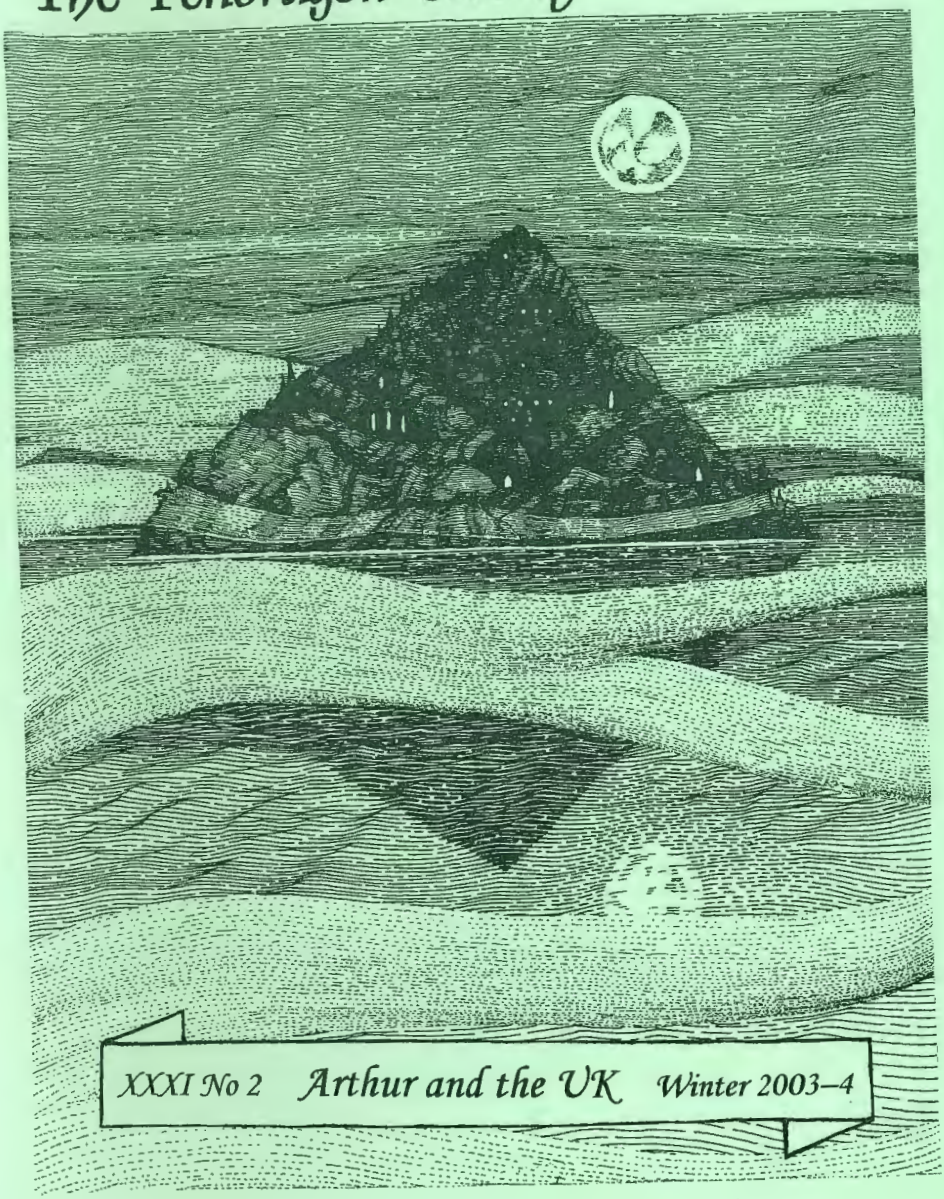
pendragon

Journal of
The Pendragon Society



XXXI No 2 Arthur and the UK Winter 2003–4

editorial

Arthur is claimed by almost all the countries of the United Kingdom (or the increasingly *Untied Kingdom* of my namesake James Lovegrove's SF novel). This issue finds him in Wales, England and Scotland in different guises, not to mention venturing further afield.

Spring will see another fiction-based issue based on material already to hand, while the summer edition now will look at the **Grail Castle**. Themes recently suggested – **Arthur beyond the UK**, the **Treasures of Britain** and **Arthurian Beasts** – could be pencilled in for the autumn onwards.

2004 marks 45 years of Pendragonry, some measure perhaps of the Society's success. Meanwhile, don't take our word for it: here follow some unsolicited comments on *Pendragon*'s current worth. "I was fascinated with my first issue – it is a joy," writes Beryl Orchard. "Another beautifully produced edition. Of all the magazines I receive or buy *Pendragon* is the only one I ever read every word of. It's a rare delight," declares Dave Burnham, while Terence F Dick writes, "*Pendragon* does provide that essential meeting place for all those [Arthurian] devotees who want to exchange many different ideas."

Finally, we regret to announce that member Beryl Mercer died on October 12th 2003, aged 79. An appreciation will appear in due course. *Chris Lovegrove*

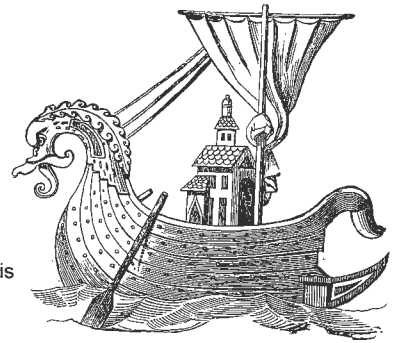
PENDRAGON

For such as he
Immortal songs are sung
By the bright company
Of the ever-young;
The truest bards
Of every land and age
Renew his saga
On the living page.
Arthurian fire
Beyond the mortal sun
Kindles our hearts
In sweet continuum.

His knights ride forth
Thro' modern hearts and minds:
Still yet today
His fight for good unwinds.

Now let it be blazoned forth
– What hope, what joy it gives! –
That in our own ignoble times
Thus, still, King Arthur lives!

Pamela Constantine



GIVEN THAT NAME FOR GOOD REASON

Camulos rustmail war god sits unseen timeweight on his
Anywhere everywhere city gives sluggish bootshove
Millennia moves downbank green worm holds hidwall
Extends across sky blankface what wonder roundfire
Legend made cloudtowered glitter gemhoard greatfeast
Out of raw gatherplace offseason warwise woundlickers
Trellised up throatcatch smoke wineboasts futures past

Steve Sneyd

pendragon

The Journal of The Pendragon Society

Established 1959 ISSN 0143 8379

Contents

Pendragon pursues Arthurian Studies: history & archaeology; legend, myth & folklore; literature, the arts & popular culture

Vol XXXI No 2 Winter 2003–4 Theme this issue **Arthur and the UK**

Illustrations Ian Brown (including cover), Chris Lovegrove

President Professor W M S Russell **Publicity** Fred Stedman-Jones, Smithy House, Kingsley Road, Newton-by-Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX
Enquiries and subscriptions Simon and Anne Rouse, 7 Verlon Close, Montgomery, Powys SY15 6SH, Wales
Four issues £10.00 UK, £13.00 Europe, £16.50 / $26.00 USA / RoW
Sample £2.00 **Cheques** *The Pendragon Society*
Members' contact details, where known, are stored in a retrieval system for Society purposes only; if you object we will remove your entry
All letters answered if accompanied by SAE or IRC
Editor Chris Lovegrove, 125 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5QG
edpendragon@yahoo.co.uk
Advertisement rates £20.00 per page and *pro rata*, minimum quarter-page
Special rates for back cover and inserts – enquire for details
These rates are for camera-ready copy at A4 scale for reduction to A5 format

Printed by Catford Print Centre, PO Box 563, Catford, London SE6 4PY
☎ 020 8695 0101 *post@catfordprint.co.uk* www.catfordprint.co.uk

Letters

PERCEVAL AND THE CUP

Steve Sneyd's survey of the discovery of the Cup at the Bride's Well in Glastonbury in 1906 ["The Cup, and all that followed" *Pendragon,* Autumn 2003] got me thinking about Wellesley Tudor Pole again. WTP, as he called himself, was one of the grand unsung characters of the twentieth century, with a hand in many spiritual, as well as practical enterprises across two thirds of the century. He only makes a fleeting appearance in Patrick Benham's enchanting book, *The Avalonians,* which concentrates on the teens and twenties. Although I suspect Steve in his second article about the Cup will comment on WTP's later life, a final comment about his attitude to Dr Goodchild's tale is worth offering.

In May 1963 WTP wrote a letter to Rosamund Lehmann (published in a collection as *My Dear Alexias* in 1969) in which he recounts the story of Dr Goodchild's purchase of the Cup in Italy, the vision in the Paris hotel and the Cup's 'burial' in 1898 in the Bride's Well. But then WTP adds a postscript to the effect that he, with a friend, Mr Frederick Leveaux...

...visited Bordighera on two occasions in the 1930s but could find no trace of the monastery ruins at Albegna (where Goodchild claimed the Cup had been originally discovered) *nor could local inhabitants throw any light on the incidents related by Dr Goodchild...The sole authority for [Dr Goodchild's] statements rests therefore on his own account of the events stated by him to have occurred.*

WTP seems not have questioned Dr Goodchild's tale before this. However in 1963 he was in the throes of putting the Chalice Well Trust on a firm footing and in his writings the importance of the Cup was looming larger, as one of the harbingers of humankind's return to Grace – or a Second Coming. Perhaps, after having the Cup in his possession for nearly sixty years, he wanted to strip away any confusion about its antiquity and remove any oddity about its origins – for Dr Goodchild's story is strange indeed.

I think Pendragon's officers should be sent to Italy forthwith to check on the mystery monastery and clear this matter up!

Dave Burnham via e-mail

New *Pendragon* thoroughly interesting, as always, and provided a distraction from self-pity, wheezings, chokings and coughings!

In your own very intriguing structural deconstruction of *Perceval* ["Perceval's Journey"], you suggest Dinas Bran as Disnadaron. Although in terms of story logic this being a separate place from Cardoeil and Carlion makes sense, the candidate I have seen several times suggested – the link being that Aaron is the patron saint of Caerleon, *via* Dinas Daron, fort of Aaron – is Caerleon itself. (Perhaps, I would tentatively suggest, rather than an *aka* for the Roman fort itself, either the hillfort above the town to the north, or one or other of the fortified sites on the ridge south-east of the town, which could have served as signal stations linking Caerleon and Caerwent).

