adults. As a Welsh writer with local roots, she regards grail lore as an essential part of her heritage. In choosing to write a modern-day grail story she had to decide which versions on which to base *Corbenic* (2002). Aspects of both Chrétien's poem and that Welsh tale of vengeance *Peredur* provided inspiration. Modern-day Caerleon and its Roman amphitheatre, King Arthur's Round Table, featured in a powerful pivotal chapter that Catherine read aloud to an enthralled audience. This wonderfully written book, with its subtle psychological insights, was deservedly rated highly by John Matthews in a review for *Pendragon*.



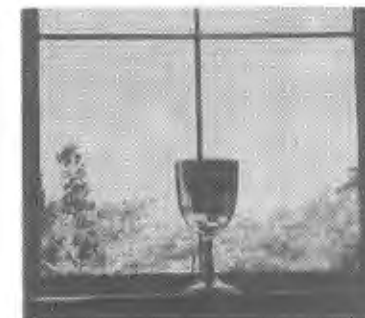
Despite guitar tuning problems (it was high summer after all!) member Anne Lister rounded off the day's events in style. We were entertained with her own evocative songs on Arthurian themes – for example Camlann, Tristan and Iseult, and the Lady of Shalott – and by a tale involving audience input and randomly chosen cards, and featuring a wizard, a damsel, a golden cage ... and a blowlamp.

The next day was organised around a very informative guided tour of Roman Caerleon by Bob Trett, taking in the amphitheatre, walls, barracks and baths. After lunch a visit to the fascinating legionary museum included a reconstruction of typical Roman army accommodation. It was here that helpful staff reminded us that our interest in Caerleon had been preceded by the Loyal Knights of the Round Table International in 1926, when American members were encouraged to sponsor excavations by Mortimer Wheeler at King Arthur's Round Table. Fittingly, we then ended up at Ffwrwm for a final chat and farewells.

Such occasions usually provide delightful opportunities to mix socially, put faces to names, share ideas and be entertained. Members' immediate response to the Pendragon Caerleon Round Table suggest that these requirements were more than adequately fulfilled, thanks in large part to the organising abilities of Fred and Marilyn Stedman-Jones.

The next Round Table is now being planned. Will you be there?

Chris Lovegrove





DARK AGE HALLS ON HADRIAN'S WALL

The Council for British Archaeology very kindly sent (without charge, too!) a photocopy of the article that was the source of the *Birdoswald* information on the radio programme *The Dark Age Origins of Britain*.

It summarises very briefly finds from Tony Wilmott's 1987-92 excavation at Birdoswald, including several phases of hall buildings on the site of the fort granary. He points out dating difficulties, but suggests approximately 480 CE for end of use.

The main thrust of the article is to discuss more generally how expansion of commanding officers' quarters at a variety of Wall sites also indicates an expansion of authority to take over civil administration at the very end of the Roman period, and to suggest that, in the early post-Roman period, the troops would have remained, albeit unpaid, their commander in effect becoming the local kinglet, and obtaining supplies for the soldiery in exchange for protecting the local population. Obviously not a new theory, but the Birdoswald halls offer some strong evidence.

I was also reminded of the theory, in Bates' 19th-century *History of Northumberland*, that the victories of Arthur over foreign peoples could in fact have been victories over remnant Wall garrisons – if, nostalgically, garrisons-turned-warbands still kept alive the traditions of their origins from far corners of the Empire, then a victory over such could indeed have been proclaimed as one over foreigners.

Steve Sneyd

♦ Tony Wilmott "Roman Commanders, Dark Age Kings" *British Archaeology* (February 2002)

SILCHESTER'S DARK ENDING

Victorian excavators thought *Silchester*, the Roman town of Calleva Atrebatum, met a fiery end, due to the amount of ash they discovered in the basilica or town hall. Mike Fulford of Reading University established a couple of decades ago that the ash was actually the remains of Late Roman on-site industrial activity. So how *did* Roman *Silchester* end, to remain abandoned and undeveloped for the rest of its history?

A BBC2 *Meet the Ancestors* programme (March 4 2003) featured *Silchester* and its enigmatic demise. The famous *ogham* inscription (perhaps a property marker) mentioning a certain *Tebicatus* was found dumped in a well, and other building debris deposited in other wells indicates perhaps that the town was deliberately demolished. By whom? Saxons from, say, nearby Dorchester-on-Thames, long denied access to Calleva by the building of Grim's Bank to the north? Or the fifth or sixth century inhabitants themselves, finally denying the use of the site to others?

Julian Richards suggests that, if the locals were not already wiped out by disease caused by wells dug close by cesspits, then Calleva was "only finally killed off by the politics of the new power-brokers ... By hanging onto their Roman way of life, the people of Calleva may have sealed the fate of their town, but, in a twist of fate, they may also have guaranteed its immortality."

♦ Julian Richards "The *Silchester Chronicles*" *BBC History Magazine* (March 2003) 28-32

LATE ROMANS

British Archaeology, the magazine of the Council for British Archaeology, has had some debate in its letters pages concerning Dark Age migration to Britain.

Martin Henig's December 2002 article about the possibility of large-scale continuity of populations in post-Roman Britain ("Roman Britons after AD 410") was disputed by at least one correspondent on the basis of linguistics and genetics.

However, Professor John Collis pointed out that while there was "considerable continuity between pre-Roman and post-Roman populations" in Gaul at the same

time, modern French has only around 120 words of Gallic origin. Minimal vocabulary transfer does not preclude "long-term symbiosis" of different linguistic populations. Another correspondent, Doug Tankard, proposed that "the native British adopted English because their leaders did" (a hypothesis he suggests is "supported by events in medieval Scotland").

The latter also noted that the BBC *Blood of the Vikings* TV programme "could not distinguish English from Scots" – a major flaw in the *ethnic cleansing* argument – and suggests instead that east Britain was "colonised in late prehistory by people resembling those now in Frisia" rather than during the Dark Ages. Professor Collis also believes that "if there are similarities between eastern England and neighbouring parts of the Continent, they may have arisen at almost any time in prehistory," though he prefers to "keep an open mind" on the whole issue.

Material evidence continues to be ambiguous. The so-called Big Dig at in the Whitefriars area of *Canterbury*, which has been going on since 1999, still cannot solve the vexed question of continuity from Late Roman times. Some time in the fourth or fifth century "a substantial, carefully-laid track" was laid out across the site of a gravelled market place. Seven bodies were dumped "unceremoniously" in a shallow ditch beside the track, something that would simply not have been allowed within inhabited Roman areas. Shops apparently were still functioning in the early fifth century, but Anglo-Saxon *sunken-featured buildings* were later cut into the edge of a Roman road. Were these SFBs later fifth century, arguing for some continuity, or sixth or even seventh century, arguing for a more cautious approach?

Meanwhile, extraordinary red beads with green and yellow stripey glass trails were being produced somewhere in Eastern England from around the mid-fifth century. These so-called *traffic light beads* were an insular tradition in barbarian style, found mainly in Eastern Anglian female graves until they went out of fashion from the 530s. Curiously, from the viewpoint of continuity,

the technique had been used in Britain before – in the Late Iron Age.

♦ "Late Romans" *British Archaeology* 70 (May 2003) 24-5

♦ "Canterbury Whitefriars: 'The Big Dig'" *Current Archaeology* 185 (April 2003) 194

♦ Birte Bruggmann "'Traffic Light Beads' in Early Anglo-Saxon England" *Current Archaeology* 185 (April 2003) 223

HERE WERE DRAGONS?

The "rural shrine" at *Frilford* in Oxfordshire being revealed by ongoing excavations is providing surprises. It was known that 500 metres north of the site was situated "one of the few cemeteries in the country with good evidence of continuities between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon periods". Bronze Age activity and Iron Age ritual features were followed by a Romano-British temple and a late Roman building, but what puzzled the excavators from Oxford University was a large circular feature, about 40 metres across.

At first they supposed this was an amphitheatre, but its non-elliptical shape suggested otherwise. Excavation revealed water below the wall retaining the delineating bank, and the current theory is that this is possibly a ritual pool similar to similar sites in northern France. A large number of bronze, glass and bone finds outside the bank could then be votive deposits.

Frilford is south-west of *Oxford*, itself the focus of a curious incident in the Welsh tale of *Lludd and Lleuelys*. Lludd is advised to measure the Island, and the middle point is found to be in Oxford. A pit is dug, a vat of mead placed in it with a silk veil over the top. Lludd observes two dragons fighting, and in the form of pigs they sink onto the veil and then into the mead. Stupefied, they then are sealed in a stone chest and buried on Dinas Ffaraon Dandde, later called Dinas Emrys, in Snowdonia.

Andrew Smith believes this story post-dates Geoffrey of Monmouth, and that there is nothing to suggest that the finding of the dragons at Oxford represents any authentic tradition. But locating the *omphalos* of the Isle is a venerable activity. Bede identified Lichfield as the middle of England, others

suggest Meriden in Warwickshire. The Romans seem to have estimated the middle as the crossing point of Watling Street and Fosse Way, or maybe the junction of Watling Street and the Icknield Way, and Paul Devereux suggests Croft Hill in Leicestershire. None of these (as yet) seem to boast a ritual pit though. Meanwhile, further excavation at Frilford's circular feature takes place this summer. What will they find?

♦ Chris Gosden and Gary Lock "Frilford: a Romano-British ritual pool in Oxfordshire?" *Current Archaeology* 184 (February 2003) 156-159

♦ Paul Devereux "Contemplating Albion's navel" *Northern Earth* 92 (Winter 2002-3) 16-18

♦ Andrew H W Smith "Oxford's Maytime Dragons" *Ceridwen's Cauldron* (Hilary-Trinity 1998) 8-10

ROLE MODEL

On the occasion of International Women's Day, a feature in the self-styled "global science and technology weekly" drew attention to an early 5th-century epitome of the woman scientist, mathematician, philosopher and inventor.

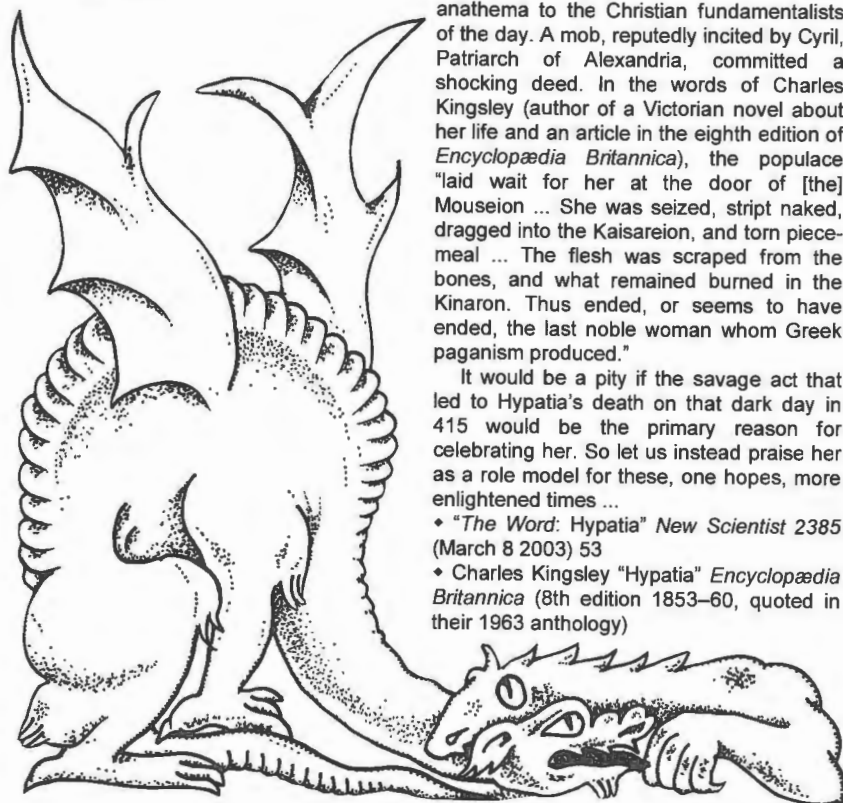
Hypatia was born around 370 CE in the Greek city of Alexandria in Egypt. By 400 she was head of the Neo-Platonist school there, product of the thorough international education provided for her by her enlightened father, Theon, and her own abilities. She challenged current thinking on algebra, and her innovations included a hydrometer, astrolabe and methods of distillation. "Reserve your right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all," she is reported to have said.

Sadly, as a gifted philosopher, pagan rationalist and a woman to boot, she was anathema to the Christian fundamentalists of the day. A mob, reputedly incited by Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, committed a shocking deed. In the words of Charles Kingsley (author of a Victorian novel about her life and an article in the eighth edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica*), the populace "laid wait for her at the door of [the] Mouseion ... She was seized, stripped naked, dragged into the Kaisareion, and torn piece-meal ... The flesh was scraped from the bones, and what remained burned in the Kinaron. Thus ended, or seems to have ended, the last noble woman whom Greek paganism produced."

It would be a pity if the savage act that led to Hypatia's death on that dark day in 415 would be the primary reason for celebrating her. So let us instead praise her as a role model for these, one hopes, more enlightened times ...

♦ "The Word: Hypatia" *New Scientist* 2385 (March 8 2003) 53

♦ Charles Kingsley "Hypatia" *Encyclopædia Britannica* (8th edition 1853-60, quoted in their 1963 anthology)



THE REAL SWORD IN THE STONE

Paul Smith draws attention to further reports on **San Galgano** – Saint Gawain – and the Italian sword in the stone (first described for *Pendragon* by Steve Sneyd).