Also, as a footnote to the very interesting Eileen Buchanan letter noting some suggested Arthurian sites, members might be interested in a very reasonably priced Llanerch Press facsimile reprint: the 1869 edition of John S Stuart Glennie's *Arthurian Localities: their Historical Origin, Chief Country, and Fingalian Relations,* which explores in great depth Glennie's view (and that of his precursor Skene) as to the principal Arthurian events being locatable in Scotland. A very intriguing, if not always convincing, book (though a magnifying glass is essential to use the map!): £9.95 from Llanerch (ISBN 1 897853 47 5).

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

Sometimes I wonder if I am reading a different version of the story of Perceval by Chrétien de Troyes. There is little doubt that the writer was writing a story about something Christian. It is possible he used some pagan elements but the story is predominantly Christian. (Certainly the procession in the grail castle is unusual because of its feminine element.)

Often seemingly ignored is the last episode Chrétien wrote about Perceval. He has been wondering for years having even forgotten that he was a good Christian knight, until he meets a group of people who point him towards a holy man. This man turns out to be his own uncle, brother of his mother and "the king who is served from the grail". He goes on to explain that it is not "pike or lamprey or salmon" that is served from the grail. "A single host that is brought to him in that grail sustains and brings comfort to that holy man - such is the holiness of the grail!" There is no indication that the grail is connected with a cup or chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper. Neither is there anything to point towards a pre-Christian cauldron or the like. It is the "Host" that is holy and thus makes the grail holy. Having had this explained to him, Perceval rejoins his Christian faith. "On Easter Sunday Perceval very worthily received communion."

Personally I believe that Chrétien made use of a particularly popular genre of that time – the Matter of Britain – to tell his stories. The grail probably had nothing to do with Arthur or Britain – mythologically or historically!

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

◆ *"Perceval's Journey" deliberately ignored the hermit episode, which is placed in the later Gawain section of Le Conte du Graal, as it is very different in tone from the Perceval section. Due to its religious and moralistic focus it seems to run counter to the fairytale feel prevalent in the earlier episodes and is, I suspect, a later gloss (though whether by Chrétien or another writer I wouldn't hazard to guess).*

I was interested to see the reference in Fred Stedman-Jones' article to Prince Madoc's medieval Welsh kingdom in America ["The Arthurian Empire" 29ff].

There is a delightfully spurious piece of 'evidence' occasionally used to support this: that the word 'penguin' is obviously a Welsh word. *Pen* means head, *gwyn* = white; thus 'white head'. Has anyone noticed that all known penguin species have black heads? More please!

Also, I'm intrigued by Eileen Buchanan's idea that 'Dumbarton' translates in Norman French as 'Astollat' – would you be able to ask her to expand?

Geoff Sawers, via e-mail

CAERLEON, CAMELOT, *CHRONICLERS*

I was hoping to compile something from mental notes about the very successful Round Table at Caerleon in June. Having not reached that point I should at least give my thanks to you and ... all other supporters of that interesting and varied round of events. Beside ideal weather conditions the days made the best for me of any Pendragon occasion ...

Reg Baggs, Windsor, Berks

Many thanks to both Beryl Mercer (Chroniclers edition 12) and Charles Evans-Günther (Camelot edition 5) for their responses to my highly speculative thoughts on possible origins of Lancelot's name. That it has inspired responses, and rather opposite responses, is delightful, as I did simply offer the idea as food for thought.

Just to clarify ... (Lancelot, here, possibly stemming from something like *Llant y llwch*, indicating a person from a holy place upon a lake), Charles Evans-Günther rightly points out that *llwch* is Welsh for dust... I've just checked in a translation of *The Mabinogion*, though, and *Llwch* is given there as a Celtic word for "lake"[1] ... Languages change over time, and I am far from being an expert, so any deeper discussions on such an idea would really be for others to take up; if they ever felt it worth the effort.

As to the discussion of a bearded or clean-shaven Merlin (Chroniclers 5), I feel it's pretty much a matter of personal preference and imagination. In most tales mentioning Merlin, he can appear in various guises (if indeed it is always the same Merlin), and is thus not always recognised

[1] Jeffrey Gantz *transl* (1976) *The Mabinogion* (Penguin Classics): "How Culhwch Won Olwen" footnote 117 on page 173. Following the phrase, "Twrch went to Llwch Ewin..." the footnote translates Llwch directly as lake.

straight away. For example, in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, when Uther is sick for the want of Igraine, Sir Ulfius goes seeking Merlin and does not at first realise when he has met him:

So Ulfius departed, and by adventure he met Merlin in a beggar's array, and there Merlin asked Ulfius whom he sought. And he said he had little ado to tell him.
'Well,' said Merlin. 'I know whom thou seekest, for thou seekest Merlin; therfore seek no farther, for I am he...[2]

And, of course, Merlin is also, naturally, different ages in different tales (such as when, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*, Merlin first appears as a young boy).[3]

So, it all really seems to depend on the culture and age in which Merlin is depicted, and one own's personal expectations of what a wise man might look like ... A Merlin by any other appearance would be just as wise.

Ian Brown, Middlesborough

Fred's article on Shropshire [*XXX* No 4, 26ff] brought back memories of hiking around the Shropshire countryside. When I wrote that article for *Dragon*, I actually visited the sites on foot, though getting to the area by bus or train. At that time there was no Hawkstone Park and I was shocked how part of BuryWalls had been cut away and was being used as a motor-cross site.

I did write later that further research showed the poetry thought to have the statement that people mentioned were "Arthur's whelps" is now considered to be inaccurate. The only existing copy of it is from the 16th century, the name Arthur is garbled and probably not a name at all! As for Bury Walls, I still think this could be the site of Cynddylan's Hall.

I can't comment on [Geoffrey Ashe's] rewrite of his *Mythology of the British Isles* as I haven't seen it, but many of Professor Russell's comments seemed very good to me and I agree with him concerning [Alfred] Watkins. However, the dismissal of "mysterious energies" I find too hasty. I live in a country where *fusui* (Chinese: *feng shui*) is still considered important and many big companies consult *fusui* experts before building factories or any buildings. Of special importance is the *kimon* – devil's gate – and how that area should be used.

It is believed that the Earth, like humans, is covered with lines of energy, translated as dragon veins. Numerous shrines and temples are built over particular veins and in specific landscapes related to the flow of this energy – *ki* (Chinese: *qi*). There is a lot more to *feng shui* than appears in many Western books and it is not dissimilar to acupuncture.

I don't agree with a lot of what is spoken about ley lines but I doubt that these dragon veins are only found in the East. I am also sure that these can actually explain certain experiences that people have – including visions, gods, spirits and other supernatural happenings. I have had several strange experiences here in Japan, and I am far from being a New Ager, though nearer becoming on old age pensioner! It's a small point in an excellent article though!

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

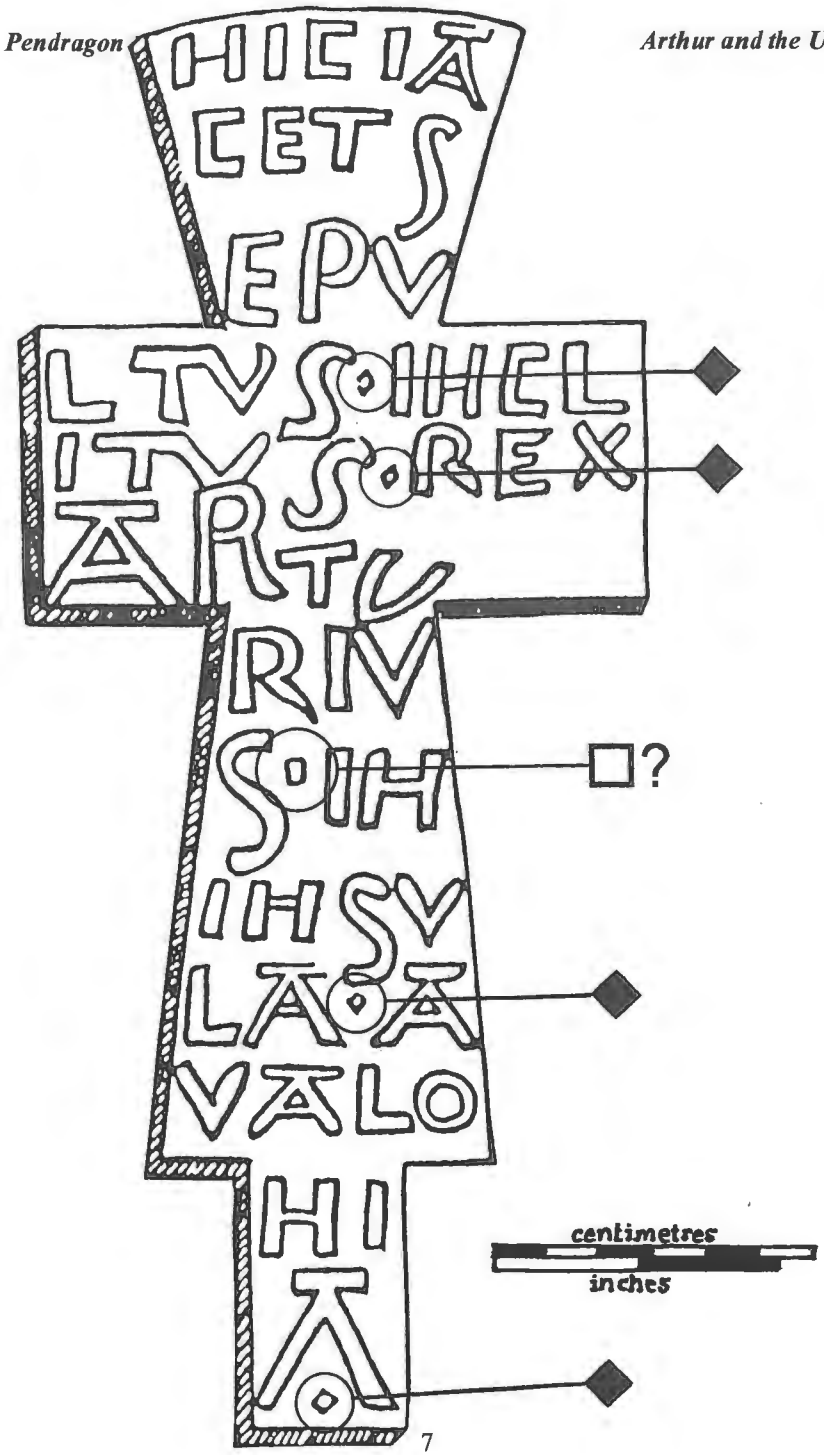
Thank you so much for sending me a copy of *Pendragon* ... It looks very attractive and interesting.

Thank you for the review of *Gawain the White Hawk* to which I have already had a response. Steve's review was thoughtful and positive and I appreciate the consideration he gave to it. One comment made me laugh – his suggestion that Gawain riding "alone and naked into the New Year" could have been meant literally – which, as he said, would have been ridiculous! I thought it was evident that this was the knight's emotional not his physical condition!

Marilyn M Bechely, Bishop's Stortford, Herts

[2] Sir Thomas Malory (1969) *Le Morte d'Arthur* (Penguin Classics) Vol 1, Book 1, Chapter 1

[3] Geoffrey of Monmouth (1966) *The History of the King of Britain* (Penguin Classics) The Discovery of the Boy Merlin: page 167



INTRIGUING: SOME SPECIAL SECRET

I enjoyed reading the "Chroniclers" issue – part of it read in a suitably atmospheric setting, on a break while walking through heather covered hills above Holmfirth, and sitting at a point that overlooks an enigmatic small earthwork which has the scholars wrangling whether it is Iron Age, a small Norman ringwork, or later medieval cattle pound – a suitable parallel to *Pendragon*'s endlessly fascinating attempts to pin down what always manages to continue to elude the grasp!

The only comments I feel able to make, and then very tentatively, are relative to the intriguing piece suggesting concealed messages borne by the Arthur cross ("Some special secret").

Firstly, I would have welcomed an explanation as to why Christians should need secret signs *after* Constantine made the religion the official one of the empire: surely the fish symbol, the *chi-rho*, the Sator Arepo Tenet Opera Rotas square and so on were needed and used as a private means of recognition of coreligionists during the long persecutions, a need which ended (except possibly briefly during the subsequent reign of Julian the Apostate) with Constantine's decision. This isn't to deny Terence Dick's identification of the symbol, simply to question the need for secrecy during the Arthurian period, if that is what he's implying – admittedly, various saints' lives portray Arthur as unhelpful or striking hard bargains, but I've not seen any suggestion that he was an active persecutor of the Christian faith *per se*.

[Secondly], an additional fairly overt bit of "Christian code" sprang to my eye in the text on the cross, while reading the piece (although seeing it doesn't mean it was intentional on the scriber's part, of course!): *IH* with *S* immediately below in a way that looks like deliberate positioning to form an inverted triangle (lines 2 and 3 below the cross-arms), since *IHS* is the standard abbreviation for *Iesus Hominum Salvator* ("Jesus Saviour of Men"). I am sure someone more knowledgeable could find other combinations on the cross as drawn by Camden open to such interpretation as abbreviations for Christian doctrinal statements (again with *caveat* as above *re* intentionality).

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

• IHS was originally the first three letters of Jesus' name in Greek, only later interpreted as the initial letters of a Latin phrase.

Terence F Dick's article on the Glastonbury Cross is certainly intriguing ... More justification for the choice of which letters and points are chosen would add weight to the hypothesis (there are plenty of *As* on the cross, for example) and for which letters and points are rejected (again, not all points of the cross are included in describing the relevant patterns. These choices and rejections may be valid: it simply seems to need more research to strengthen the case.

Of course, simply digging where *X* kind of marks the spot, or perhaps trying some geophysics surveys, might do the trick. As it stands, it's an interesting idea, and it would be more interesting to see further research to perhaps validate the suggestion.

Ian Brown, Middlesborough

I was intrigued by Terence F Dick's idea concerning the Glastonbury Cross but after reading it came down out of the clouds somewhat. Most churches are based on the cross shape with Glastonbury Abbey being no exception but it doesn't look all that like the Cross. The article seems to be speculation rather than facts.

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

[W]hoever it was who designed [the Glastonbury Cross], I believe, has left us much to ponder. While the historical arguments continue I found that very little study had been directed to the drawing itself (the actual cross, as you know, sadly went missing in 1700). Yes, I do have an interest in archaeology and history, but because of my daily associations with detailed drawings I was completely stunned when I saw William Camden's drawing for the first time.

Who was this man Camden? When I researched his background I became more than satisfied about his recorded pedigree. Because of his painstaking accuracy I was prepared to accept his reproduction as

reasonable safe, but because the drawing is a copy, some of the angles would be bound to have a slight variance. My colleagues in the drawing office did reassure me that the deviations were well within the accepted limits.

I have highlighted the small square feature that played an important role in supporting a triangle base line. This small marker is typical of the kind of syntax used during the middle ages and designed mainly as a word spacer, but what is odd about this particular spacer is that it is the only one that is depicted as 'square' on the cross, while all the other four spacers are 'diamond' shaped. It would seem to suggest just how important its separate identity was in supporting a geometric line ...

Terence F Dick, Worthing, West Sussex

CELTIC SURVIVAL

I'm afraid that my Great Goddess flying round the pole each night ("Bulls, Bears and Dragons" *XXX* No 4, 9) has dwindled in men's minds to Mother Hibblemere of Nettlebed and the "old woman tossed up in a basket fifty times as high as the moon. Where are you going, old mother? I cry. To sweep the cobwebs off the sky" – or whatever the old nursery rhyme says. Rather a comedown from a chariot drawn by dragons! But she is still remembered; and a goddess of fertility and growth would be a change from the God of the Abrahamic faiths that are causing wars all round the world!

By the standards of a 21st century historian and astronomer Mr McBeath's comments ("A Bed of Nettles") are true, but in antiquity, as during World War 2 in Europe, there was no light pollution of the night sky. On a cloudless night very faint stars were clear, especially if they moved. Also, in an agricultural community long-sightedness is prevalent. Old British star gazers had Dene Holes (Merlin's tower of air!) from which they could make careful observation of the stars – even in daylight when the hole was deep.

Most major meteor showers (even if faint today) are marked by a pagan festival (or its Christian successor) on the British Cog Almanac ... Mr McBeath is probably correct that establishment scientists didn't time and plot the radiants of meteor showers before early in the 19th century, but I think that shepherds and countrymen did, as there was no way they could have acquired such book learning and passed it on as common knowledge to people born in the mid-19th century.

I read with delight the quotes from *British Archaeology* that some archaeologists are at last suggesting there was large-scale continuity of population from Roman Britain to Romanesque and Medieval Britain. I have been treated as an illiterate peasant by historians and place-names experts for fifty years for maintaining this same postulation on the basis of the fact that the three leading families of the Buckinghamshire Chiltern Hundreds, the Hamptens, the Penns and Bulstrodes all claimed *British* ancestry, and that the farm workers on the South Bucks farms spoke the Lowland British language (akin to Breton, Welsh and Cornish) in my grandfather's youth *ie c* 1860. They called it "the old-fashioned way of speaking". (See my *Kecks, Keddles and Kesh*, published by Capall Bann.) I was put on the trail of Lowland British from the few words that my family normally used and from the complimentary nickname my great great grandfather was given by his men ...

Having served with a victorious British Army across Europe, in the Middle East and Greece, I just cannot believe the Venerable Bede's ethnic cleansing story. Victorious armies don't act that way. They enjoy the fruits of conquest and fraternise!

I am sure that my British ancestors were brought up as I was – not to talk to strangers; to mind my own business; and never to commit anything to writing, unless it was essential. So the only written evidence is in field and place-names. I have been horrified to find that the English Place Names Society are only interested in the *pronunciation* of anciently recorded names by Anglo-Saxons, and are not interested in how it describes the site or the possibility that it is in a similar language to place names in Wales and Cornwall.

Michael Bayley, Maidenhead, Berks

Arthur and the UK

Dave Burnham

During the last decade the appearance of studies purporting to 'find' Arthur in different parts of the UK have dominated Arthurian publication in Britain. Kelso, the Ochill Hills, Flintshire, Shropshire and Glamorgan have all had honourable mentions in this parochial phenomenon[1]. Some of these books read simply as 'quests', others include swipes at orthodox 'academic' opinion and some are explicit about an anti-English agenda. None of these parochial studies find Arthur in England proper and as a whole they reflect the renewed confidence amongst Welsh and the Scots in relation to their English cousins. Reclaiming Arthur for his Celtic homeland is one of the many rites of passage severing the bonds of cultural union, dissociating Wales and Scotland from an imposed 'Englishness'.

This use of Arthur as a nationalistic figurehead is not new. In fact it has been a notable feature of Arthurian literature from the beginning. Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote in a Norman political landscape, but nevertheless had a strong agenda for Cornwall and Brittany[2]. He had no interest, on the other hand, in Scotland, which he often used as a sort of waiting room for the Saxons, who he made to either 'lurk' there after a defeat or 'lurk' there in preparation for further attacks. Subsequent French romancers, being interested in chivalry and then the Grail Quest, having a thin grasp of British geography anyway and little interest in insular politics, contented themselves with magical landscapes[3]. Later British writers, both tale spinners and chroniclers, set Arthur in recognisable places once more, often in their own areas[4].

The major benchmark from the end of the mediaeval period into the twentieth century is of course Malory[5]. There is no ambiguity with him. The second line of *Le Morte D'Arthur* announces unequivocally that Uther Pendragon was King of England. When Arthur came to the throne his first battles were with the Scots and Welsh and King Rience of Gwynnedd was his first archenemy. Malory's concern for geography, however, is limited and the landscapes of *Le Morte D'Arthur* have that magical mediaeval feel. But he is concemed enough to ensure that as Arthur is King of England he does not have Saxons as external enemies. While most battling is between individuals or with other British kings Arthur's external enemies and sea raiders are often 'Saracens'. Although this was anachronistic in fifteenth century England, the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans 1453 stunned all Christian Europe and the regular Barbary slave raids on the shore of Britain and Ireland, so common on the sixteenth and seventeenth century, may well have started by then, so perhaps a contemporary note was struck.