Dr Luigi Garlaschelli described co-ordinated investigations he conducted to the Fortean UnConvention (April 12-13 2003). Some details on this can be had from www.unconvention2003.com (link to visiting speakers).

Researchers from several Italian universities used georadar scanning, carbon-dating, thermoluminescence-dating and other techniques to reveal a "fascinating story of knights, saints, hermits, swords, dragons, buried graves, Templar Knights, relics and mummified hands".

As well as being a chemist at the University of Pavia, and lecturer at Milan's San Raffaele University, Dr Garlaschelli is a fellow of CICAP, the Comitato Italiano per il Controllo delle Affermazioni sul Paranormale (the Italian Committee for the Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal).

♦ <http://chifis.unipv.it/garlaschelli/> gives biographical details

THE PLAY'S THE THING ...

What may be not only the sole example of a secular play surviving in the Middle Cornish language but also the only medieval play featuring King Arthur to have survived in Western Europe has been recently discovered.

Depicting the life of St Kea, the previously unknown play includes a section on King Arthur in its collection of twenty unbound folios, and provides "substantial new evidence about the cult of St Kea and the importance of King Arthur in Cornwall".

Found in a collection at the National Library of Wales, among the papers of the late Professor Caerwyn Williams, its provenance is not known though the script appears to be mid-16th century. It is hoped that the Library will publish the find in due course.

♦ Cheryl Straffon "The Piper's Tune" *Meyn Mamvro* 49 (Autumn 2002) 24

ROCK OF AGES

What has been suggested as "proof of a terrible and defining moment in the evolutionary history of the human mind" has been discovered in a Spanish cave, and dubbed **Excalibur** by its finders.

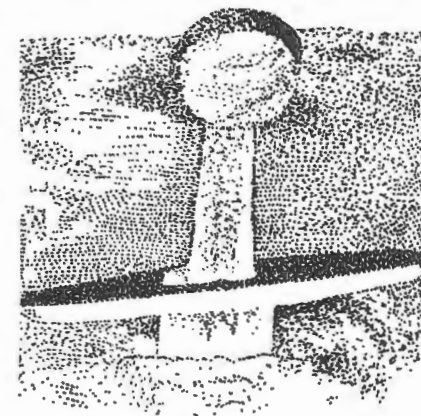
Claimed as the world's oldest human artefact, the 350,000-year-old axe-head may have been deliberately deposited in a primitive burial chamber – the Pit of Bones – by *Homo heidelbergensis*.

The cave at Atapuerca, near Burgos in central Spain, has been excavated for some years, and the dig's director, Dr Juan Luis Arsuaga, has argued that groups of Heidelberg Man brought their dead over time to join a collective burial.

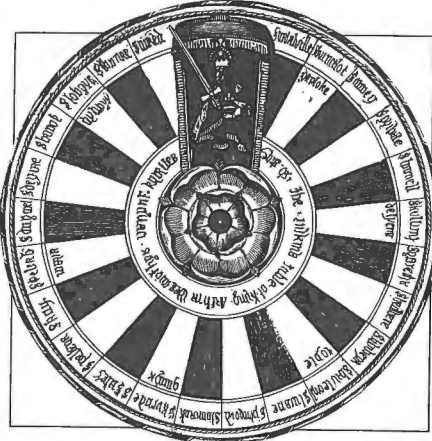
Other palaeontologists, however, are sceptical that the Excalibur axe-head had been intentionally placed there and therefore a case of "symbolic behaviour", requiring more than just one tool as evidence. If true, though, it would "push back intentional or symbolic thought back much further than is currently accepted," said Dr Michael Petraglia of the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies at Cambridge.

Excalibur went on show at the American Museum of Natural History, New York in January 2003.

♦ Giles Tremlett "Excalibur, the rock that may mark a new dawn for man" *The Guardian* January 9 2003 [Steve Sneyd]



**No court esteemed so high
Wace's *Le Roman de Brut*
translated by Geoff Sawers
lines 9641 – 9798**



When Artur had settled his land
and throughout there was true justice,
and all his kingdom was restored
to its former dignity,
he took Genuivre for his queen,
a graceful and a noble girl;
beautiful, courteous and high-born,
of noble Roman family;
Cadur had raised her richly
for many years in Comaille,
as she was his close cousin;
and his mother was a Roman.
She was perfectly accomplished
and of a noble bearing,
her speech both free and pleasing,
Artur much loved and held her dear;
but between them they had no heir
nor could they have other children.
Artur, once the winter was past
and warmth had returned to the land,
and the sea was fine to sail on,
ordered his navy to prepare.
To Irlande, he said, he should go
and he would conquer all that land.
Nor did king Artur wait long,
but he summoned his best young men
those best experienced in war,
rich and poor alike from his land.

When they had crossed into Irlande,
from the land they seized their meat;
they took both milk and beef-cattle,
and whatever could be eaten.
Gillomar, the king of the land,
heard that Artur had come questing;
he heard the noise, he heard the news,
he heard the complaints, the distress
that the peasantry all made
as they were losing their herds.
He set to fight against Artur,
but no success did he have
because his men were quite naked;
they had neither halberds nor shields,
they knew nothing of arrows
or of how to draw a bow.
And the Bretuns, who had bows,
showered them so with arrows;
they did not dare expose their eyes
nor did they know where to hide.
They could be seen scurrying away
one hiding beside another,
running for the woods and hedgerows
and into the towns and houses,
begging respite for their lives.
They were vanquished and disarrayed.
The king fled into the woods,
but he was caught, he could not hide;
Artur chased and harried him so
that he cornered him and took him;
but he made homage to Artur
giving him back his heritage;
and he gave many hostages
to guarantee his tribute.
When Artur had conquered Irlande,
he wandered as far as Isleande;
taking and conquering the land
and submitting all to himself;
he wanted lordship over all.
Gonvais, the king of Orchenie,
and Doldani, king of Godlande,
and Rummaret of Wenelande
had all heard the news from Isleande,
for all of them had their spies,
that Artur would come to them
and would destroy all the islands.
No force under heaven was his peer,
nor could anyone lead men so.
For fear that he would attack them
and that he would waste their lands,
without constraint, of their own will,
they all came to him in Isleande.
Of their own wealth they brought so much,

so much promised and so much given,
that peace was made, they became his,
holding their heritage from him.
A truce was promised and ordained,
hostages given from them all;
thus peace remained among them all,
and Artur came back to his ships;
to Engleterre he returned
and was received with great joy.
For twelve years after this return
Artur ruled the land peaceably,
no-one dared to make war on him
nor did he go to war with them.
Alone, with no other influence,
he acquired such accomplishment
and held himself so nobly,
so well and with such courtesy,
no court of men was esteemed so high
not even the Roman emperor's.
No knight was ever spoken of
who was praised in any way,
who was not part of his household,
if he could possibly be so;
if he desired reward for this,
he would never leave without it.
On account of the great barons,
each of whom felt he was greatest,
each held himself to be the best,
and no-one knew who was the worst,
Artur had made the Round Table
of which Bretuns tell many fables.
There were seated all the vassals
each one knightly and each equal;
at table each placed equally
and equally they were served;
not a one of them could boast
that he sat higher than his peer,
all were equally honoured,
none had to take the lowest place.
No-one was held to be courtly
Scot or Bretun or Franceis,
Normant, Angevin or Flamenc
from Burguinun or Loherenc,
from whomever he held his fief,
from the west as far as Muntgeu,
who did not go to Artur's court
and who had not stayed with him,
and who did not have the vestments
heraldic emblems and armour
in the manner that they held there
who served at the court of Artur.
From many countries they came
those who sought honour and reknown,

so much to hear of his courtesy,
so much to see his possessions,
so much to acknowledge his barons
so much to receive his rich gifts.
By poor men he was much loved
and by rich men he was honoured.
Foreign kings viewed him with envy
for they feared and doubted greatly
that he might conquer the whole world
and steal their dignity from them.
Whether for love of his largesse,
or for fear of his bravery,
during this peace of which I speak,
I do not know if you have heard,
these wonderful events took place
and those adventures were sought out
that are recounted of Artur
that they have been turned to fable.
They are not all lies, not all truth,
all madness nor all wisdom.
So many accounts have been told
and fabulists have embellished
such fables upon those accounts,
that all has become like a fable.

*I am indebted to Judith Weiss' work for
clearing up several obscure passages. I
have not attempted to reproduce Wace's
rhyme scheme, but I have kept the rhythm
of loose 8-syllable lines (sometimes 7).
Names are retained in their original spelling.*

*It is interesting that the first ever (I
believe) mention of the Round Table
introduces it with the comment "of which the
British tell so many stories". This, and the
very last few lines here, both seem to point
to the existence of a rich oral tradition which
chroniclers could selectively mine as they
created their romances.*

*Another addition of Wace's from his
major source, Geoffrey of Monmouth, is the
mysterious "Wenelande". Miss Houck thinks
of Slavic Wendland; Ivor Arnold suggests as
a possibility the Scandinavian "Vineland".
Heaven knows ...*

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Some special secret

Terence F Dick



I have stumbled across something which for the most part might be regarded as an hypothesis, but with some reassurance from the Department of History at Birkbeck College, University of London, that there may be something in it. With this in mind, could I ask you to take just a small step into that land of strange coincidences that seem to defy all logic? To read about the legends of Arthur – or even see them in film drama – has for me always been fleeting and in passing moments, so even now I do not profess to be an expert on this vast absorbing subject.

Forgery?

The incident occurred when I was given a very old small tourist book called *The Realm of King Arthur* by Graham Ashton BA. It was by simply thumbing through its pages that I stopped in my tracks and noticed how very similar the ground plan of the abbey church ruin was at Glastonbury to that well known much maligned Arthur cross drawing by William Camden (1607), the cross that was

found in the alleged grave of Arthur at Glastonbury in 1191. The latest suggestion now seems to be that the drawing is in all probability a forgery.

Being a retired engineer and having spent many hours in the past pondering over detailed drawings, in which old habits do tend to die hard, I took time out to see if this similarity was just a plain coincidence. Many religious buildings are often laid out in a cross formation, so what would be new in this case?

I did sense that the author of this cross had incorporated in the design many interesting unexplained features which seem to combine two separate designs. Laying the plan and the cross side by side I asked myself could it be possible that the cross was a cleverly prepared Tudor map version of the abbey – during its last days – and if this be the case, is it likely that it may have hidden some special secret? I decided to put this intriguing possibility through a process of detailed examination by experimenting and using various lining tests – these would throw up any geometric patterns that might exist. I first selected the only obvious X in the text which might indicate an important location.

I was strongly advised at the time to leave the cross well alone, because it had been regarded as a fake by most scholars. Well, fake or not, and simply taking the cross drawing at face value, I set about the task.

The abbey ground plan alongside the Glastonbury Cross shows very similar outline features (fig 1). The short large cross arms and the north and south transepts bear a striking resemblance to each other. The odd space under the word REX in the right cross arm is the first feature that strikes the eye, even when viewed from a distance. It is easy to see how the top left hand corner of the cloisters would fit neatly into this space or area when the cross is viewed as a map. The bottom narrow feature of the cross and the west end of the abbey ground plan speak for themselves. The top and bottom tapering of the cross, which seems to be unbalanced in its design compared to the straight cross arms, become instrumental in tilting a

hidden important line feature to the right, making the X in the word REX the centre of a secret geometric design hidden within the cross.

The drawings showing the results of my findings are of course subject to scrutiny. Because the cross drawing is a copy, many of the angles were bound to be at a slight variance, but the intention of a geometric construction does appear to be fairly obvious. William Camden, who is well known for his copying and accuracy, was, I'm sure, not aware at the time of any hidden anomalies. The results do seem to be intriguing. But what could it really mean?

X marks the spot?

I considered the possibility that the monks may have hidden something special in the abbey just prior to the coming dissolution by Henry VIII. Being surely forewarned, they could have used this small unobtrusive leaden cross (not made of gold) to hide in it a secret that might, and did, survive the rampaging of Henry for future times?

The X in the word REX which would be an obvious target for some location 'was as yet unconfirmed', so I set about using the X as a starting point – and began working, as you might expect, in reverse. The so-called *Iesus Christos* design which suddenly emerged (fig 2) was completely unknown to me at the time but instantly recognised at once by a local clergyman, Rev Chown, who said if I had remembered my Greek I would have spotted it. Sadly, I am no Greek scholar. He insisted that I should check an ancient cross directory to confirm that it was.

The first discovered geometric design is shown here as a dotted line on the Glastonbury Cross. This is known as a *Iesus Christos* symbol, which has been constructed combining the Greek letters I and X. It is regarded as an early Christian secret sign.

The second discovered geometric design is widely known as the Star of David or Seal of Solomon, which has been cleverly constructed by placing just two letter As. The top letter A and the top taper of the cross has allowed the geometry to tilt to the right – having joined together with the inner

Iesus Christos – making a complete design. The X in the word REX is clearly the central target letter. The bottom left letter A has been used as a directional line letter, while the solitary square feature assists a triangle base line.

The two small illustrations below show a *Iesus Christos* (left) and a developed *Chi-Rho* design (right), both taken from an ecclesiastical directory.

Cruets

The further Star of David design, I am sure, has nothing to do with any mystical reference; but as it surrounds the *Iesus Christos* design it made me think of Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury, with the *Iesus Christos* (Jesus Christ) or cruets located at its centre. REX does mean king, but which king could it really mean – Arthur or Christ?