In Malory's English fourteenth century worldview the relations between the three nations of Britain were simple. The Welsh had been quieted by the defeat of Glyndwr's rebellion in the early years of the century and merely needed oppressing. The Scots, although relatively quiescent during the

[1] See, in order, A Moffatt (1999) *Arthur and the Lost Kingdoms* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson); D F Carroll (1996) *Arturius – A Quest for Camelot* (self published); S Blake and S Lloyd (2000) *The Keys to Avalon* (Element); S Blake and S Lloyd (2002) *Pendragon: The Origins of Arthur* (Rider); G Phillips and M Keatman (1992) *King Arthur – the True Story* (Century); A Gilbert, A Wilson & B Blackett (1999) *The Holy Kingdom* (Corgi)

[2] Geoffrey of Monmouth (Lewis Thorpe's translation 1966) *The History of the Kings of Britain* (Penguin)

[3] See for instance Chrétien de Troyes (William Kibler's translation 1991) *Arthurian Romances* (Penguin)

[4] The unknown author of *Gawain and the Green Knight* for instance sets the later action of the poem on the Wirral. Brian Stone's translation of *Gawain* is available in Penguin (1959).

[5] Sir Thomas Malory (2000) *Le Morte D'Arthur* (Cassell)

fifteenth century, were a danger and the northern marches had to be defended. But from the sixteenth century the relations between the three nations of Britain became more complex. Wales was 'incorporated' into England in 1536. James I took both the crown of England as well as Scotland in 1603. Then the Act of Union of 1707 established a recognisable United Kingdom. Thus during a relatively brief period of 171 years the three nations of the Britain became suspicious in-laws rather than quarrelsome neighbours.

When interest in Arthur revived in the nineteenth century writers made careful decisions about where Arthur's allegiance would lay. The political geography of Victorian Britain was unerringly English and from mid century the mania for all things Anglo-Saxons gathered pace. Just before the final of Tennyson's *Idylls* were published the hugely influential historian Bishop Stubbs wrote:

From the Briton and the Roman of the fifth century we receive nothing. Our whole ...history testifies unmistakeably to our inheritance of Teutonic institutions from the first immigrants. The Teutonic element is the paternal element in our system, natural and political [6].

Tennyson wanted to please his English audience with the tragic tale of his hero without offending Anglo-Saxon sensibilities[7]. He made things more difficult for himself because, although he used Malory as his template for the action, he was greatly exercised by a need to be historically accurate and true to the original sources. The result is a sleight of hand about where Arthur rules and who his enemies are. Thus in the eleven poems Tennyson identifies Arthur as king of the Britons only twice. Hengist is named as the leader of Arthur's national enemies, although not often. The people Hengist leads are referred to occasionally, but only obliquely. They are 'Heathen, the brood by Hengist left', 'Heathen of the North Sea', 'Lords of the White Horse', 'Raven, flying high'. He often excoriates them as barbarians but on not one occasion does the word Saxon (or Angle) appear. Considering he was writing a human tragedy rather than a political treatise, that he went to so much trouble to avoid identifying Arthur's enemies as the English themselves confirms his sensitivity to the issue.

The early twentieth century saw little development in the idea of Arthur until the shadow of the Second World War. And it was the war that led to serious complications. T H White, in his quirky way, rewrote Malory in *The Sword in the Stone* (1938), so he too has Arthur as King of England[8]. Arthur succeeds Uther (1066–1215!) and reigns himself, it seems, into a fifteenth century world. White has fun with Arthur's enemies but essentially stays true to Malory's Anglocentric view of Arthur's world. R G Collingwood's vision in *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (1936) was straightforward and more influential in the longer term[9]. Collingwood was primarily responsible for the long-lived mid century notion that Arthur was a historical figure, a cavalry general. Collingwood makes Arthur pan-British, fighting Saxons and Angles across the length of the land. It is Collingwood's vision which, I believe, set the scene for popular interest in a Dark Age Arthur later in the century, replacing the previous fascination with the high mediaeval figure of Malory, Tennyson and White.

Charles Williams and C S Lewis shared a more subtle view of the geography of Arthur which although literary reflected the cultural needs of the war years and foreshadowed a subtle use of Arthur as 'English' that was to last until the end of the seventies. Williams' *Taliessin Through Logres* (1938) and *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944) are difficult poems, unread today[10]. Both have Arthur as king of these islands, part of a Europe wide Byzantine Empire. As a devout Christian Williams saw the perfect condition

[6] W Stubbs (1870) *Select Charters of English Constitutional History* (OUP)

[7] Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1983) *Idylls of the King* (Penguin)

[8] T H White (1991) *The Once and Future King* (Collins)

[9] R G Collingwood & J N L R Myres (1936) *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (OUP)

[10] Charles Williams (1982) *The Arthurian Poems of Charles Williams: Taliessin Through Logres. The Region of the Summer Stars* (D S Brewer)

of these islands as Logres – a post revelation Eden. The narrative has Logres fall apart because of the conflict between good and evil in and around Arthur's court. As a result Logres becomes, in his words, 'mere Britain'. C S Lewis was a close confidant of Williams and a great admirer of *Taliessin Through Logres*. In the novel *That Hideous Strength* (1945) Lewis takes Williams' ideas further, making use of different meanings for 'Britain' and 'England', both of which are geographically coterminous with mainland Britain[11].

The focus of *That Hideous Strength* is an attempt by the forces of both good and evil to raise Merlin from the sleep of ages so they can make use of his magic. Merlin will only offer his powers to those he sees as having legitimate authority over the land. Lewis suggests that this authority rests with the 'Pendragon', the whole island having been cared for by a continuous line of powerful but secret Pendragons since Arthur's time. Each Pendragon's task is to look after the spiritual health of the country, which is both England and Britain. Lewis sees England as the creative, loyal, gentle side of the land and people. He uses the word Britain to describe the more pragmatic, efficient, cold side of the nation.

'For every Milton [English] there is a Cromwell [British] after every Arthur [English] a Mordred [British]'.

This confusion of the words England and Britain is often still heard, thankfully less often from Britons themselves, but the deliberate conflation of the ideas of England and Britain strikes an awkward note at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Not so during the war years when frantic propaganda efforts were made to convince people from every part of the country that the nation was as one. This was not difficult as the privations and threats to life and limb were shared both geographically and across class divides. As a result the support for nascent Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties fell away sharply from 1939. It mattered little that the ideas of Britain and England were confused at this time, but after the war the thoughtless incorporation of the nations of Britain into a sort of Greater England began to matter a lot. Post-war British governments were slow to wake up to the fact that an increasing number of people in Wales and Scotland had aspirations that were different from and even alien to those of the English. But during the fifties and sixties determined efforts were made to continue the cosy incorporative idea of an English Britain.

Churchill was one so determined and he included Arthur in his determination. Castigating timid historians for not being able to find evidence of Arthur's existence until recently, he demanded in Volume 1 of his *History of the English Speaking Peoples* that historians must 'proclaim' Arthur's reality[12]. He continued:

Let us declare that King Arthur ... slaughtered innumerable hosts of foul barbarians and set decent folk an example for all time.

There seems to be no irony in this; no recognition that the 'foul barbarians' being slaughtered by Arthur were ancestors of the very English Speaking Peoples Churchill was celebrating. This attempt to assimilate Arthur as an active predecessor of English civilisation we may see as gross bombast, but Churchill was by no means alone. Geoffrey Ashe had a go too. He was much more subtle but nevertheless attempted to claim that Arthur handed the baton of civilisation on to the English. This is from *King Arthur's Avalon* (1957):

[Arthur] left a durable achievement which no Celtic degeneracy could efface ... he had given his own people a legend to keep their culture alive. Thanks to him by the time the wars drew to an end Pope Gregory's mission had done its work and civilisation had begun to return to the Eastern Counties. Night never extended from sea to sea. England was England and not a wild heathen Anglo-Saxondom: and she was ready to draw on the legacy of Arthurian Britain and make it splendidly her own.[13]

There is similar comment in Ashe's more detailed work on Arthur *From Caesar to Arthur* (1960)[14]. Rosemary Sutcliff in her excellent novel *Sword at Sunset* (1963) followed suit and constructed a scene where a British child and a Saxon child make friends during a peace conference[15]. Arthur, in one of the few clumsy sections in the book, explains that all he can do is hold off the Saxons for a few more years hoping that by the time of the final victory they will be civilised enough to make a decent society. Beram Saklatvala in his amateur investigation *Arthur: Britain's Last Champion* (1967) followed this line comprehensively[16].

This incorporative 'English' Arthur reached its apogee with the excavations at South Cadbury between 1966 and 1970 where Arthur, by implication, was overwhelmingly associated in the public mind with South West England. Alcock's *Arthur's Britain* (1971) and John Morris's *The Age of Arthur* (1973) were the final and grandest expositions of a Dark Age Arthur who was real, pan British and whose legacy somehow survived, giving the English of later generations what we all desire, unbroken continuity with a heroic past[17].

The initially guarded and then angry Welsh response to Alcock and John Morris has been followed up by detailed scholarship which makes it impossible in orthodox academic circles to claim Arthur as anything now but the vaguest historical figure. But paradoxically the ruin of this pan British orthodoxy in the late 1970s and early 1980s left the field open for less academically respectable theories. Since then the 'parochials' have gone to town[18]. Geoffrey Ashe was first in the early 1980s with his Riothamus, who if not geographically contained was a figure from an earlier generation than Arthur's traditional time. Then in 1986 Norma Lorre Goodrich found a northern Arthur disporting around Hadrian's Wall and Blackett and Wilson made their claims about Arthur in Glamorgan[19].

The number of parochial Arthurs found over the last ten years has been truly staggering. But I cannot see the thirst for them (or the supply) drying up quite yet. The cultural and political differentiation between England, Scotland and Wales clearly has a long way to go and the amount and geographical diversity of evidence for Arthur (however late) allows for many more theories to emerge. But although these parochial Arthurs are fun, there is something 'hole in the corner' about them. These Arthurs are pokey figures in a restricted landscape. They please the authors and the denizens of the lucky corner of Britain chosen, but are unsatisfying to the rest of us. We need grander heroes to celebrate like Siegfried, Charlemagne or the Cid, or indeed Collingwood's mobile cavalry general.

The Arthurs of the future may have a more pan British feel once again. The fashion for suggesting that Saxon and Anglian culture and language spread across lowland Britain by a process of assimilation rather than conquest allows surely for a revival of the Arthur as civiliser of the English. And once the English (like the Irish and many Scots and Welsh) embrace European integration more wholeheartedly will we then see Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthur revived, a grand master of half the continent as well as a king of all these islands? Or a development of Malory's hero where the external enemies are Saracens ... but perhaps we should leave that one alone.

[11] *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-tale for Grownups* (1945) was the final book of Lewis's science fiction trilogy. The other two were *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *Perelandra* (1943) – which in some versions is called *Voyage to Venus*. All were originally published by John Lane, the Bodley Head

[12] W S Churchill (1983) *A History of the English Speaking Peoples* (Fromm International)

[13] G Ashe (1957) *King Arthur's Avalon* (Collins)

[14] G Ashe (1960) *From Caesar to Arthur* (Collins)

[15] R Sutcliff (1976) *Sword at Sunset* (Hodder and Stoughton)

[16] B Saklatvala (1967) *Arthur: Britain's Last Champion* (David & Charles)

[17] See Leslie Alcock (1971) *Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology 367–634* (Penguin), and John Morris (1973) *The Age of Arthur* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson)

[18] There are several articles, but the most important undoubtedly was David Dumville's 'Sub Roman Britain: History and Legend' *History* 62 (1977) 173 – 192

[19] See in order G Ashe (1985) *The Discovery of King Arthur* (Guild Publishing), Norma Lorre Goodrich (1986) *King Arthur* (Watts), Baram Blackett & Alan Wilson (1986) *Artorius Rex Discovered* (King Arthur Research)

The *Real* King Arthur

Charles Evans-Günther

Robert of Gloucester lies buried in St James' Priory in Bristol, which he founded
Above *Rose window,* circa *1160*
Below *Romanesque west front*

Introduction

I have always thought that the King Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* (1136) owed more to the author's own time than to the Dark Ages. The following will explore a possible theory that King Arthur is based on a real person who lived during the time when Geoffrey was composing his great work. Despite a critical review of Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd's *The Keys to Avalon*, I owe this piece to them.[1] The idea came while rereading their publication and I am surprised I hadn't noticed it before.

The Dedication

I ask you, Robert, Earl of Gloucester, to do my little book this favour. Let it be so emended by your knowledge and your advice that it must no longer be considered as the product of Geoffrey of Monmouth's small talent. Rather, with the support of your wit and wisdom, let it be accepted as the work of one descended from Henry, the famous King of the English; of one whom learning has nurtured in liberal arts and whom his innate talent in military affairs has put in charge of our soldiers, with the result that now, in our own lifetime, our island of Britain hails you with heartfelt affection, as if it had been granted a second Henry.[2]

It is possible that the original dedication of *The History of the Kings of Britain* was solely to Robert: at least seven manuscripts include his name, according to Lewis Thrope's introduction to his translation. Other names are found in some dedications, including Waleran, Count of Mellent, and King Stephen in one manuscript. Also, since Geoffrey uses the title "of Monmouth", he probably hailed from that part of Wales, an area that Robert, Earl of Gloucester, held sway over, being the most powerful of the Marcher Lords. Of course, Robert was more than this – he was the recognised natural son of King Henry the First and patron not only to Geoffrey but also Caradoc of Llancarfan, William of Malmesbury and

[1] Blake and Lloyd (2000): see sources
[2] *The History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, translated by Lewis Thorpe.

other un-named scholars. Southeast Wales, at this time, was very much under the rule of the Normans and their allies: Gwent was divided between Brian fitz Count (son of Alan of Brittany) and Walter fitz Richard, (from the powerful Norman Clare family), Monmouth was lorded over by another Breton – William fitz Baderon, while Glamorgan and Gwynllwg was under Robert of Gloucester himself.

Robert of Gloucester

Robert Consul, Earl of Gloucester, was born at Caen in around 1090, son of Prince Henry, son of William the Conqueror, and an unknown woman of that town. It has been suggested that his mother was Sybil Corbet and the *Brut Y Tywysogion* stated he was the great Nest's child. Both are now considered unlikely and certainly Gerald of Wales, who was descended from Gerald of Windsor and Nest, daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr (not Iestyn ap Gwrgan, as in *The Holy Kingdom*[3]), would have made some mention of a relationship with such a prominent figure. Gerald was the son of William de Barri and Angharad, daughter of Gerald and Nest.

When Henry became king in 1100 Robert joined his court and grew to be an integral part of it. Robert inherited his father's love of books but also became a great warrior, proving himself at the battle Bremule in 1119. In 1107 Henry had married Robert to Mabel, heiress of the Lordship of Glamorgan, daughter of Robert Fitzhamon and Sybil of Montgomery. (Neither Robert's mother or wife were of Welsh parentage, though Mabel may have been born and grew up in the area.) Following the death of King Henry's only son William Audelin in 1120, Robert became the most important of the king's numerous illegitimate sons. Then in 1121 he was made Earl of Gloucester, the only earldom created by Henry in the thirty-five years of his reign – an indication of his love for his bastard son.

Henry also showed considerable favour to other members of his family – the sons of his sister and Stephen de Blois in particular. Stephen the Younger was brought up at King Henry's court and Henry de Blois, eventually, became Bishop of Winchester. Stephen, ten years younger than Robert, nevertheless grew up to be a strong and dangerous rival. However, they were poles apart. Robert was the epitome of a knight and continued throughout his life to follow the rules of chivalry. Whatever people were to say about his character, not even those he hated him could deny he was a loyal and just lord. The land he ruled became a haven, where the people were well fed, well-treated and most of all shown justice in a time when crime was rife and the ruling classes had the power of life and death over their subjects.

King Henry's relationship with the lords of Wales was not always friendly but was less belligerent that kings of England yet to come. He put three men in charge of dealing with Wales, Pain Fitz John, sheriff of Shropshire and Herefordshire, Miles, sheriff of Gloucester, and Robert, who dominated South Wales and the West Country from his castle in Bristol. It would seem that both friend and enemy respected Robert and when fighting men were needed, during the coming civil war, the Welsh were at his side and made fearsome troops!

Of the 21 children Henry sired, only two – William and Matilda – were legitimate, and his male heir had drowned leaving only a daughter to succeed. Matilda had married Henry V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and had lived in Germany from 1110 (then aged only eight and married when she was twelve) until the Emperor's death in 1125. Three years later she was married to Geoffrey, count of Anjou, one of the most powerful men in France – a pain in the sides of both Henry and his rival King Louis VI of France. Henry entrusted Matilda to her older half brother Robert and Brian Fitz Count to escort her to a partnership that was to give raise to one of the most important dynasties in English history.

Civil war

Then in 1135 all hell was let loose. Without a male heir, Henry had appointed Matilda to succeed him and had got his lords and barons to swear allegiance to her. However,

[3] Adrian Gilbert *et al* (1998)

the marriage to Geoffrey had alienated many of the powerful men in England and few supported her succession.

While on a hunting trip in Normandy, Henry had eaten lamprey, a delicacy he loved, but had been against his doctor's orders. He fell ill and took to his bed. After a week, on 1st December 1135, Henry died. At his bedside were his loyal followers – Rotrou of Perche, widower of one of Henry's bastard daughters; William de Warenne, husband of another of Henry's daughters; Robert of Leicester and Waleran of Meulan, twin brothers of Henry's youngest mistress Isabel and half brothers of William de Warenne; and, of course, the ever faithful, Robert, Earl of Gloucester.

Neither Matilda nor Stephen of Blois were there when the king breathed his last. But Stephen moved quickly, crossed the Channel and got the people of London to proclaim him king of England. There then followed nearly twenty years of civil war.

Robert, who, in many ways, had a better claim to the throne than Stephen, took no action. At first he sided with Stephen but following an attempt on his life, orchestrated by the king himself, he broke away and supported Matilda in her futile crusade to gain the throne of England. Robert landed in England in 1137 and soon most of the west of the country was at his command. Advantages were taken by a number of Welsh lords but both Randulf of Chester and Robert were given support from Wales. The tide of war moved backwards and forwards, with success and failure. Stephen was captured at Lincoln in February 1141 and imprisoned at Bristol for nine months.

Queen Matilda, Stephen's wife, kept up the fight and then in September Robert was also captured while fighting a rearguard action. He refused to negotiate with the Queen and eventually a straight swap took place, taking things back to square one.

The war dragged on and despite the attempt to gather support with Matilda and Geoffrey's young son, Henry, no great advances were made. Young Henry became a part of Robert's court at Bristol and was tutored together with Robert's son Roger by eminent scholars, such as Adelard of Bath and Master Matthew, and enthused with a love of literature by Robert himself. In 1145 Robert's son Philip changed sides, much to his father's sorrow, but he repented soon after following an sudden illness and took off on a crusade to the Holy Land. Meanwhile, in early 1147 Henry, and now thirteen years old, tried to make his own mark on the civil war by bringing over from Normandy a band of unruly knights and mercenaries. He soon found himself in trouble without any money to pay these renegades and approached Robert for help. The Earl refused to give him any money and the motley band deserted young Henry. One version says Robert took Henry to Wareham and put on a boat back to France, while another has him going to Stephen for help. Whatever actually happened, eventually Henry arrived at Bec, in Normandy, during May.

Then in October 1147, while preparing an expedition against Stephen, Robert fell ill with a fever. He was about fifty-seven years old, a good age in medieval times, and was still very active. The fever proved to be incurable and at Bristol castle on the 31st October, his wife Mabel at his bedside, Robert died. Behind he left five sons, the eldest William becoming Earl of Gloucester, and one daughter, Matilda, who was married to Randulf of Chester. The death of Robert affected the Empress Matilda so badly she left England. Stephen was later defeated by her son and agreed to making Henry his heir. When Stephen died in 1154, Henry became ruler of England and the first of the Plantagenet kings.

King Arthur

Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed he had been given a book by Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, and had translated it from the British language into Latin. *The History of the Kings of Britain* was a story that began in Troy, before 1000 BC, and ended in Gwynedd with the death of Cadwallader in 689 AD, but the highlight, and by far the longest part, was the history of King Arthur.

The book bears some similarity to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, which may have been deliberate. The Old Testament, according to Christians, was a lead-up to Christ and the later part of the

New Testament followed on from Christ's life.

Without going into great detail (and probably it would be unnecessary since most readers know this tale), when after the Romans left Britain was in great need of help against attack from Scots and Picts, Constantine, brother of Aldroenus, King of Brittany, was invited and arrived with thousands of troops. He married a woman of noble family and had three sons – Constans, Aurelius Ambrosius and Utherpendragon. When Constantine was murdered, the villianous Vortigern placed Constans, who had become a monk, on the throne. Like his father, Constans was murdered and Aurelius Ambrosius became king. He too was killed and Utherpendragon succeeded him. Later, after at touch of magic from Merlin, Uther seduced Ygerna and Arthur was born. Uther, a great warrior, defeated Octha son of Hengest at St. Albans, but died after drinking water polluted by the enemy. He was succeeded by his fifteen-year-old son Arthur.