The speculation and the coincidences do tend to race on at this point. The *Iesus Christos* was a secret sign used by many Christians between the time of Constantine and the sixth century, as an interwoven Greek I and X [iota and chi].

The *Prophecy of Melkin*, concerning Glastonbury's early church, was by the Welsh bard known as Maelgwn of Gwynedd. He was a contemporary of Arthur who died in 547 and was written about in John of Glastonbury's *Chronicle*. The prophecy, originally in Welsh, is translated here from the Latin by James Carley: The Isle of Avalon, greedy in the burial of the pagan, above others in the world, decorated at the burial place of all of them with vaticinatory little spheres of prophecy, and in future will be adorned with those who praise the Most High.

Abbadare, powerful in Saphat, most noble of pagans, took his sleep there with 104,000. Amongst them Joseph de Marmore, named "of Arimathea", took everlasting sleep. And he lies on a forked line close to the southern corner of the chapel with prepared wattle above the powerful venerable Maiden, the thirteen aforesaid spheres occupying the place. For Joseph has with him in the tomb two white and silver vessels filled with the blood and sweat of the prophet Jesus.

When his tomb is found, it will be seen whole and undefiled in the future, and will be opened to all the earth.

From then on, neither water nor heavenly dew will be able to be lacking for those who inhabit the most holy island.

For a long time before the Day of Judgement in Josaphat will these things be opened and declared to the living (Carley 1988, 93).

It is easy to imagine how images of Joseph of Arimathea (here seen holding the cruets in a stained glass church window) would in a symbolic way represent the two combined geometric drawings, with the cruets representing the *Iesus Christos* at the centre and Joseph surrounding and representing the Star of David.

Mystery

What is interesting is the legend of Joseph of Arimathea and the two cruets. Is there some traditional link between the first church and the abbey? By this I mean the location mentioned in *The Prophecy of Melkin* where Joseph is to be found: "And he lies on a forked line close to the southern corner of the chapel."

There is no doubt that the two proposed geometric symbols are linked together in some religious way. But are the A construction letters for Arthur, or perhaps A for Arimathea? Would the monks have moved Arthur's remains to where the X is located in a corner of the South transept? Or at the end of the day is it all just simply a case of many unresolved coincidences?

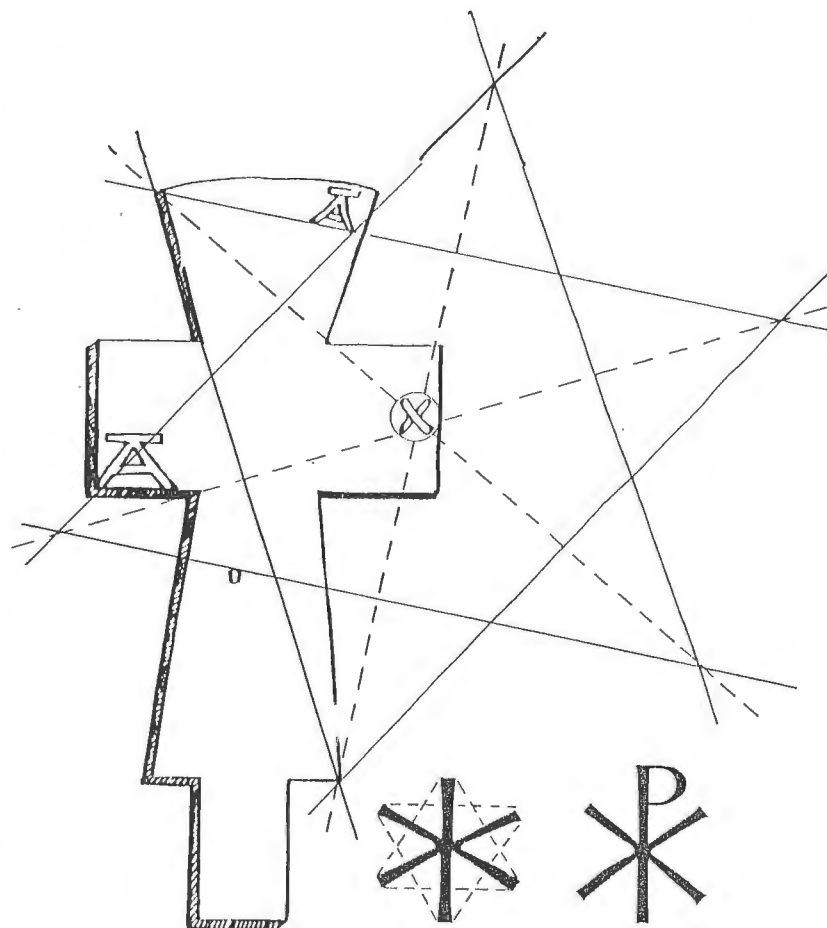
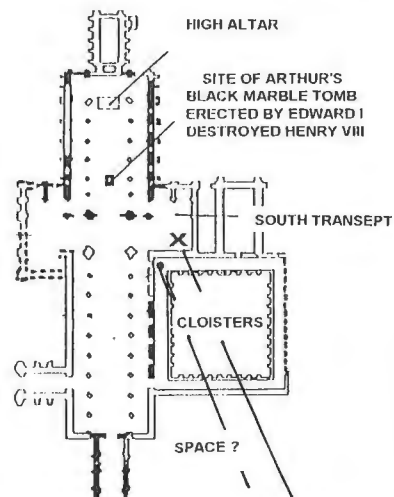
Note too, in the name of Arthur (ARTVRIVS) the letters TV have been reduced and crammed into the lower part of the cross, leaving a clear space in the right cross arm – why? If it is a map, then the author of the cross design is certainly correct as this area is not part of the main building.

The four hexagon points that are not represented are indeed a mystery. If there are any important relative sites at these locations they are yet to be determined. The uncanny positioning of the letter A, X and the small □, by some scholar of the Middle Ages, I thought would have been a very

skilful operation. These, with the odd space, would have been located first.

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Cross text definition

HIC IACET SEPULTUS INCLITUS REX ARTURIUS IN INSULA AVALONIA
 "Here lies buried the famous King Arthur, in the Isle of Avalon"



ARTHUR IN SHROPSHIRE

Browsing through the Pendragon Archive I recently came upon a review in Pendragon XVI/4, Autumn 1982 by Chris Lovegrove, of a thirty-two page booklet titled *Some Shropshire Stories* (1), written by a Society member, Michael Peele. Chris's review describes the booklet as telling, a *handful of old Salopian tales with marvellous observation and accomplishment after a close study of medieval romance and local tradition*. Chris points out that Shropshire hardly figured on the Arthurian map - less true in 1982 than now, thanks to Phillips and Keatman's theories, perhaps!

And then, Michael Peele's name began to ring a bell in my head and I searched through my books for a rare little volume I had picked up in a bookshop at Ludlow twelve years ago. It turned out to be a more extended collection by the same author, *Shropshire in Poem and Legend* (2), also published at Shrewsbury by the same firm in 1923. Mr. Peele was much older than I thought, or was it father and son?

My own Stedman ancestry stems from the Welsh Marches, east of Ludlow under Wenlock Edge and west of Ludlow along the Teme valley into Powys, and I have been delighted to find that two authors of real calibre, Catherine Fisher and Kevin Crossley-Holland (3), have recently set their Arthurian novels in that historic, hauntingly beautiful and long disputed area of conflict between Romans and Celts, Celts and Saxons, Welsh and Normans -

where their descendants often carry the names of both races combined, as I do myself, proving that there must have been times of peace between hostilities! This is fine country indeed for an Arthur to range, guarding the borders of his homeland in imagination if not in fact. Are there any facts to find? I wondered.

With characteristic generosity, Charles Evans-Günther kindly supplied me with a copy of Peele's booklet and of his own article from *Dragon*, the complementary journal to Pendragon that he founded and edited with distinction, titled *Arthur in the Midlands*. This article includes some excellent research on possible locations for the site of Cynddylan's Court and brings attention to the possibility that this Celtic hero and his brothers may have been the 'heirs' of Arthur who died defending their territory in Shropshire. He speculates further, referring to the poem *Canu Heledd* (Heledd's song) which tells us that the Mercians were Cynddylan's foes and that he and his followers are described as *Great Arthur's Whelps* who made a steadfast defence in front of Caer Lhwytgoed, identified as Letocetum or Wall-by-Lichfield. Charles next examines the theories put forward for the location of Cynddylan's Court, notably the Berth near Baschurch - his possible burial place about eight miles NW of Shrewsbury - and more fully with excellent maps and plans, Bury Walls, a hillfort near Weston-under-Redcastle, some ten miles North of Shrewsbury.

Charles then asks the tantalising question: If Cynddylan was descended from Arthur and Bury Walls was his Court could it also be Arthur's Court? He stresses that what he is writing is a series of possibilities for comment and criticism and he supplies notes, a genealogical tree and a useful two page bibliography. It would be most fitting and beneficial for future researchers if we might include some of the excellent articles that appeared in *Dragon* in our archive, which we hope to list on our new website and eventually make available as our own contribution to Arthurian chronicles.

Before I return to Michael Peele's work I would like to mention Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman who claim to have solved the mystery of Arthur's identity, placing him firmly in Powys in their book of 1992, *King*

Arthur - the True Story. (4) (Historical detectives always get their man!) He was Owain Ddantgwyn (white tooth), driver of the chariot of the bear's stronghold, a late 5th century prince of the house of Gwynedd who, they claim, ruled from Viroconium (Wroxeter), the Roman town 4 miles east of Shrewsbury which they believe became the most important town in the country during the post-Roman period. They further suggest that Arthur is buried at (wait for it!) the Berth, near Baschurch, just where we located Cynddylan the Fair, prince of Powys. On the strength of their 'evidence' Shropshire C.C. set up a *King Arthur's Trail*, a route of 138 miles visiting sites in the county often dubiously identified with Arthur, and printed a glossy map for distribution to tourists. Wilkinson's Sword also produced an expensive *Excalibur* (£495) based on a short Roman sword, a spatha, designed by Dan Shadrake of the Britannia re-enactment Society. On Phillips's website (5) we read, *the controversial nature of Graham's research makes it an ideal subject for the media to cover...Graham writes his own press features and generates much of his own publicity, he has appeared in numerous documentaries that have been broadcast around the world*.

In November 1995 he interested the producers of T.V's *Schofield's Quest* to finance a geophysical survey and employ a dowser to explore The Berth. Brian Blessed was brought in to boom suitable poetry at the site and the geophysics team reported a burial - type ditch with some metal object in the centre to a local audience of onlookers. The forbidden word *Camelot* was whispered. Wellies were essential wear, the site is largely under water, but not to be outdone the dowser claimed to have located eight graves! Philip Schofield excitedly promised that an excavation would be sponsored and the finds would be featured on his programme. As far as I know there was no excavation and Schofield's programme died a sudden death! Popular press reviews of the book have been largely favourable, *A study which places legend firmly in history*, and *Unfolds like a scholarly detective story* are just two. Reviews by Arthurian pundits are more critical. There is an evaluation in Chris Barber's and David Pykitt's *Journey to Avalon* (6) and Professor

Gwyn Alf Williams wrote, *One of the better attempts to identify Arthur...which singles out Powys as Arthur's probable centre - an opinion with which I have considerable sympathy - goes on to place a man and a dynasty and identify places in a process which loses this reader*. (7) Phillips's later book, *The Search for The Grail*, (8) stays in Shropshire, trawls through the medieval French prose romance *Fulk Fitz-Warine* (9) for clues, moves from Whittington Castle to Alberbury Priory and on to Hodnet and Hawkstone Park, at Weston-under-Redcastle, to find the Holy Grail - a sort of eggcup-shaped scent jar made of onyx - which now resides with a graphic designer in Rugby, a descendant of Owain Ddantgwyn no less - and that's a triumph of genealogical research in itself.

It is now time for romance, legend, folktale and tradition to take their recognised place in my survey. 'Tradition' is a word much used by those claiming authenticity without evidence and has been defined amusingly by Billy Connolly as 'Rumour + Time'. But Gradgrind 'facts' don't always tell us all there is to know. Tales once told by the fireside, at the forge and the inn are a rich inheritance of earlier cultures and often express the inner life of a people, the way they thought and felt and their particular view of life. The Arthur of Powys, the ancient kingdom which encompassed much of Shropshire and Mid-Wales - not the modern Welsh County which is an area enclosed by a line drawn on a map by bureaucrats - is largely a folkloric hero who leads a band of superhuman heroes; a peerless warrior of giant-like stature who rids the land of ogres, hags and monsters and releases prisoners - rude, savage and protective, his origins lie in the Mabinogion, the triads, the old Welsh sources. (10) Charlotte Burne, is Shropshire's authority on the county's folklore. (11) She tells of an old lady who remembered from childhood that, *it was a matter of common report that King Arthur kept his court in Bury Walls and fought giants*.

William Camden himself wrote, *scarce a mile off (from Redcastle-Hawkstone) is a spot of ground which the people of the neighbourhood call Bury from Burgh, and they affirm it to have been very famous in King Arthur's days*, and Greene records that

on the back of John Speed's map of Shropshire (1610-11) is recorded, *Vnder Red-Castle the ruines of a Citie, whom the vulgar report to have been famous in Arthur's dayes.*



Red Castle, now within Hawkstone Park which was developed in the 18thc., has several stories of encounters between the giant knights who lived there and knights of the Round Table. Their names alone are enough to frighten off visitors: Tarquin, Tarquinius, Carados. Gawain in particular seems to have fallen foul of them and was rescued several times, once by Lancelot who carried him away to safety lying across his saddlebow! Greene calls these stories 'floating traditions'. In contrast, the Rector of Hodnet (later Bishop Heber) told of two parishioners, an old farming couple who lived at Hermitage Farm below Hawkstone, who used to point out local sites as the actual places they had read about in their lovingly worn-out old copy of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. This may be read in Burne's *Folklore*. Greene calls them the 'gossiping old couple' and distinguishes between such 'tradition' and pure folklore reaching back over the centuries, a tradition that was firmly established by the 16th C. can be relied upon to have much longer roots into the past. Something similar seems to have occurred at Stapely Hill near Chirbury, where the sleeping King story is told of the Giant's Cave and nearby Mitchell's Fold Stone Circle was reported by William Stukely in the 18thc. to be where locals believed Arthur had pulled the sword *Excalibur* from the stone.

The *Perlesvaus*, the *Book of the Holy Vessel* (c.1200) mentions the Blaenche-Land where Arthur saw the Grail and recovered his lost honour, and the *Fulke*

Fitz-Warine romance identifies Whittington as this place. There is no room here to investigate this rich field, the Fitzwarins were a historical marcher baronial family based at the White Castle, Whittington. Graham Phillips has muddied these waters but they are still there for the fishing!

The multivallate hillfort of Old Oswestry, arguably the most impressive in the Welsh Border, was re-occupied in the Dark Ages, and, as *Caer Ogyrfan*, it is linked to *Gwenhwyfar*, Arthur's queen. A 17thc. antiquary noted that the fort was called *Llys Ogran* or *Caer Ogran* in Welsh manuscripts – *Ogyrfan* (or *Gogfran* or *Ocuran*) was a *gawr* (giant) himself and *Gwenhwyfar*'s father. Arthur was said to have supported him against the giant *Rhion* or *Ryons*, probably the North Walian giant known as *Rhytta* who sported a cloak made of the beards of kings. Welsh folklore says Arthur buried him on the summit of *Snowdon*. Greene has a very interesting list of local ladies of the Oswestry area who were all Christened with variant forms of *Gwenhwyfar*'s name, from the time parish registers began they are there and Steve Blake tells me they also appear in registers around the *Llangollen* area over the Welsh Border. Perhaps *Guinevere* was abducted to *Castle Dinas Bran* and like *St.Collen*'s her story was transposed to *Glastonbury*. More of this at next year's Round Table perhaps!

There is a rival location in the borderlands which is claimed to be the place of the birth of Arthur's queen and the site of her marriage also. We must ford the river *Teme* into *Knighton*, *Radnorshire* - County of the riding men, the horsemen who patrolled the *Dyke* (12) - in Wales but always in *Powys*, too. *Knighton* sits on *Offa's Dyke*, the only settlement to do so, and is centre of the *Offa's Dyke Association*. It is also on the *Heart of Wales* line which runs down through Wales between *Craven Arms* and *Llanelli*. One station along the line brings you to *Knucklas* and the impressive 465 yard viaduct is built of stone from the castle that stood on the prominent steep hill, for *Knucklas* or *Cnwclas* means *Green Hill*. It is not known if ancient earthworks lie beneath but A 15thc. Welsh manuscript tells that it was the home of *Gogfran* or *Gogfran* who presented Arthur with the Round Table on his marriage to *Gwenhwyfar* there. The story

of the marriage is told in the *Llanstephan Mss.5.56(2)* at the National Library of Wales. At the foot of the hill is a piece of land known as the *Bloody Field* where a tumulus was opened in the 19thc. and a vault consisting of five chambers yielded five skeletons of exceptional size, arranged in regular order side by side. Greene obligingly gives us a splendid finale to our stories of giants and Arthur. He says a 16thc. antiquary states that *Gwenhwyfar*'s two brothers were imprisoned by giants at *Bryn Organ* on the Shropshire border, which seems to be near *Knucklas*. Arthur sorted this out and used the head of one of the giants as a stepping stone to cross the river *Tyfediad* (*Teme*)!

I shall conclude with an extract from a Shropshire version of the ubiquitous *Cave Legend* from *Peele's 1923 book*, attached in this case to *Stapely Hill* and written with remarkable imaginative power.

The Story of the Giant's Cave in Stapely Hill



And in the cavern was a table of stone, and about it were four and twenty chairs of stone, twelve on each side, and in the midst was one greater than any. And therein sat Arthur and those of his knights whom he best loved. On his head he wore a helm of shining steel, and a dragon fashioned with both wings and mighty claws and scales covering its body. Around his helm was a broad circlet of gold that was set with crystal

and about his armour garments of white silk, and a heavy mantle of crimson, furred with ermine. And his belt was clasped with gold, and therein jewels set; and at his side was Caliburn his sword and the hilt seemed as it were two serpents, the one pale as silver and the other red as any garnet, that glared venomously one upon the other. By Arthur's side lay Peredur, whom men later called Percivale, whom Arthur loved; and his head lay upon Arthur's breast. Cavall, Arthur's dog, lay at his feet. And there also were many others sleeping.....Then it seemed to him that long shadows fell within the cavern and it grew dim, and the smell of leaf-mould was in his nostrils, and his head ached, and the figures were merged in each, and at length he saw nothing but the serpents upon the hilt of Caliburn; and they seemed seven times their size, and blazed in their hatred, and coiled, one upon the body of the other, and darted rays of burning fire from out of their jaws and their nostrils and their eyes. And his eyes were pained by the sight and fear fell upon his heart, and he turned and hastened from the chamber. The cold wind struck him again about the face and head, and the sudden chill shook his frame, and he humed down the hill. Nevermore found he that cavern in the hillside.

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Geoffrey Ashe

Mythology of the British Isles

London: Methuen 2002 £9.99

0 413 77199 7 pb xi + 333pp

The appearance of a new book by the doyen of Arthurian scholars is a welcome and exciting event. This is in fact a second edition of a book he first published in 1990, but it is considerably revised. In it he recounts the legendary story of the British Isles from the dim beginnings of perfidious Albion to the tale of Alfred (not Arthur, *pace* Sellar and Yeatman¹) burning the cakes. The background and origins of all the legends are carefully explored. But what makes the book so original and interesting is Ashe's stage by stage and point for point comparison of the legendary story with the real prehistory and history of Britain.

Evidently Ashe has broadened his sights in this book, but it is precisely his very wide knowledge that has enabled him in the past to contribute so much to, and shed such new light on, the special field of Arthurian studies.

I have always assumed that the legendary story of Britain was nearly all recorded – or invented – by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Ashe dispels this illusion in his

¹ Sellar, W C and Yeatman, R J (1930) *1066 and All That* (London: Methuen) 18

preface. He shows that Geoffrey, though the chief, is by no means the only source, and mentions that not more than ten of his (Ashe's) fifty-eight sections are 'predominantly taken from him' (page x).

Ashe begins with what even in legendary terms can be called a predynastic age – the peopling of Britain and Ireland by giants, Fomor goblins, Trojans, and of course the lost Ten Tribes of Israel. The British-Israelites keep cropping up in the book, with their delightful theories. I specially liked their derivation of Cymry from the Cimmerians of the Crimea. "Cymry" in fact means "fellow countryman", observes Ashe, 'and is not used till a comparatively late date, when the Welsh wanted to affirm solidarity against the English' (13): it did nothing to stop their endless internecine quarrels.

There follows a fascinating group of sections on the 'Mysteries of Early Britain' which, needless to say, Ashe very satisfyingly demystifies. Three very interesting sections on megaliths are followed by discussions of hill figures, ley lines, mazes and the fantasy of a zodiacal landscape.

Other subjects discussed are the fairies, whom he rightly associates with the dead and the Bronze Age – he notes their 'aversion to iron' (107) – the Druids and all the modern Druid-fantasies, and early ideas about the far West.

A large part of the book is devoted to the long succession of kings, those before Roman times wholly legendary, those afterwards sometimes real but much altered by legend. Some are well known – for instance, Lear (Leir), Lud and Old King Cole – Ashe relates Colchester to the Colne river, and not to any real or imaginary king. The Welsh kings of the *Mabinogion* are discussed, and two saints – Helena and Ursula. Throughout these sections, as throughout the book, he examines both the origins of the legends and the actual prehistory and history at each stage. It is all immensely informative and interesting, but I specially liked the section on the geographical etiology of the sons of Brutus – Kamber, Locrinus and Albanactus, and Ashe's brilliant disentangling of the Welsh royal legends.

With nineteen sections on Arthurian and related legends, we are on familiar Ashe ground. But he is always worth reading on this subject, and he always manages to find new enlightening angles on the old material. He discusses in turn Vortigern and the Saxons, Merlin, Arthur, Camelot, Guinevere, the chief knights, Morgan le Fay, Nimue, Tristan and Isolde, the Grail, the *Morte d'Arthur*, the survivors of the last battle, Arthur *redevisus*, sites associated with him, Taliesin, and Avalon.

There are special sections on the English and on Scotland. The genealogies of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties suggest to him that there may have been a real Woden, named after the god, just as, he points out, the Celtic chiefs called Brennus may have been named after the god Bran. He discusses *Beowulf*, and legends of the Anglo-Saxon kings and saints. Here he emphasises the role of the Celts in the conversion of Anglo-Saxon England.

In Scotland, he discusses the Picts, the Scots who came from Ireland and settled in Dalriada (West of Scotland), the legends of Finn and Oisín (Fingal and Ossian) they brought with them, and their eventual move East and take-over of the Pictish kingdom. (They actually came in two waves, North and South.²) Kenneth MacAlpine's treacherous massacre of the Pictish chiefs invited to a banquet looks like an obvious double of Hengist's banquet, but of course there have been plenty of treacherous murders in real history.

A bonus of this wonderful book is the abundance of literary references – Blake, Burns, Byron, Chesterton, Richard Corbet, Cowper, Cynewulf, Drayton, Gilbert, Graves, Gray, Hardy, John Higgins, Housman, Kipling, Milton, Pope, Sackville and Norton, Scott, Shakespeare, Spenser, Nahum Tate, Tennyson. Many of these authors are quoted.

My bald summary does little justice to the wealth of intriguing facts and intelligent interpretations packed into this book. To list them all – with appropriate cries of admiration – would take another book. So I

² Russell, W M S (forthcoming) "The Making of a Villain" *Pendragon*

shall limit myself to comments on some passages where I feel I have something to add in support or, in a very few cases, in disagreement.

When Ashe considers the actual peopling of Britain and Europe (as opposed to nonsense about Trojans and Israelites), he is rather too indulgent to the extraordinary fashion among some modern archaeologists of discounting prehistoric mass migrations and invasions. No sociologist, familiar with the vast importance of mass migrations and invasions in world history, can possibly accept so different a conception of prehistory.³ In any case, the actual migration of the Beaker Folk is proved by the characteristic physique of their skeletons, and the invasion of the Belgae is attested by Caesar.⁴ Hubert Butler, using an indirect but entirely convincing approach, has shown that prehistoric Europe was a boiling ferment of tribal alliances, conflicts and movements.⁵ Cavalli-Sforza, by his beautiful genetical studies, has proved beyond a shadow of doubt the mass migrations of the Indo-Europeans across Europe from Southern Russia, and of the Celts from Central to Western Europe.⁶

These invading floods virtually eliminated pre-Indo-European languages from all but a few resistant 'islands' in the Caucasus and the Basque country. This is another proof of mass migration, as well as invasion, since 'in later centuries the Franks, Normans and Bulgars conquered and became the ruling classes of France, England and Bulgaria, but were too few to replace the French, English and Slav languages of those

³ Russell, W M S (1975) "Saints, Tribes and Ancestors" *Biology and Human Affairs* 40, 118–130

⁴ Russell, W M S (2001) *Pendragon* 29 No 3, 15–24, especially 21–22

⁵ Butler, H (1972) *Ten Thousand Saints: a Study in Irish and European Origins* (Freshford, Co Kilkenny: The Wellbrook Press) *passim*

⁶ Cavalli-Sforza, L L (2000) *Genes, Peoples and Languages* (transl Seielstad, M, Harmondsworth: Allan Lane The Penguin Press) Chapter 4

lands'.⁷ There was nothing gradual or peaceful about the Celtic incursions into Central Italy, Greece and Asia Minor, where they settled in Galatia. The battle-axes of the Battle-Axe Folk (identifiable as the Indo-Europeans), the bows and arrows of the Beaker Folk, and the chariots of the Celts were (as Gibbon remarked of the harem and library of the younger Gordian) surely designed 'for use rather than for ostentation'.⁸

Ashe leaves the origin of the Picts open. 'They were simply there since no one knows when' (67). Bede (surely a very respectable historian) writes that the Picts sailed from Scythia to Ireland, where they were repulsed, and then to Scotland. Farley Mowat interprets 'Scythia' as the Scillies, from which such a voyage would be reasonable. He identifies the Picts with Caesar's Pictones, a tribe in Western Gaul, south of the Loire. He supposes they sailed from Gaul to escape the Romans, and after a stay in the Scillies arrived in Scotland, partly displacing a native people there he calls the Albans. Later chronicles distinguished Northern and Southern Picts, and Mowat assumes the Northern group were the Albans. In the 6th century, the Albans and Picts amalgamated for defence against common enemies, and Columba, visiting the Northern king, was told that he was now king of both Northern and Southern populations, the whole being named Alba. It retained this name even after the Scots, coming from the West in two waves, absorbed the Picts (and presumably the Albans) in the ninth century.^{9 10}