The story is well known and laid the basis for all the classical Arthurian tales to come. But what are its origins? There seems to be little in existing chronicles to back up Geoffrey's tale. Odd names exist, though – apart from a version of Aurelius Ambrosius and Arthur – nothing can be found of this so-called Breton family. Uther appears in one strange poem and later Triads, but nothing that can be traced to pre-Galfridian times. Arthur, of course, was known before Geoffrey as his name and some aspects of his life, both historical and legendary, can be found in *The History of the Britons*, *The Welsh Annals* and references in poems (such as *The Gododdin*). Aurelius Ambrosius must be from Gildas' Ambrosius Aurelianus and the folk story about Emrys (later confused with Merlin) in *The History of the Britons*.

Despite these few snippets of information some how Geoffrey created a saga. Did one already exist or is the tale of Geoffrey's own making? I honestly believe he did use various materials to create this story but I would suggest that events closer to his time had an influence on the make up of this best-seller. That influence, I would put to the reader, was the career of the first few kings of Norman England and of a man that was all but king in name – Robert, Earl of Gloucester.

Norman families

The History of the Kings of Britain was written for a Norman audience, and though it may have pandered to some Welsh readers, Geoffrey's overall attitude to the Welsh is less than complimentary. Much more praise is heaped on the Bretons than the Welsh as if some of these characters are really symbolic of Geoffrey's Norman masters. Though, presumably, born in Wales, and possibly of Breton descent, Geoffrey spent most of his life in Oxford and London. Despite being made bishop of St. Asaph, in what is now Denbighshire, he never returned to Wales. I don't think this book was written for the Welsh and it certainly wasn't written for the Anglo-Saxons, who even in the mid-12th century made up a large percentage of the population of British Isles. They were portrayed as the villains of the piece and even St Oswald wasn't given good press, even though Geoffrey must have read Bede's worthy tale! I suggest that Geoffrey's work, especially the Arthurian section but probably all of it, was for Norman consumption.

What history did the Normans have? They had been a group of wild Vikings led by Rollo (possibly Rolf Ganger of Norse saga) taking over a small area of north-west France around 911, and fighting to keep it from powerful neighbours. Even in 996 the Normans were referred to as pirates and Vikings were welcomed in Normandy in 1004. However, by 1025 most of the Norman aristocracy spoke French. Then the bastard son of Robert the Devil invaded England following the death of Edward the Confessor and defeated Harold at Hastings.

What is interesting is the similarity between the families of William the Conqueror and the Constantine of *The History of the Kings of Britain*.

• On William's death he was succeeded by his two sons, one of whom may well have been murdered. And when the second son dies there is no male heir, yet Henry – like

Utherpendragon – has a powerful and chivalrous bastard son: Robert.

• Though Constantine and his sons first fought Picts and Scots, they later defeated a Saxon enemy. William began his conquest in 1066 and slowly subdued Saxons over the next twenty years. (The Welsh, though taking a battering, were not wholly defeated, and the Normans may have had some respect for them.)

• Then there are Geoffrey's references to Earls of Gloucester and the city itself. Is it a coincidence that the founder of Gloucester who gave it its Welsh name – Caer Gloiu – was the illegitimate son of the Roman emperor Claudius who, like William, conquered Britain? Then there is Eldol, Earl of Gloucester, who survived the massacre of the British near Salisbury, and who goes on to capture and execute the great Saxon leader, Hengest. A while later leading men of the principal cities of Britain are listed by Geoffrey and – surprise, surprise – number one is Gloucester and its earl, Morvid (who goes on to be instrumental in defeating Lucius Hiberius during the Arthurian war in Gaul). Apart from London and Caerleon, Gloucester shines ahead of all other places.

• One of the earliest references to Arthur, though not by name, is the prophecy made by Merlin to Uther concerning the arrival of a comet[4]. Two rays came from the dragon-like phenomenon and Merlin interpreted these rays thus: one is Uther's son who will be a great warrior and the other is his daughter from whom the successors to the throne will come. There is no evidence in Geoffrey's book that Arthur's sister's sons succeeded him, but if you compare this to real history it makes sense. William having drowned, Robert was the only prominent son and he certainly was a great warrior. In 1127 Henry I calls all his lords and barons and demands that they swear allegiance to Matilda. He repeated this twice before he fell ill and it is reported that his last wish was for her to succeed him. In 1133 Matilda had given birth to her first son, Henry, and two more were to follow in quick succession.

[4] Halley's comet featured in the Bayeux Tapestry, and was supposed to presage William's success in 1066. *Ed*

Comparisons

Things get even more interesting when Arthur and Robert are compared.

• The most obvious fact is that Arthur and Robert were both bastard sons of kings. This point seems to be repeated by Geoffrey from an earlier part of the book. Despite illegitimacy, Arthur succeeded Uther. Robert, strictly, should have succeeded Henry but the Church had grown in power by this time and it would have been difficult for Robert to push his claim. Of course, he never did and eventually supported Matilda's right and that of her sons.

• The next obvious similarity is Robert and Arthur's prowess as warriors. Robert was considered one of the foremost knights of his time and lived by the code of chivalry both in peace and in war.

• Robert's marriage to Mabel, daughter of Richard Fitz Hamo, bears some resemblance to Arthur's marriage to Guinevere, though the latter part of the story doesn't reflect her relationship with him (I am not saying that everything is an exact copy in the two men's lives). It is interesting that the few portrayals of women in *The History of the Kings of Britain* are lacking in detail and sometimes not very complimentary. Geoffrey was a churchman and the attitude towards women – who basically were there to procreate and could even be agents of the Devil – was that they were a necessary evil!

• The rivalry between Arthur and Mordred, as well as their relationship, and that of Robert and Stephen is also remarkably alike. There is, however, some mix-up in Geoffrey's writings, since at one point he states that Mordred is the son of Loth and Aurelius Ambrosius's sister (therefore also Uther's), calling him Arthur's cousin, and then, in another section, he calls him a nephew. At one point he also says Arthur's sister Anna married Budicus II of Brittany. If the former is what Geoffrey was getting at, then the similarity between Stephen and Robert is acceptable. Stephen was the son of Henry's sister Adela and Stephen de Blois. And there is no doubt that Robert and Stephen were rivals in peace and in war!

• The enemies of Arthur are, in the main, also the enemies of the Normans. And places that Arthur shows supremacy over are those that had Norman connections. They were related to Cnut who was king of Norway and Denmark, as well as a king of England – William's great aunt was married to Cnut. William had married Matilda, daughter of the Count of Flanders, and Henry's wife Edith was the daughter of Malcolm III, king of Scotland. Henry's sister Constance was married to Alan IV of Brittany. When Arthur invaded Gaul to fight, first, Frollo, and later Lucius Hiberius, the enemy though said to be Roman may as well have been French. Frollo was killed outside Paris, which then surrendered to Arthur. His allies included Flemings, Normans, Cenomani from Maine, Angevins and Aquitainians. France was ruled from Paris by Louis VI, and after 1137, Louis VII. There was no love lost between England and France – in some ways the French king was the common enemy of many in France as well as in England. It should be remembered that Henry was a Norman!

It is also interesting that even in death Arthur is not quite the normal king – he goes to Avalon to be cured. However, there is no indication that he will return, despite Geoffrey's later work *The Life of Merlin*. Still, though mortally wounded he wasn't quite dead! Robert was a man who deserved the immortality of a true hero!

Conclusions

I am not saying this is a clear cut and perfect theory. It certainly isn't! But I think there is enough above to warrant further discussion. Was Arthur based completely on a genuine history going back to the Dark Ages? I seriously doubt that very much. As I began this article, I still believe that Geoffrey was writing about his own time and that it is possible that the story owes more to the lives of Norman kings and Robert of Gloucester. No doubt Geoffrey had at hand documents that told him about Britain's past but I don't believe they went into the detail that he was able to give. It is likely that Geoffrey would have known Robert of Gloucester well and had great respect for his patron.

There is no evidence that the Arthur of the Dark Ages was illegitimate, was born in Tintagel, that his family was from Brittany, that he lived at Caerleon, became a king, invaded Ireland, Gaul and so on, fought Mordred or was taken to Avalon. In fact, the Welsh bards of the Middle Ages made no mention of Arthur fighting at Badon, being of Breton descent, living in Caerleon, invading anywhere (apart from the Otherworld in one poem), fighting Mordred or being taken to Avalon (or any Welsh version of that name). Both Arthur and Mordred – Medraut, to be more correct – were never linked in rivalry outside of later Triads, and both were considered to be paragons of warriorhood. Camlan is one of the few battles linked with Arthur in bardic poetry. He is said to have died there and to be dead like other famous men! I tend to trust these Welsh bards more than I do Geoffrey![5]

Sources

Blake, Steve and Lloyd, Scott (2000) *The Keys to Avalon: the true location of Arthur's kingdom revealed* (Element)

Crouch, David (2000) *The Reign of Stephen*

Dictionary of National Biography

Dictionary of Welsh Biography

Gilbert, Adrian *et al* (1998) *The Holy Kingdom* (Bantam Press)

Givens-Wilson, Chris and Curteis, Alice (1984) *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England*

Pain, Nesta (1978) *Empress Matilda: Uncrowned Queen of England*

Poole, A L (1976) *From Domesday to Magna Carta*

Thorpe, Lewis *transl* (1966) *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (Penguin, Harmondsworth)

• *For family trees related to this article, please send an SSAE to the editor.*

[5] Studies of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* usually concentrate on the Arthurian section and almost completely ignore what went before or what followed it. I am sure that using this tunnel vision form of study ignores some important points.

The Hunt for the Cambrian Boar

Chris Lovegrove

Ysbaddaden, Chief Giant

The Arthurian story of the hunt for the boar Twrch Trwyth in *Culhwch and Olwen* is justly well known. It does, however, depict a world far distant from the usual Round Table view of knights in armour and damsels in distress, and does so in localities that can largely be plotted on a modern map, unlike most medieval romances. Two aspects of the tale will be examined here – how much it conforms to archaic fairy-tale plots, and how far the final author may have been successful in placing it in a geographical context in South Wales, long a claimant for Arthur's traditional stamping ground.