In his fascinating discussion of megaliths in legend and fact, Ashe gives due credit to the marvellous work of Alexander Thom. I was at the very exciting joint meeting of the Royal Society and the British Academy to

assess Thom's work.¹¹ With a fine sense of drama, the organisers left the verdict open on the programme. In fact it was overwhelmingly in Thom's favour. Kendall proved, by very sophisticated statistical methods, that Thom's megalithic yard was a genuine measure, and not an artefact of his calculations. MacKie excavated a Scottish site where Thom had predicted the existence of a carefully designed artificial sighting platform, for sighting the sun at the winter solstice behind the notch between the Paps of Jura. *He found the platform.*

Claire Russell and I have interpreted the hill giants of Cerne Abbas and Wilmington as tribal territorial phallic markers; the territorial phallic warning marker goes back to the primates – in many monkey species males sit on the band territorial periphery showing their penises. The Cerne Abbas giant has a phallus and a club, the Wilmington giant two phallic objects.¹² But all this depends on an early date, at latest the Iron Age, and Ashe shows that the dating is in fact very uncertain. He mentions the belief that 'a barren woman could be cured by having sexual relations on' the Cerne Abbas giant (44). In 1998, it was reported that Andy and Sandy Thorne, who had tried in vain to conceive for five years, had just had a baby daughter, after making love on the penis of the Cerne Abbas giant!¹³

In discussing leys, Ashe draws a welcome distinction, which not all authors do, between Alfred Watkins's perfectly reasonable hypothesis of sight lines and the carloads of utter nonsense (mysterious energies and the like) accumulated about leys in recent years. And he admits that some alignments do exist. But I think he is

¹¹ Hodson, F R ed (1974) *The Place of Astronomy in the Ancient World* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy): Kendall, D G "Hunting Quanta" 231–266; MacKie, E W "Archaeological Tests on Supposed Prehistoric Astronomical Sites in Scotland" 169–191

¹² Russell, C and Russell, W M S (1998) "Hill Figures" *Folklore Society News* No 28, 12

¹³ Simpson, J, Yeowell, J and Ridgewell, G (1998) "Hill Figures" *Folklore Society News* No 28, 12

⁷ Russell (ref 4) 22

⁸ Gibbon, E (1910) *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (6 vols, London: Dent) Vol 1 171

⁹ Mowat, F (1999) *The Alban Quest: the Search for a Lost Tribe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) 58, 61–64, 95–96, 339

¹⁰ Lynch, M (1992) *Scotland: a New History* (London: Pimlico) 40

still a little too critical of Watkins. In a thickly forested country, with no maps available, sight lines would be an enormous convenience, almost a necessity. That the points on the lines are marked by quite different structures of different date is not, I think, a serious objection. People are extremely conservative in building new structures on old sites: Watkins cites folk legends in support of this generalisation. His book is extremely detailed, giving many examples meticulously worked out, and some interesting corroborations, and, like Darwin, he carefully considers objections to his thesis. I have never seen a detailed criticism of all his examples. As John Michell observes, in his introduction to the 1973 edition of Watkins's book, 'Today we know that stone and mound alignments were indeed set out over considerable distances, often directed towards mountain peaks, cairns and notches, just as Watkins described'.¹⁴ The notch between the Paps of Jura is an obvious case in point. The discoveries of Thom certainly prove, though in a different context, that the prehistoric peoples of Britain were capable of very accurate long-distance sighting arrangements.

Ashe's section on mazes can be supplemented by a publication of Claire Russell and me.¹⁵ Ashe notes the traditional connection with Troy; in fact, 14 of the English turf mazes (nearly half the total number) are named after Troy or Aeneas's son Iulus, and a number of stone mazes in Scandinavia and Germany are also named after Troy. Ashe makes the interesting point that Helen had to be extracted from Troy, corresponding to 'a woman at the centre' of a maze 'who, like Sita, has to be reached by a hero' (57).

This aspect of Helen may have helped cement the Trojan connection in later times. But the original verbal connection had nothing to do with the city of Troy, but arose from words for maze based on the

Indo-European root *tro* or *tru*, in both Celtic (Welsh *troiau*) and Latin. The root means *windings* or *turnings*. The Etruscan vase mentioned by Ashe shows two riders emerging from a maze labelled *Truia*. The Romans adopted, almost certainly from the Etruscans, a mazy cavalry training exercise, probably performed on a marked-out mazy course by young nobles, as a form of initiation. In view of their fanciful Trojan ancestry, believed since at least the early 3rd century BC, the Romans naturally misunderstood the winding-turning word as the city of their legendary ancestors, and called the exercise the Trojan Game. Augustus encouraged all such patriotic legends, and Virgil provided a fictitious origin for the Trojan Game by having it played by Aeneas's young Trojans, including his son Iulus.

However, Ashe is absolutely right in his concept of Helen as extracted from a maze. We noted that the Scandinavian stone mazes were said to be used for children's games, in which boys raced through the maze for a girl at the centre. Because social relations are often represented spatially, we proposed that a maze could symbolise a kinship network. The quest for a girl at the maze centre would then symbolise the extraction of a mate from an unfamiliar and often very complex kinship network, particularly challenging when patrilineal mating began. In this connection Ashe makes the very interesting Arthurian point that Guinevere, when kidnapped, was (in one version) held at Glastonbury, where Ashe himself had shown that the maze round the Tor is genuine, and not a series of 'agricultural strip-lynchets' (58).

Because maze-treading is so often connected with initiation, we traced its origin to the need for young primates to be taught their band territory, not a simple area but a set of pathways, no doubt sometimes spiralling out from a centre. In human societies, where this sort of learning is still practised, for instances among Australian tribes, the original culture pattern led on the one hand to realistic maps, and on the other to the maze symbol, which was eventually transferred to the metaphorical mazes of kinship relations.

¹⁴ Watkins, A (1973) *The Old Straight Track, its Mounds, Beacons, Moats, Sites and Mark Stones* (New York: Ballantine Books) xvi

¹⁵ Russell, W M S and Russell, C (1991) "English Turf Mazes, Troy and the Labyrinth" *Folklore* 102 77–88

Ashe very pertinently associates Geoffrey of Monmouth's emphasis on British queens with the topical dispute over Matilda's claims as a woman to the throne. It is perhaps worth mentioning that Geoffrey's patron, Robert Earl of Gloucester, was his half-sister's chief champion. Last year Charles Evans-Günther told me he was writing an article on Earl Robert and the whole topical significance of Geoffrey's *Historia*, and I greatly look forward to this. It is true that Geoffrey may have hedged his bets, since he dedicated his work jointly to Robert and to Waleran Count of Meulan, for along a supporter of Stephen.¹⁶

At Bath, Ashe notes, 'Sul may have had a sacred spring before the Romans arrived' (73). In fact the excavators found an artificial pre-Roman causeway leading to one of the springs, from which a few offerings – 18 Celtic coins – were recovered.¹⁷

Ashe suggests that the Brennus who sacked Rome was named after the god Bran. I note, in support of this, that he was not the only Celtic chieftain so named – some seventy years after the sack of Rome, another Brennus led the attack on Delphi.

Ashe notes that 'among Celtic Britons, official Christianity was perhaps more successful against the fairies than against the gods ... Church bells and crucifixes could more or less tame them' (108). I was reminded of Peer Gynt's rescue from the trolls. The case of elves and dwarves is interesting. Originally, elves were good and dwarves bad. The Church, disapproving equally of both, demonised the elves. Hence among the Anglo-Saxons in England, who were early converted, illness was attributed to elfshot. In Iceland, converted much later, illness was still attributed to dwarfshot.¹⁸

¹⁶ King, E ed (1994) *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) *passim*

¹⁷ Cunliffe, B (2000) *Roman Bath Discovered* (Stroud, Glos: Tempus) 12

¹⁸ Lecouteux, C (1995) *Au-delà du Merveilleux, des Croyances du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne) 112

Ashe considers the story, no doubt of Celtic origins, in Plutarch's dialogue *On the Face that Appears in the Disc of the Moon*, of islands and a mainland in the far West, and wonders whether the Celts had some dim notion of the New World. Johannes Kepler had no doubts about this. When I studied his Latin translation of Plutarch's dialogue, I found his note in the margin of the relevant passage (my translation): 'Look at the size of this continent, therefore don't doubt, it must be America'.¹⁹

Ashe tells the legend of Vortigern's last dismal years in Snowdonia. George Borrow talks of these legends at the point in his Welsh tour when he explored Snowdonia.²⁰ Ashe shows that Geoffrey of Monmouth utterly confused two Merlins (Myrddins) – the mad poet and the magician. It is greatly to the credit of Gerald of Wales, writing only a generation later, that he clearly distinguished between the two.²¹ But even Gerald thought Carmarthen was named after Merlin; Ashe disposes of this legend.

This completes my comments. If, in making them, I have occasionally found myself in the opposing ranks of Tuscany, I certainly can scarce forbear to cheer at this magnificent book. The idea of comparing the legendary and real stories of Britain was a brilliant one, and Ashe has executed it splendidly. I learned a lot from the book, enjoyed it enormously, and wouldn't have missed it for anything. It has all of Ashe's usual combination of scholarship, imagination and unputdownability. It will of course be indispensable for Arthurians, but it deserves, and I hope it will reach, to instruct and delight, a very wide public indeed.



¹⁹ Russell, W M S (1983) "More about Folklore and Literature" *Folklore* 94 3–32, especially 6–7

²⁰ Borrow, G (1977) *Wild Wales: its People, Language and Scenery* (London: Fontana Collins) 161

²¹ Giraldus Cambrensis (1908) *The Itinerary Through Wales and Description of Wales* (transl Colt Hoare, Sir Richard, London: Dent) 125–126, 73

Reviews



Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd
**Pendragon: the definitive account
of the origins of Arthur**
Rider 2002 £18.99

0 7126 3121 6 hb 310pp illus

Pendragon consists of 310 pages, a 9 page index, 20 pages of notes, a 6 page bibliography, 3 appendices of over 60 pages, 9 maps, 7 charts, 7 colour and 16 black and white plates. It is probably what Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd should have written first, and is almost like a prequel to *The Keys of Avalon*. I must begin with a criticism of the title: Arthur, as far as I'm aware, was never called *Pendragon*, and this book is not definitive.

From there things look up. There is much in this book that may be new to the general reader. It cuts away the covering of the Romances and goes in search of the possible origins of a real Arthur. The authors use the oldest material possible and also sources that are virtually unknown to most people.

One of the big problems with studying Arthur is that material is in either Latin or Welsh. Folk also tend to depend on Geoffrey of Monmouth and what followed on from his works. Steve and Scott have, in this publication, avoided this. They, however, show that that Geoffrey had

ample Welsh material to work from. The book he claimed to have translated should not be dismissed out of hand but shouldn't be considered history. The real Arthur, if he existed, is hidden in the works of chroniclers and poets of the British and their Welsh descendants.

Apart from Gildas' *Ruin of Britain*, the *History of the Britons* and the *Welsh Annals*, most scholars avoid the Welsh material and go for Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*. They see this work as being something that can be used to discover the origins of a Dark Age warrior leader. And yet Welsh bards until the late 13th century never quoted or even mentioned this work. Giraldus Cambrensis – not quite what you would call Welsh – does mention him but seemed to consider his work to be false. The poets and writers of Wales had a different tradition for Arthur. There were no Round Tables, Swords in Stones, Holy Grails or knights in shining armour. To the Welsh, Arthur was a native leader set firmly in their own society, which was much nearer to the Dark Ages than Norman England.

If you want to discover something of the above, *Pendragon* will be very interesting and useful. It brings together many pieces of Welsh material that have been ignored for years by scholarship outside of Wales and unknown to most general readers about Arthur. For those who have already delved into the Welsh material there isn't much new in Steve and Scott's book, but to those who haven't, it may be an eye opener. There is a lot in this publication that I support, and I suggest that there is still more to be learned from further research, which is why I say it is not definitive. I don't agree with every conclusion Steve and Scott make, but in general I would readily recommend *Pendragon*.

Having said that I would like to look at a few points that I personally believe deserve expanding on. Arthur, if he existed, must have been a warrior of considerable prowess or a leader who had some effect on the British psyche. However, he may well have been much less than he became under the pen of Geoffrey of Monmouth and subsequent writers. He was certainly no

saviour as the 10th century poem *Ames Prydein*, which called for all Celtic people to rise against the English, ignored him completely. But his stature was enough to get two mentions in the Welsh Annals and a chapter in *The History of the Britons*. We should ask ourselves, *Why?*

I think Steve and Scott's comments concerning Arthur are fair and may be the answer. It is also possible that there was something of Welsh propaganda there as well. Especially for the 'kingdom' of Gwynedd. However, I see some problems in trying to find where Arthur lived and campaigned. From the Welsh writings, it cannot be doubted, there was a strong connection with North Wales and possible links with Central Wales and the Marches. The South Welsh connections, such as Caerleon, only appeared after Geoffrey's works became popular. Arthur's court being at Celliwig in Cernyw – Cornwall – is also mentioned in early tales and Triads, but was it really there?