Three hairs from the devil's beard

Though less familiar than many of the well-known Grimms' fairy tales, *The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs* is a story with as many resonances as those other tales. The outline of this tale (of a type, AT 461, known as "Three Hairs from the Devil's Beard") is as follows:

1. A child's fortune is to marry the king's daughter. To circumvent this, the king first abandons the child as a baby in a river, from which he is rescued by a miller, and then sends him to the queen with a letter ordering his execution.
2. During his passage through a wood the text of the letter, unbeknown to him, is changed to arrange his marriage with the king's daughter, thus fulfilling the prophecy.
3. The king's third attempt on the youth's life is to send him to fetch three golden hairs from the head of the giant king ("the devil") reigning in a wonderful cave. "I will soon manage that, " says the youth. On his way there he promises to solve three conundrums on his return journey – why a fountain has run dry, why a tree no longer bears golden apples, and how the ferryman to the giant's land may gain his liberty.
4. In the cave, the giant's grandmother conceals the youth (as an ant in the folds of her clothing), and as she plucks out each of the golden hairs she also extracts from the giant the answer to each of the conundrums. The youth returns home, on his way gaining rewards for solving the conundrums.
5. The greedy king then rushes off to gain his rewards too, which inevitably means taking the place of the ferryman – forever.

In keeping with the psychological fulfilments that fairy tales provide, all characters in effect represent aspects of the protagonist and his or her perceptions of immediate kin. So it is that the youth's anxieties about fathers are embodied by both the king and the giant (as well as by his own father and the miller, who had both sold him to the king). These concerns readily surface in the various versions of this tale type, including the Grimms' "The Griffin", an English gypsy tale, "The Grey Castle" (Philip 1992 29–36) and, of course, *Culhwch and Olwen* (Guest 1848 and other translations).

The quest for the giant's daughter

In summarising the plot of *Culhwch and Olwen* it will be evident how closely it accords with *The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs* in using certain motifs.

1. Culhwch's jealous stepmother predicts that he will marry Olwen, the daughter of Ysbaddaden Bencawr, that is, Hawthorn

Chief Giant. His father advises him to seek the help of his kinsman, Arthur, and together with some skilful companions from Arthur's court he sets out to find Olwen.
2. A giant's wife – another relative – recognises Culhwch from a ring token. She has concealed in a chest her last son, Goreu ("The Best"), to protect him from Ysbaddaden Chief Giant. When Culhwch meets Olwen, "her bosom was more snowy than the breast of the white swan" – perhaps her real name is White Swan (*cf* Old Irish *ela*, Manx *olla* "swan"), implying she was originally a Swan Maiden, like the maiden in *The Grey Castle*. She gives Culhwch valuable advice: "That which [Ysbaddaden] shall require of thee, grant it, and thou wilt obtain me."
3. At Ysbaddaden's court, the giant three times tries to delay an answer to Culhwch's proposal, and three times makes an attempt on Culhwch's life by throwing a poisoned dart at him; the youth is each time saved by Arthur's men.
4. The giant sets Culhwch a number of impossible tasks. Some are related to preparing for the marriage feast, some are related to preparing the giant for the wedding:

"It is needful for me to wash my head, and shave my beard, and I require the tusk of Ysgithyrwyn Penbaedd to shave myself withal, neither shall I profit by its use if it be not plucked alive out of his head ..."
"Throughout the world there is not a comb or scissors with which I can arrange my hair, on account of its rankness, except the comb and scissors that are between the two ears of Twrch Trwyth, the son of Prince Tared[d]. He will not give them of his own free will, and thou wilt not be able to compel him."
To every task set, Culhwch answers, "It is easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest think that it will not be easy."
5. Lengthy descriptions of how a number of the tasks set are achieved then follow. One is plucking the beard of Dillus Farfawg (*Barfog* "the bearded") while he is still alive. Another is taking the tusk of Ysgithyrwyn Penbaedd, Whitetusk Chief-Boar. Almost the last (but not the least) is the famous hunt for the boar Twrch Trwyth. Arthur's hunting of *Porcus Troynt* – clearly the same creature – recurs in a description of the Wonders of Britain, ascribed to Nennius.
6. When a significant number of the tasks are achieved, they all return to Ysbaddaden's court. The giant is violently shaved, and finally his head struck off by Goreu. "Thus did Culhwch obtain Olwen."

Features

Outline summaries of course can never do stories full justice. Enough of *Culhwch and Olwen* has been told, however, to illustrate how it relates to the tale type epitomised by the Grimms' story. Even though different elements are emphasised, and the order of motifs varied, they share common features: attempts are made on the life of the protagonist, assurances are given that tasks are possible, beards are plucked, female giants consulted, impossible tasks achieved and daughters are married. Of course, *Culhwch and Olwen* has much more material to consider, and has been ably deconstructed elsewhere (*eg* Piquemal 2000, Ford 1977, 14ff), but for present purposes this analysis will remain as delimited.

Another feature that is common to both tales (and fairy tales in general) is the appearance of characters who are doublets of each other. Attention has already been drawn to the various father figures in the Grimm tale. Culhwch's wicked stepmother – who lays his dangerous destiny on him, and who is matched by the witch who is despatched by Arthur towards the end of the tale – is balanced by his virtuous mother and by his aunt, the helpful giantess. Goreu ("The Best"), who alone among his brothers has survived the murderous attention of the giant, and who dispatches Ysbaddaden at the end, is clearly another aspect of Culhwch himself. And the various dread figures that rear up during the impossible tasks – the giant Gwrnach, the bearded Dillus and, above all, the fierce boars – are also doublets of each other, of Ysbaddaden, and of the father whose re-marriage precipitates the adventures of Culhwch.

Before examining the boar hunt that is the centrepiece of this particular tale, it is worth briefly looking at a motif that is

sometimes called the Obstacle Flight. It has long been recognised that *Culhwch and Olwen* is related to tales such as the story of Jason, Medea and the Quest for the Golden Fleece. Like Olwen, Medea ("the cunning one") helps Jason (originally Diomedes, "god-like cunning") in the tasks set by her father. When the fleece is won, Medea delays her pursuing father by throwing the dismembered body of her brother behind for him to retrieve.

Now, objects snatched from between the ears of the Twrch Trwyth – razor, scissors and comb – are reminiscent of objects thrown in another fairytale chase (this time by a water-hag), when two children in a Grimms' tale ("The Water-Nixie") throw behind them a hairbrush, a comb and a mirror, each of which grow to monstrous size and obstruct the progress of the pursuer. However, there is no obstacle flight in the Welsh tale, as the promulgator of the quests and the father of the bride-to-be are one and the same, not separate as in the Jason tale.

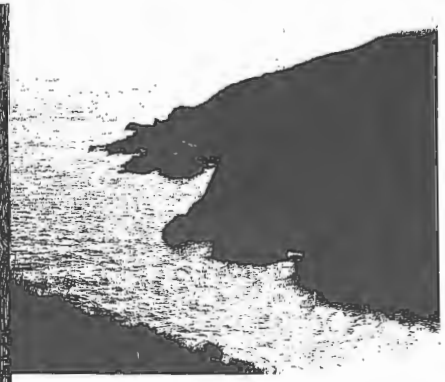
The hunting of Twrch Trwyth

While the frame is Culhwch's quest for the giant's daughter, the climax of *Culhwch and Olwen* is the hunt for a monstrous boar. Such hunts are not uncommon in early lore, from the Greek Hunt for the Calydonian Boar to those in Irish tales and in the Welsh Triads. Indeed, Culhwch's name itself is explained as meaning "swine-burrow" or "pig-run" (an allusion to his birth-place, from *hwch*, "sow") though some scholars suggest "slender pigling", from *cul*, "narrow" (Piquemal 2000, 21), underlining a link with his destiny.

Culhwch and Olwen is unambiguous about who the Twrch is: he is the son of Taredd Wledig, Prince Taredd, and Arthur explains that he had been a king but was changed into a swine for his sins. Medieval Irish sources reinforce this regal impression, as the analogous Torc Triath is either the king of boars (Old Irish *torc* "boar", *triath* "king") or, as Orc Treith, the King's Boar. In Welsh *twrch* indeed means "hog" – a direct equivalent of the Irish – but Modern Welsh *trwyth* translates as "decoction" (unrelated, surely, to *troeth*, "urine"?). We can only hope that whatever is lost in the translation is not of crucial importance; for Nennius, who mentions the Arthurian boar-hunt, the name of *Porcus Troynt* clearly was of no significance, with any royal association passing him by.

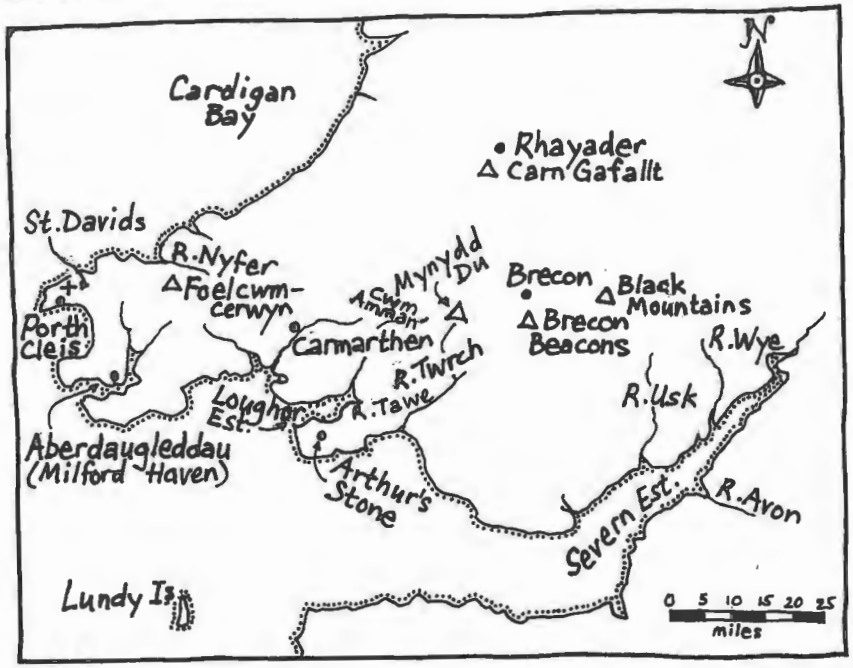
According to Barber and Pykitt (1993: 50 and 122) "this riddle story is undoubtedly a folk memory of the expulsion of the Gewissei from Gwent. It becomes apparent that the Gewissei were collectively known by the Welsh as the Twrch Trwyth, or Irish pig." In other words, "the 'boar' [is] a symbolic representation of the Gewissei, [Arthur's] Irish enemies ..." (One must assume that the authors meant the Deisi, or Dessi, a tribe which had migrated from Ireland, rather than the Gewisse, later to become the West Saxons.) Gilbert *et al* similarly believe (1998: 244 and 249) that the story of Twrch Trwyth is "a fairy tale with hidden meaning," but this time Twrch Trwyth is really – yes, really – a Vandal king and the "nine piglets" his commanders. From Nennius' Mercian genealogies *via* Geoffrey of Monmouth, Gormund King of Africa becomes a previously unknown Vandal ruler who sailed with the fleet from Carthage in 548, invading Ireland, then Wales, before settling in what was to become Mercia.