It is possible, however, that Arthur could have lived elsewhere and the stories superimposed on the North Welsh landscape. Twice, we are told, the ruling classes of Gwynedd came from the North. First Cunedda in the 4th or 5th century and then Merfyn Frych in the late 8th or early 9th century. There are archaeological similarities between Dark Age graves found in Denbighshire – Tanderwen – and in the area of the Firth of Forth – thought to be Mannau Gododdin. There is also evidence from monuments on the Isle of Man that the latter generation of the Gwynedd ruling class had spent time there. Equally, a lot of early Welsh poetry seems to emanate from Scotland. Of course, it depends on whether you believe "Y Gogledd" was actually in the northern part of the British Isles, or North Wales as the authors of *Pendragon* suggest. I wish to keep an open mind about this, but it is interesting that the area around the Clyde in Scotland was connected with a British tribe called Dumonii, as was Cornwall.

I think it is worthwhile making some comment on Steve and Scott's suggestions about the battles of Arthur as found in *The History of the Britons*. If this is a genuine

list, and not something compiled to glorify Gwynedd in their war with Mercia, then certain things can be gleaned from it.

♦ Battle 1 was *in ostium fluminis quod dicitur Glein* – "at the mouth of the river called Glein". Steve and Scott point to Gleiniant, a brook that flows into the River Trannon. But the original says the mouth of a river and the Modern Welsh for Glein would probably be more like "glan".

♦ Battles 2 – 5 were *super aliud flumen, quod dicitur Dubglas, et est in regione Linnuis* – "on another river called Dubglas, in the region of Linnuis". The authors rightly point to a "dulas" but cannot explain Linnuis, which would easily become Lindsey in Lincolnshire.

♦ Battle 6 *super flumen quod vocatur Bassas* – "on the river called Bassas", which is suggested as being either Basingwerk, Flintshire, or Baschurch, Shropshire. Both are of English origin – Bassa is not a British name, though the latter may have some merit, as there are references to Eglwyssau Bassa in quite early Welsh poetry. If Bassas was a mistake for "bas" it would be a Welsh name.

♦ Battle 7 *in silva Celidonis* – "in the Celyddon Forest" is guessed as being somewhere in the region of the rivers Conwy and Clwyd. This is based on information from *Culhwch and Olwen* where Cilydd Celyddon killed King Doged and there is a Llanddoged near Llanrwst on the River Conwy. In Welsh tradition Coed Celyddon is usually linked with Myrddyn and he with Rhydderch, who is said to have been a ruler of Strathclyde. This, if Strathclyde is where it is now believed to be, would put the forest in Scotland.

♦ Battle 8 was *in castello Guinnion* – "in Guinnion fort" – and here Steve and Scott have found as good a placename as any. All three suggestions suit a more modern version of Guinnion.

♦ Battle 9 *in urbes Legionis* – "in the Legion city" – is agreed on by most scholars to be Chester. I have my doubts.

♦ Battle 10 was *in litore fluminis quod vocatur Tribuit* – "on the bank of the river called Tryfrwyd". The authors give no identification but it must have been on a

river that ran into a coastline – maybe a beach.

♦ Battle 11 could have had two names – *monte qui dicitur Agned* – "a mountain called Agned" – or alternatively a mountain called "Breguoin". Steve and Scott suggest Breguoin is possibly Berwyn but cannot identify Agned.

♦ Battle 12 was the famous *in monte Badonis* – "on Badon Hill" – and this deserves much more space than can be given here. Badon, apart from Tryfrwyd, is the only battle on this list that can be found in other sources. Gildas records it and it is found in the *Welsh Annals*, as well as often mentioned by Welsh poets as a great battle to be compared with. However, only the *History of the Britons* and the *Welsh Annals* connect it to Arthur. Gildas gives it importance as a victory over the Saxons by the British but doesn't say who led the victors. Welsh poets also saw it as a great victory but never linked it to Arthur. We must ask ourselves was Arthur the battle leader at Badon or was he given credit for it? It may well be a piece of propaganda.

Steve and Scott point out that Badon is mentioned in *The Dream of Rhonabwy* and located near Cefn Digoll, now known as Long Mountain in Shropshire. *The Dream* is very much a fantasy and no one has located Badon, unless it is the Badonis in *stagnam calidum in quo balnea sunt Badonis, quod est in regione Huich* – "the hot lake, where the baths of Badon are, in the country of the Hwicce" (Bath, in Somerset?), one of the wonders listed in *The History of the Britons*.

Camlan, on the other hand, is often connected to Arthur in early Welsh poetry and may be one of the only real battle he fought. Like Badon representing a great success, Camlan has come to represent the opposite and confusion. Whether the stories about Gwenhwyfar and her sister Gwenhwyfach are to be considered the reason for Camlan is another question and, like Badon, deserves far more space than allows. Certainly Medraut in Welsh tradition bears no resemblance to the Mordred of later stories. We can only be sure that Arthur and Medraut fell at Camlan and that they were on opposite sides may well be a

story that grew up much later. However, family feuds were not unknown in Welsh history.

If we remove Badon and its Saxon connections then Arthur could have fought British, Irish or Pictish enemies and not been the saviour of the British from the devilish Saxons! This could narrow his campaigning area down and who knows that may well have been Wales and the Marches. I don't disagree with Steve and Scott on this point but am not completely convinced. Nevertheless, a different viewpoint is worth discussing and they have made it open to the general public.

I haven't touched on all the possible sites linked with Arthur in Wales – Steve and Scott's book is only the tip of the iceberg. However, it must be decided whether these places are primary or secondary sites. In fact, there are a number of decisions that have to be made.

First, did Arthur fight the Saxons? If it is decided he did, then we should be looking elsewhere for Arthur's battles at least. It is possible Arthur's birthplace, home and base could have been in Wales or in another part of British held territories. However, if we decide that Arthur didn't fight the Saxons, the battles were unlikely to have been in Wales rather in the Eastern part of Britain. It would silly to deny the large number of sites in Wales linked with Arthur in stories, Triads and placenames, but are they primary sites? If they are primary then we should be searching in Wales. However, if they are secondary, other parts of the British Isles could easily be possible. Therefore, there is need for further and serious research.

I'm not going to sit on the wall here. I have had my doubts about Badon and Arthur fighting Saxons for a long time. Badon and the Saxons may have been added to the famous battle lists for propaganda reasons, and also twelve is a nice round number as with the 12 apostles, 12 signs of the Zodiac and the 12 months of the year. And so I would ask the reader to consider *Pendragon* and see if you are convinced by what Steve and Scott have written.

Peel away the Romances and what have you got? Read *Pendragon* and decide for yourself whether it has merit. I believe it does, and wish Steve and Scott lots of luck with this and future ventures.

Charles Evans-Günther

Les Merton compiler and editor

The Spirit of a King

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What became of Arthur after his terrible wound at Camlann? In Cornish belief, it's not a matter of doubt – the king's spirit, after the final battle, took residence in that remarkable bird, the red-beaked, red-legged acrobatic crow family member whose many names include the Cornish Chough, or *Palores* in the Cornish language.

This book, the first specifically about the bird since 1973, the year the very last of the species disappeared from the Duchy after decades of human-caused decline, appears at a time, instead, of hope. A breeding project proposes imminent release into the wild in Cornwall of captive birds, while, by extraordinary coincidence, the first breeding in the wild in over fifty years has occurred this spring [2002], a pair having returned from a surviving group elsewhere, perhaps Brittany.

The enthusiasm of this book is catching, as it tells the story of the chough, including its relationship to the wider *corvidae* bird family, behaviour and habits, its names and nicknames in a variety of languages, and associated terms. That includes the wonderful term used for a flock; when there were still enough to so gather, it was called a *chattering*, and the book includes a 1941 account of the last such in the Duchy. The book quotes observers from the 17th century on, including Defoe, on the chough's former abundance and painful decline under human pressure, and describes the program to restore the bird to its rightful place in Cornwall. It links, too, the idea of Arthur's return at time of need to the symbolism of a return of the chough for

attempts to strengthen Cornish identity, and ensure both an economic and a cultural (reviving the language etc) future for its people.

Alongside this varied prose content go poems, plus an extract from a verse play, which illuminate the impact of the bird and its relationship with Cornish identity. Of these, the most directly Arthurian is Merton's own "The Spirit of a King", linking bird and Excalibur – "Its shining blade arcs, / carves down, / fire colours the legs and bill / of an emblem." John Harris' "The Cornish Chough" apostrophises as "thee" and "thou" the bird in 19th century style, while Pol Hodge's is given as facing texts in Cornish and English; the latter, after addressing the chough as "guardian of the holy soul – sanctified Arthur!" (an intriguing Christianisation) takes a less saintly turn – the bird may be "Little, black angel in the Celtic heaven", but "Leg and beak in English blood". Victorian Field picks up the "Dark Angel" image, picturing a bird that terrifies as it allures: "She wears red tights and her lips are blood [...] hungry for carrion". R E Warner's "Chough" is mellowly elegiac: "cave-dweller that flies like a butterfly [...] so gentle a bird, to live on furious coasts [...] sailing with ragged plumes upturned, into the wind, goes delicate indifferent."

An extract from Morton Nance's verse play *An Balores* (again Cornish and English texts facing) returns to the Arthurian link: "In a chough, as all men know, / Arthur's spirit, too, unsleeping." Finally, a triptych of Jan Tozer poems depict choughs elsewhere, surviving in Pembrokeshire, her vivid imagery conveying the multifaceted impact of these striking avians in a wild habitat: "glossy black horseguards / a cortege with fanfares, flags"; "Choughs are the curlicues // Their beaks gleam like official wax / a thick meniscus of red ink / for saints' days"; "play air polo / laugh at their own jokes."

The book is profusely illustrated, including RSPB colour and black and white photographs of the bird, views of places in Cornwall where it once lived, an early engraving by the great Thomas Bewick, modern theme-inspired drawings, including a chough flying over a lake-arm-gripped Excalibur, even a picture of the Cornish

coat of arms where a chough serves as crest.

Although I wished it contained more of the folklore of the Cornish chough (and in particular a fuller account of the belief that it incarnates Arthur, how far back has the story been traced etc), I found the book a fascinating introduction to its subject, which should particularly appeal to Arthurians with a taste for omithology and love of Cornwall.

Steve Sneyd



Jim Lowder ed

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Attention, lovers of original stories about The Matter of Britain: Jim Lowder has put together another anthology of Arthurian short stories and this one is better than his last. For devotees of this genre that revel in the creativity and imagination of today's authors of fiction, the publication of this type of volume is always eagerly awaited. While reading the opinions of members of an on-line Arthurian discussion group, I was shocked to read that one noted Arthurian historian did not consider Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* an Arthurian novel because, unlike in Malory, Morgred appears as the son of Morgan rather than of Morgause. I am not debating the quality of that well known novel but I mention this as a warning to all Arthurian scholars, historians and literary pedants that become incensed when there is a deviation from the traditional Arthurian story as presented by Malory: this is not a book for you.

Mr Lowder has become the champion of Arthurian enthusiasts ever since he took over as Executive Editor of Green Knight Publishing Company. He has not only been instrumental in the publishing of rare, long out of print, Arthurian novels but he has made available a unique work called *The Merriest Knight*, a volume edited by Mike Ashley which consolidates the Dinadan short stories written by T G Roberts. An earlier volume of original Arthurian short stories called *The Doom of Camelot* was also edited by Mr Lowder.

Quite often I have been disappointed by the unimaginative and poorly written stories that are presented in an anthology such as this, particularly after a protracted period of waiting, but not this time. Mr Lowder tells us in the introduction that each story will focus on an episode in The Matter of Britain prior to Arthur's ascension and give us a glimpse of the tragedy to come as it is foreshadowed by earlier events. For the most part these stories succeed in detailing

some heretofore obscure tale barely mentioned in the volumes of the traditional Arthurian corpus. As in any anthology a very small number of stories seem to miss the mark and leave this reader wondering why they were included. However, the few disappointments, although not without some merit, do not detract from the excellent work presented throughout the book.

Mr Lowder has chosen stories written by accomplished writers of Science Fiction and Fantasy as well as some newcomers who are getting their first opportunity to see their work in print. The episodes chosen by these contributors are, for the most part, easily identifiable to Arthurian enthusiasts. Each episode demonstrates the ingenuity, resourcefulness and imagination of these writers as they delve deeper into the lives of the characters that have become so familiar to us, thereby illuminating their histories and the motivations behind their actions.

"Keystone," a first short story publication by Shannon Appelcline is the initial offering. Here we follow Merlin in the circular dance of his life through which the Arthurian legend takes shape and endures eternally. Engaging and well written, this story was an immediate attention grabber. Noteworthy first time short story publications by Alex Kolker, Beth Anderson, Steen Jensen, Andrew H W Smith and Cory Rushton give us insights into Merlin's destiny, the reason for trying to change that which cannot be changed, the nature of the individual and the role each must play, Arthur and his symbolic role as a religious icon and, lastly, the secret behind the birth of a famous peasant knight.

Entries by established writers are numerous and, as one would expect, often spellbinding. Among these are an absorbing retelling of the tale of Vortigem and Hengist with Rowenna at the center of the maelstrom, authored by Nancy Varian Berberick, a very clever and unique alternative to Arthur's parentage by C A Gardner and a story by Cherith Baldry that captures the true spirit of this volume, the foreshadowing of the fall of Camelot, in this case reflected in events of the early lives of Arthur and Kay.

To say that I have passed over some excellent pieces of Arthurian literature contained in *Legends of the Pendragon* is an understatement. This volume containing twenty original short stories is an exciting new edition to the body of Arthurian fiction that keeps the legend fresh and alive. Unless you are caught up in the minutiae of scholarly interpretations of Malory or the search for the facts (if there really are any facts) concerning the existence of the "real" King Arthur, I suggest you run out and buy this book as soon as it is available. Sit back each night and enjoy each story as it reveals a secret from the earliest days before the crowning of Arthur, "The Once and Future King."

Larry Mendelsberg

Michael Morpurgo
The Sleeping Sword
illustrated by Michael Foreman
Egmont Books 2002
0 7497 4852 4 hb

The author's own wrapper-notes describe the story thus: "I go on holiday every year to Bryher in the Isles of Scilly, the inspiration for so many of my stories ... Two years ago I arrived on Bryher to hear that Paul Jenkins, who farms on the island, had made an extraordinary discovery. He was ploughing his potato field under Samson Hill when he suddenly felt the back wheel of his tractor sinking behind him into some kind of hole. He managed to drive himself out of it, and then sent to see what it was that he'd almost fallen into. He discovered he had opened up what looked like an ancient tomb. And there, lying at the bottom of it among the debris and dust of centuries, he saw a sword, a shield, a mirror and the remains of a fleece." Archaeologists pronounced that "this was indeed the tomb of some noble chieftain who lived about 1500 years ago – the very time of King Arthur." From these details he built up his tale, "weaving from the magical fleece of fact and fantasy my own story ... a story within a story within a story ..."

The main story is 'composed' on to tape by a Bryher boy who has been blinded in a diving accident. This story then becomes his dream in which his sight is restored by

handling the sword found by his father (just as Mr Jenkins found it). The boy is then approached by ancient Bedevere (*sic*) who says he has been sent by Merlin "to put right the unforgivable wrong I did all those years ago. The sword you hold now is Excalibur ..."

The boy – 'Bun' – and his friend Anna sail through the night on a magic galley to the island of Little Arthur (between St Mary's and St Martin's) where they restore Excalibur and the shield found with it to an aged King Arthur. When Bun awakes from his dream, he can still see, and the sword and shield – no, I'll leave the final mystery for readers to discover.

This is the first of Mr Morpurgo's 'Bryher' stories I have read, so I don't know if the rather juvenile style of writing is his usual mode, or adopted for this tale as 'written' by Bun. It's certainly an unusual plot, especially since it's based on fact (and one wonders just where Mr Jenkins' finds are now housed, and the date and provenance assigned to them), but any child interested in Arthurian matters will probably love it.

Beryl Mercer

Marilyn Bechely
Gawain the White Hawk
0 95 244248 6 pb 128pp illus
George Mann Publications 2001 £9.50
Easton, Winchester, Hants SO21 1ES
tel 01962 779944

Described as "legends retold", here are two adventures which begin at the Arthurian court in the depths of winter, those of Gawain with the Green Knight, and with the Loathly Lady.

They are perhaps best described as verse revisitations – neither close translations nor total rewritings of their originals; rather, they follow the medieval tradition of keeping the gist while selecting, changing emphases, and adding new touches and individual interpretations of meaning.

Both stories are told economically and readably, in language that is simple yet apt to its purpose of poetic storytelling – it is easy to imagine these versions gripping an audience round the fireside – if, for my taste, in the Green Knight case sometimes a little too smooth-running relative to the

hard Northern sounds so much the backbone of the inspiring source ...

The challenge that the author faces is obviously the greater with the former, its original one of the greatest of medieval poems, than in the second story, where her version draws together, seamlessly, elements of two less distinguished sources, a relatively clumsy Middle English poem and a Percy ballad cobbled together from scrappy earlier survivals.

In terms of form, she has chosen a flowing free verse; for the Green Knight, this retains the original's irregularity of stanza length, without its alliteration or "bob and wheel" links.

In terms of narrative content, her version stays generally close to the *Gawain* Poet's, while shearing away much locational and descriptive detail. She is furthest from her source in two ways. First, that she makes explicit her adherence to the theory that at the core of the story is pagan religious matter – Morgan, described only in passing as a "goddess" in the original, is here fully identified as the Celtic three-in-one hag-mother-maiden divinity bent on testing, almost to destruction, the seasonal male solar god. Secondly, she offers what might be called editorialising as to emotion. For instance, when Gawain has returned to Camelot, the *Gawain* Poet lets us see him blush as he tells his tale, and hear the court laugh, but leaves to the reader any conclusion as to the interior feelings of either, whereas Marilyn Bechely says of Guinevere "she alone perceives / what a hard birth this has been in the winter hills," (an intriguing echo of Eliot's Christ-referencing "Journey of the Magi") "what certainties / will never be certain again" and of Gawain himself "as alone as ever he was in the wilderness / among those who love him / and who have never been to the Green Chapel".

Both these developments recast our view, of Gawain and those around him, and, while stripping away some of the layers of ambiguity which, for many, add much to the original's appeal, do give the story a new clarity, even if, once or twice, at the cost of creating new inconsistency: for example, having survived the Green Chapel

encounter, Gawain "rides alone / unarmed and naked into the new year", which, if meant literally, rather than merely as rebirth symbolism, would be both unknighly and unbelievable, indeed potentially suicidal, behaviour for a warrior in a wilderness.

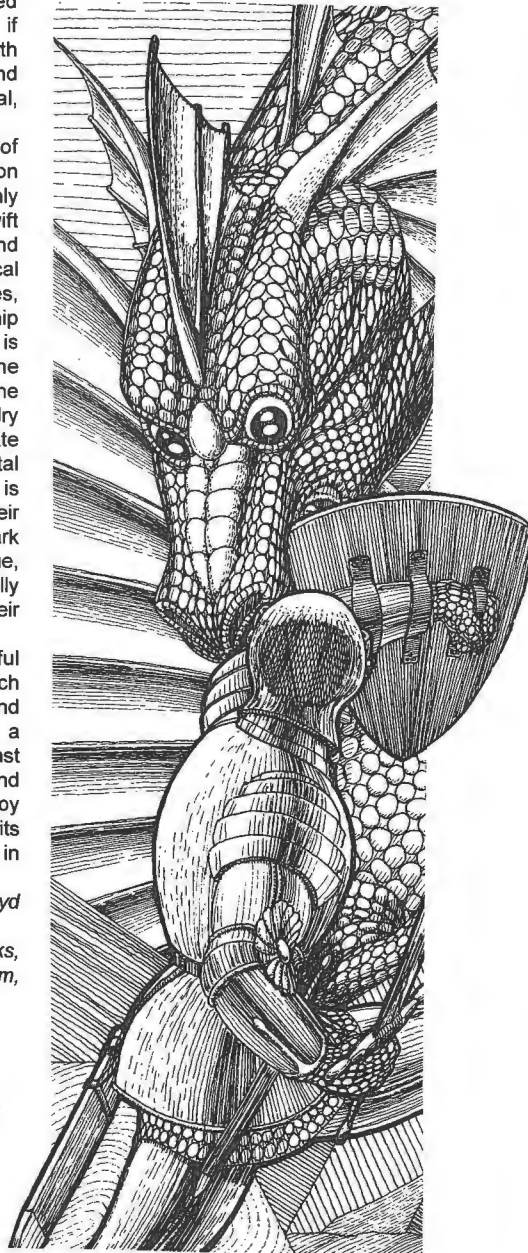
Free from such a mighty overhang of source, I imagine the "Loathly Lady" section as being more of a joy to write: it is certainly a joy to read. The storytelling is again swift and gripping, there is real wonder and mystery in her intermingling of mythical matter with the bare bones of her sources, the development of the relationship between Gawain and the apparent hag is movingly shown, particularly in the scene where they lead out the dancing after the enforced wedding, and delicately dry humour, as when Arthur, in desperate search of the answer to the potentially fatal riddle as to what women really want, is asking all and sundry and writing their answers down in a little book like a Dark Age focus group facilitator! The language, too, is often memorable, as in the powerfully timeless "an ox treads down on their tongues".

This book, illustrated in colourful medieval style by the author, and which also includes her brief but useful Notes and Bibliography, is, in sum, one which offers a double pleasure to the Arthurian enthusiast – its own merits as verse and narrative, and the somewhat anorakian but irresistible joy of comparing and contrasting with its sources, and with other treatments in modern English of them.

Steve Sneyd

♦ Many more reviews next issue – books, radio and TV programme – plus BookWorm, already suffering from indigestion.

♦ *Gawain the White Hawk* is obtainable from M Bechely, 120 Dunmow Road, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 5HN, price £9.50 plus £1.50 postage



The board

PEOPLE ...

The intriguing sub-heading was "Tintagel legend to stand for council". The story was that **Arthur Pendragon**, former Hell's Angel, soldier and gardener, was "considering standing for the new ward of Camelot" ...

Apparently the ward – the name of which was "dreamed up" by council members themselves – will cover Michaelstow, St Teath and Tintagel. It isn't clear, though, whether or not the King had thought of standing before the paper had contacted him, as spokesperson for the council Annie Moore declared that "obviously Mr Pendragon will have to meet the criteria to stand as a local councillor."

While in Cornwall, it's worth considering Warbstow Bury, the second largest Iron Age hillfort in the Duchy. Enclosed within its ramparts is the Giant's Grave, also known as **King Arthur's Grave**. Local author **Michael Williams** took a medium with him to the site to get her reactions. She was unable to establish whether the spirit of an old warrior she made contact with there had real links with Arthur, though Williams and writer **Paul Broadhurst** agreed that there was "an Arthurian aura" on the hill. "It reminds us that our quest for Arthur is really an inner journey, searching for our better self or selves."

More now on **Alexander Winslow**, the author of *Siege Perilous* (Squire Publishing 2002) mentioned in *Old News* last issue. He claims that a "British Archeological" [sic] report map "proves that the three fortresses which made up Arthur's empire were nowhere near Cornwall". The author, who says he has researched the Arthurian legend for forty years (what's the sub-text here?), claims "Arthur was the Duke of England and Cadur was the Duke of Cornwall. Arthur never went south of the Tamar." As Beryl Mercer notes, "I fear that Mr Winslow can't be much of an Arthurian

authority if he makes such a glaring error!" Journalist error might just be to blame here.

♦ Andy Greenwood "King of Britons gets ready for his regal return" *Western Morning News* (January 2 2003)

♦ Michael Williams "Searching for Arthur on a windswept hill" *Western Morning News* (February 25 2003)

♦ Nathan Pynn "New theory on Arthur legend" *Western Morning News* (August 27 2002)

♦ "Chester's home to Arthur – claim" *Sunday Independent* (accessed 01.10.02 at www.thisisthewestcountry.co.uk); see also www.squirepublishing.co.uk

... AND PLACES

The **Hadrian's Wall National Trail** opened in May, with 84 miles of walks along the Roman Empire's most northerly frontier. Running from Bowness-on-Solway in the west to Wallsend in the east, the footpath was financed by money from the Countryside Agency with the support of two Heritage Lottery Grants. It is anticipated that around 20,000 people a year will be walking the trail by 2006. A new four-star YHA hostel opens at **Birdoswald** near the Wall – but for just seven weeks every summer (see *PenDragon* letters for more on Birdoswald).

Astonishingly, Scotland is this year celebrating the creation of its first ever National Park, covering **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs**. Among other events, a Travelling Gallery exhibition in early 2003 focused on the practice of seven international artists commissioned to make the public art works sited at The Park's Gateway Centre in Balloch.

Loch Lomond is of course linked to an Arthurian story. Geoffrey of Monmouth describes how, after defeating Picts, Scots and Irish there, Arthur and Hoel of Brittany go sightseeing there (ix.6–7). The enumeration of the wonders there are based on Nennius' chapter concerning the Wonders of Britain (67): "The first wonder is Lake Leven [*stagnum Lumonou*]. In it are sixty islands ... surrounded by sixty rocks, and there is an eagle's nest on each rock, and sixty rivers flow into it, and only one river flows from it to the sea, called the Leven [*Lemn*]."

Here's an unusual comparison. Simon Hoggart has this to say of **Liverpool**, recently declared 2008 European Capital of Culture: "I suspect that the city ... exists less these days as a place and more as a state of mind, symbolising warmth, wit, artistic endeavour and cheerfulness in the face of adversity. In that respect it resembles **Camelot**, another mythic site where there isn't an awful lot to see."

♦ "On the trail of the Romans" *Triangle YHA magazine* (spring / summer 2003); "Take a walk by the wall" *Living History* (May 2003); www.hadrians-wall.org
♦ John Morris ed transl (1980) *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals* (Phillimore)
♦ Simon Hoggart's diary, *The Guardian* June 7 2003

AUDIO-VISUAL

The **Holy Grail** "has the richest associations of any artefact in British myth," suggested Melvyn Bragg for BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* for Thursday May 15 2003 – coincidentally, a traditional fixed date for Pentecost. This programme looked at its origins, its symbolism and why stories "so resolutely set in these Isles" were so often written by French speakers. Contributing to the stimulating discussion were Dr Carolyne Larrington (Tutor in Medieval English at St John's College, Oxford), Jonathan Riley-Smith (Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge) and Dr Juliette Wood (Associate Lecturer in the Department of Welsh at University College of Wales, Cardiff). Archive details are on BBCi at

www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime.shtml (accessed 16/05/2003).

The annual day conference of the Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Nottingham, held on June 21 2003, had the intriguing title *Tartan Arthur*. The theme of the conference was "The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend", and speakers included academics (such as the ubiquitous Juliette Wood) from St Andrews and Cork, Bristol and Cardiff, the whole promoted by the School of English Studies. www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/ta_conference

Showing at the Edinburgh Filmhouse in January 2003, as part of a *Frame On*

season to coincide with the National Museum of Scotland's *Game On* exhibition, was Mamoru Oshii's film *Avalon* (noted in *The Board* last issue; see *Reviews* next issue). This "astounding" future sci-fi thriller – the "exception to the rule" that success for video game movies is "notoriously hit-and-miss" – was described as "a dark but handsome view of relative realities in a game-playing world". You may yet catch it on the art-house cinema circuit.

David Bintley's two-part ballet *Arthur*, with music by John McCabe, sets by Peter J Davison and costumes by Jasper Conran, was finally presented in its entirety by Birmingham Royal Ballet at the Birmingham Hippodrome in March 2003. *The Daily Telegraph's* critic was not impressed: Part 1 was "weighed down by latter-day references" though Part 2 was "more tightly focused". Too much seems to have been crammed in to make it truly satisfying.

The Festival of the Singing Head was a storytelling event held at Meifod, Powys, over the weekend of 20th–22nd September 2002. Simon Rouse, who participated in the festival, reminds us that "the singing head reference is, of course, Bran the Blessed from the *Mabinogion*". The theme for the 2002 event was *The Inspiration of the Animals*, with stories coming from Wales and England and celebrated by location storytellings, workshops, guided walks and landscape art.

The owners of **Camelot Castle**, Tintagel issued a new music CD in February called *The Ripples of Peace*. Written and recorded by John Mappin, the songs on the album are intended to be a "peace-creating tool", with any additional donations ensuring that copies of the CD are sent to "leading humanitarians" and "opinion leaders" around the world. Each copy costs £9.99 (cheques etc "Camelot Castle") from Camelot Castle, Tintagel, Cornwall PL34 0DQ. Meanwhile, a grim political cartoon by Martin Rowson, entitled *Ex(44)calibur*, featured a firearm held aloft – in the manner of the Lady of the Lake – from below floodwaters swollen by rain, around which floated newspapers with headlines such as *Countdown to War*, *Birmingham Shootings*,

Floods Latest and *Happy New Year ...* The real world is never far away.

♦ "Frame On" *The Guardian Guide* December 28 2002
♦ Further information on future Festivals of the Singing Head might be had from Steve Gladwin on 01938 500728
♦ Zoe Anderson "It still doesn't make sense" *The Daily Telegraph* March 8 2003
♦ Mark Rowson in *The Guardian* for January 30 2003

WORMWIDE

Most Arthurian websites have links to others with similar aspirations. One which does mini-reviews of such sites using a star system is **Vortigern Studies** at

www.geocities.com/vortigernstudies/links.htm

"Roberts Arthurian Collection" itself gives 5 stars to *Arthurnet*, to *The Camelot Project* and to *A Millennial Quest for Arthur: in Search of Britain's Lost King* which describes how "in January 2000 two undergraduate students left for a month-long research trip. After travelling over 3000 miles across the Island of Britain they created this outstanding site ..."

Alternatively, you can get even more links to Arthurian sites by accessing **Links2Go** at

www.links2go.com/topic/Arthurian which also offers other features including further discussion.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Beryl Mercer draws attention to selected details in her article "Avalon, the Cornish connection" (XXIX No 4, 27–8).

Angela Broome, Librarian at The Courtney Library (Truro), Cornish History Research Centre, clarified that the library should be The Courtney Library, Royal Institution of Cornwall, and that "Truro Museum" should be The Royal Cornwall Museum (apparently a common mistake). The 1838 *Parochial History of Cornwall* is by Davies Gilbert with notes by Hals (not Halo) and Tomkin (*Halo* was a typo in the original document).

Also, "the Boscawen family is still very much with us. Boscawen is the family name of Lord Falmouth of Tregothnan ... I would

suspect they have chosen to be ex-directory, which is why they do not appear in the current telephone book."

The BBC News online archive reported (June 27 2002) the chairman of the Llangollen Tourism Association as declaring that "the **River Dee** is regarded as the most scared [*sic*] river in western Europe ..."

Scooby Dee, perhaps?

♦ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/wales/2065938.stm> (accessed 12/05/03)



FEATURED JOURNALS

Exchange journals have included many Arthurian items in recent issues. In Cheryl Straffon's "The Sword and the Mirror: priest/ess burial on Bryher?" (*Meyn Mamvro* 48 Summer 2002, 5) details were given of an Iron Age cist grave discovered in the Scillies in 1999. In addition to a 34-inch sword in a scabbard, a mirror – decorated on the handle and the rim – was found, plus a brooch, a sword belt ring, a shield, a spiral ring and a tin object (possibly a decorated bronze canister).

Though the sex of the dead person could not be established from DNA samples, there are suggestions that, despite the presence of the sword, s/he may not be a warrior but a high-status priest or priestess,

and the mirror a scrying glass. The discovery, significantly, inspired Michael Morpurgo's 2002 Arthurian story *The Sleeping Sword*, set on Bryher (see *Reviews*). *Meyn Mamvro* 49 (Autumn 2002, 12–16) includes "King Arthur's Hall: megalithic monument or mediaeval pound?" by Diana Coles (an earlier version of this article appeared in *3rd Stone* 39 and was then mentioned in *Pendragon*). The article's conclusion is that this rectangular banked enclosure on Bodmin Moor began as a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age megalithic site but was then adapted as a drift pound – "where animals found illicitly grazing ... would be held subject to the payment of a fine" – during the early medieval period. In other words, "the two proposed functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive", a very sensible suggestion on the evidence shown, though we are none the wiser as to any genuine Arthurian association (the earliest mention is from the 16th century).

Another exchange journal, *Northern Earth*, re-examines a famous piece of furniture in Dave Weldrake's "The Mystery of the Round Table" (No 91 Autumn 2002, 9–12). There is interesting discussion of Round Table place-names and, for example, possible gender divisions as to use of sites. Ultimately there are more questions than answers, but this is a thought-provoking paper. Responses in the following number came from John Michell ("Could Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronicle have been so effective in giving Arthurian names to old sites? Or did he draw from a much older tradition?") and from Martin Burroughs, who suggested possible parallels between *bwrdd* as a game board and *bwrdd* as a tournament location, both being symbolic combats (at least, to start with!).

3rd Stone – "The Magazine for the New Antiquarian" – highlights archaeology, folklore and myth, thus overlapping with *Pendragon*'s spheres of interest. For example, issue 43 (Summer 2002) compares the Celtic calendar and the Anglo-Saxon year, while No 44 mentions Arthurian topology in Aleks Pluskowski's "Mapping Neo-Medieval Forests in the Popular Western Imagination" and Juliette

Wood reviews Martin Biddle's *King Arthur's Round Table*. Past and present *Pendragon* associates Jeremy Harte, Alistair McBeath, Alby Stone and Ian Brown all make significant contributions. Sadly Neil Mortimer is due to step down as editor of *3rd Stone*; any news of developments will be followed closely.

The periodical of the English Companions, *Widowinde*, ably focuses on matters Angle, Saxon and Jute, but occasionally finds space to mention matters Arthurian. And so it is that *Mine Gefræge* – the periodical's equivalent of *The Board* – notes (in No 128, Summer 2002, mis-numbered as 127) *The Independent's* quest for 'The real King Arthur', with Neil Bowdler concluding, on April 14, "So what if it isn't true? Why spoil a good story with the facts?"

Other titbits include (1) re-enactment group Britannia presenting the Battle of Reculver ("fought between the Romans and Saxons in AD 437") and promoting "Arthur as a factual figure" despite being self-confessed "nutters with swords and axes"; (2) a King Arthur group of delphiniums, a collection of dark-blue hybrids (noted here before by Fred Stedman-Jones) in *The Guardian* for June 16; and (3) Llangollen tourism chiefs promoting claims that town landmarks are related to Arthurian legend.

All these exchange journals, and others, are worth supporting, and not just for their Arthurian content, of course. Elsewhere, "the International Journal of Dragons and Dragonlore" is how *The Dragon Chronicle* describes itself. Issue 23 (Summer 2002) has a couple of items with explicit Arthurian references – Liz Cocks' "Dragons" (republished from the Watford Folklore Society Newsletter) and Michael Lohr's poem "The Ashes of Avalon". *Pendragon* members Alastair McBeath ("Mesopotamian Dragons Revisited") and Ian Brown (cover illustration *etc*) also get a look in, and I especially enjoyed Sandra Unerman's "Dragons in Fantasy Fiction: an incomplete bestiary". A sample copy (cheques payable to "Dragonslair") can be had for £2.50 from 106 Oakridge Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 2PL.

The magazine of The Historical Association features a critical study of a noted example of "fabricated history". Laura Musselwhite's "Myth and Reality: a necessary marriage at twelfth century Glastonbury" (*The Historian* 70, summer 2001, 18–22) examines the use to which William of Malmesbury's *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* (c 1130) was put to glorify the abbey. Professor Musselwhite examines particularly the claims to St Dunstan's body and, of course, Arthur's tomb. Oddly, she seems to credit William himself, and not a likely later interpolator, with a statement that Arthur was "buried with his wife in the monks' cemetery between two pyramids".

Issue 2 of new magazine *Living History* features Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh, though more for its history of geology significance than any putative link with the king (£3.25 monthly; www.livinghistorymagazine.co.uk)

In *Dreams and Nightmares* 64 (Jan 2003, 3) comes a poem by Darrell Schweitzer entitled "Amid the Field of Corpses", about the Battle of Camlann, Arthur and Bedivere, and the immortality conferred by fame. And in *Awen* 16 (June 2002) – a desk-top-published bi-monthly dedicated to small-scale poetry and prose – comes Aeronwy Dafies' short story "Le Damosel de la Graal" about a life-changing modern-day encounter in a Breton forest. It's available in return for a SAE (27p/IRC) from D J Tyrer, 38 Pierrot Steps, 71 Kursaal Way, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2UY.

With thanks to Beryl Mercer, Simon Rouse, W M S Russell and Steve Sneyd

EXCHANGE JOURNALS

Readers, please mention *Pendragon* when enquiring from exchange journals, and enclose SAE or IRC for replies. Editors, please check details are correct.

Caerdroia Journal of mazes and labyrinths *Editors* Jeff Saward, Kimberly Lowelle, 53 Thundersley Grove, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB *Annual sub* £6.00 Ffi 01268 751915 email info@labyrinthos.net

www.labyrinthos.net

The Cauldron Paganism, folklore, earth mysteries *Sample* £2.50 *Annual subs*

£12.00 *Cheques* M A Howard, BM Cauldron, London WC1N 3XX

www.the-cauldron.fsnet.co.uk

Celtic Connections Journal of Celtic and related subjects *Editor* David Barton, 97 Rosehill Drive, Bransgore, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 8NX *4ER Sample* £1.25 *UK annual sub* £9.00 *Cheques* David Barton *E-mail* editorceltconn@aol.com

www.celtic-connections-magazine.co.uk

Ceridwen's Cauldron Magazine of the Oxford Arthurian Society *Editor* Matthew Kilburn *E-mail* arthsoc@herald.ox.ac.uk *Sample* £2.00 *Three issues* £5.50 *Cheques* Oxford Arthurian Society

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~arthsoc>

Hallowquest Caitlin and John Matthews' publishing and teaching programmes *Four issues* £8.00 / £16.00 *World Cheques* Caitlin Matthews, BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX

www.hallowquest.org.uk

Meyn Mamvro Cornish ancient stones and sacred sites *Editor* Cheryl Straffon, 51 Cam Bosavern, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX *Sample* £2.20 *Annual sub* £6.50 *E-mail* cheryl.straffon@meynmamvro.freeserve.co.uk

www.cornwt.demon.co.uk

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

www.northernearth.co.uk

The Round Table Occasional Arthurian poetry and fiction *Editors* Alan Lupack, Barbara Tapa Lupack *Enquiries* The Round Table, Box 18673, Rochester, New York NY 14618, USA (enclose IRC)

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

3rd Stone Archaeology, folklore, myth *Sample* £5.00 *Annual sub* £10.00 from PO Box 961, Devizes, Wilts SN10 2TS *Cheques* 3rd Stone

www.thirdstone.demon.co.uk

Widowinde Anglo-Saxon literature, history and culture *Editor* Karl Wittwer *Sample* £3.50 *Enquiries* BM Box 4336, London WC1N 3XX

www.kami.demon.col.uk/gesithas



DRAGONALIA



he splendid Dragon image shown above appeared as a new logo on Pendragon Round Table literature sent out this year with the kind permission of the artist, Linda Gardiner.

It is a reproduction of a beautiful wall plaque in stone-finished resin, one of a very limited issue. The mould will be destroyed once the definition is no longer acceptable to the artist.



inda works in a wide variety of media and her paintings are especially sought after by collectors across Europe. The black and white photograph does not do justice to the subtle colouring and very fine moulding of the plaque and a coloured photograph and further information about its availability, dimensions, price, etc. will be sent on application.



ragonalia : further designs are in the planning stage and a small range of Dragon artefacts will be marketed soon under this brand name. Linda is happy to discuss commissions, especially for new Dragon designs. She can be contacted through Pendragon using our Cheshire address, all communications will be forwarded to her.