John Rhys (1901: chapter IX *passim*) and others have argued, with some plausibility, that the Twrch Trwyth tale may well be associated with a Goidelic (*ie* Irish) presence in South Wales (though he favours an explanation where the Goidels are aboriginal rather than the result of Dark Age immigration). In favour of an Irish connection are the analogous traditions of the Torc Triath, the initial hunt of the Twrch in Ireland before crossing over to Britain, and remnant Irish words in the topographical details of the hunt. And there is, as we shall now see, a curious mirror image to Arthur's invasion of Ireland to attack the king of boars.



Porth Clais, near St Davids (CL)

Wild Boar (Ian Brown)



The hunt for Twrch Trwyth across South Wales (CL)

Place-names

In the text usually known as *The Colloquy of the Ancients* (Dooley and Roe 1999), Arthur is called "the son of the King of Britain". On a deer hunt near Dublin, in Leinster, he steals three of the Irish hero Finn's hounds before returning to Britain. Finn's men cross over to Britain, retrieve his hounds and take Arthur prisoner. In addition they steal a stallion and a mare, future source of all Finn's horses – Finn had none before this.

In *Culhwch and Olwen* the situation is reversed. All the Irish show Arthur due respect, all except Twrch and his piglets, who lay waste to an Irish province (probably Leinster). Then they cross over to South Wales, followed by Arthur and his company in his ship *Prydwen*. Arthur lands by St Davids, Twrch and his piglets at nearby Porth Cleis. The swine devastate lands near Milford Haven before heading north to the Preseli Hills. From the River Nyfer in the north to Cwm Cerwyn ("Winepress Combe") in the heart of the Preselies, Twrch, though wounded, creates a bloodbath. More are killed further south at Pelumyawc (Rhys 1901: 512–3, argues this is around Llandysilio) and when Twrch crosses the mouth of the Towy, south of Carmarthen.

Battle is joined in the valley of the Loughor and on to Mynydd Amanw, the heights above Ammanford and Brynamman. Here, following fierce fighting, the name of the piglet Llwydawg may be commemorated in Carreg Llwyd. An unnamed young boar (Welsh *banw*, Irish *banbh*) is killed, originally to account for the river name Amman, then another piglet, Twrch Llawin, is slain to account for the place-names River Twrch and Cwmtwrch, followed by Gwys close to a river of the same name. The author seems unaware that *gwys* was an archaic name for "sow" (Rhys, 1901: 524). Finally, a *banw* and a *benwic* (a young boar and a young sow, both also unnamed) meet their ends in Dyffryn Amanw, now Cwm Amman.

Twrch's remaining two piglets meet their ends elsewhere, Grugyn at Garth Grugyn in Ceredigion, and Llwydawc at Ystrad Yw near Crickhowell (perhaps by the Roman fort of Pen y Gaer). Twrch himself is reported to have gone "between the Tawy and Ewyas", east of the Black Mountains, and it is from here that mounted warriors and dogs flush him out, down towards Aber Hafren – the Severn estuary – between Llyn Lliwan (a lost lake) and the mouth of the Wye. His razor and shears are taken and, before he finally disappears off the coast of Cornwall, his comb, too.

Arthurian topography

What is interesting is that, while the story pretends to explain place-name links with the quarry (and a few of Arthur's men), little or no mention is made of specific sites named for Arthur himself. Now, existing Arthurian place-names effectively form a complementary set of milestones to trace the route taken on the hunt. Why, then, did the author not utilise these to give substance to his tale? Is it that these various monuments, whose Arthurian names are of uncertain or unknown date, mostly did not have these associations till relatively recent times?

In Dyfed, by St David's where Arthur lands, is the prehistoric dolmen Coetan Arthur. One of several Arthur's Quoits in Wales, this has no associated legend reported, nor has Pentre Ifan, south of the Nyfer, sometimes also called Coetan Arthur, though Ashe (19, 20) suggests a confusion with Carreg Coitan Arthur nearby.

Another class of monuments concerns a certain *gast* ("bitch") or *miliast* ("greyhound bitch"). In *Culhwch and Olwen* Arthur and his men go searching for the two cubs of Gast Rhymhi, who has been causing devastation as a she-wolf. They find her at Aber Gleddyf – Milford Haven – below the junction of two rivers called Cleddau. They surround her in a cave, by sea and land, forcing her to return to her normal shape. A number of dolmens across Wales are called Gwâl y Filiast ("lair of the greyhound bitch"), or similar (*cwrt*, *llety*, *llech*, *twlc* "court, lodging, stone, kennel"), including one south-east of the Preselies, by Llanglydwen near the river Taf, and another at Llanboidy to the east of that. None of these seems, however, to be linked to an Arthurian boar-hunt in lore of any antiquity.

On the Preselies are a group of features associated with the prehistoric track called

the Golden Road (John 1993). Principally these are Cerrigmarchogion ("the rocks of the knights") and other natural outcrops, Beddarthur ("Arthur's Grave") and Carn Arthur. Cerrig Meibion Arthur ("stones of the sons of Arthur") are two standing stones east of Foel Cwmcerwyn (at 536 metres the highest point in the Preselies). Now *Culhwch* does mention great slaughter at Cwm Cerwyn, with initially four of Arthur's named warriors being killed, then four more (including Arthur's son Gwydre) and, the next day, seven. While *Culhwch* does not explicitly name these monuments, there do seem to be some correlations, even if they are inconsistent.

In central South Wales the few legendary Arthurian sites (such as Arthur's Stone on the Gower, Craig y Ddinas and the Brecon Beacons) are unconnected with the hunt for Twrch Trwyth. Much further north, however, a hill overlooking Rhayader called Carn Gafallt does preserve a tradition at variance with the *Culhwch* tale. In the 9th century *Historia Brittonum* attributed to Nennius we read in chapter 73 (my translation):

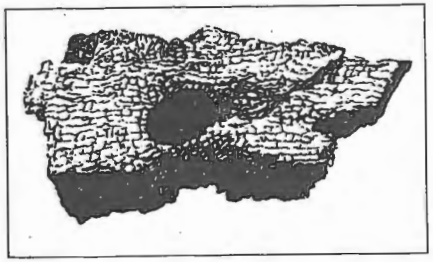
There is another wonder in the region called *Buelt* [modern Builth]. Here is a cairn of stones, one stone placed upon the pile with the footprint of a hound on it. When the boar *Troynt* [*sic*] came by, *Cabal*, who was the hound of Arthur the warrior, left the impression of a footprint in the stone, and Arthur afterwards amassed a pile of stones under the stone in which was the footprint of his hound, and called it *Carn Cabal*.

Here is an independent legend of the Arthurian boar-hunt, far to the north of the onomastic geography of *Culhwch*, with its South Walian bias. An interesting footnote to this is recounted by Jacobs (1892, 253f):

*A friend of Lady Guest's found on this [*mountain*] a cairn with a stone two feet long by one foot wide in which there was an indentation 4 in. x 3 in. x 2 in. which could easily have been mistaken for a paw-print of a dog, as may be seen from the engraving given of it [*in Guest's 1874 *Mabinogion* edition*]. The stone and the legend are thus at least one thousand years old.*

This seems to put an end to the legend reported by Nennius that despite the stone being removed from the cairn it would find its way back to the pile by the next day. This supposes of course that

- Carn Gafallt and Carn Cabal are one and the same;
- that Guest's friend's piece of conglomerate is identical with that described by Nennius;
- and that there hasn't been a very ancient mix-up, with a Latin word for "horse" (*caballus*, Modern Welsh *ceffyl*) being mistaken as the name of a hunting hound.



Conclusions

Fairy-tale motifs, folk place-name etymology, local legends attached to landscape features and, if some authors are to be believed, migration tales: all features of early Arthurian lore predating Geoffrey of Monmouth. But do they tie Arthur to South Wales? And why does Geoffrey of Monmouth apparently ignore this terrific tale?

The basic story of *Culhwch and Olwen*, "the quest for the giant's daughter", is international and is no way reliant on an Arthurian connection. But neither is the tale of the boar-hunt specifically Arthurian: Meleager hunts for the Calydonian Boar in Greek myth, and Finn and Diarmaid both hunt swine (such as Balar's pig and the Torc Forbartach) in Irish myth. It has long been pointed out (*eg* Rhys 1901, 503–509 and Rhys 1999, 97ff) that one of the other pig-hunts that feature in Welsh mythology also involves Arthur: the hunt for Henwen, told in a Welsh Triad. Here Arthur unsuccessfully chases the supernatural sow Henwen ("Old White") from Cornwall across Gwent and Dyfed up to North Wales. However, earlier versions of this Triad do not mention Arthur at all.

The other boar to feature in *Culhwch and Olwen* is Ysgithrwyn. His name means "White Tusk", and the hunt for him is not localised, though Arthur's hound Cafall brings him down. Surely, as has been often suggested (*eg* Ford 1977, 16), Ysgithrwyn is a doublet for Twrch Trwyth.

Porcus Troy[n]t	Twrch Trwyth	Ysgithrwyn
9th century	11th century	11th century
Hog Troy[n]t	*Hog Trwyth*	*White Tusk*
Hunted by Arthur's hound Cabal		Hunted by Arthur's hound Cafall
Carn Gafallt, Builth	South Wales	Unlocalised

There is no mention of an Arthurian boar-hunt, let alone Twrch Trwyth himself, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*, and it is usually assumed that despite his familiarity with Nennius' work Geoffrey would have not regarded this apparent tall story as suitable for his putative historical chronicle. But knowing Geoffrey's ability to plunder and use any scraps that came his way, we might suspect otherwise.

In Book X there is a lengthy and vivid description of Arthur's mighty battle with the forces of Lucius Hiberius in Gaul. Amongst the enemy captains is Boccus, King of the Medes, who slays Arthur's men – Bedevere his butler and Kay his seneschal. In a rage, Bedevere's nephew rushes forward with his company "like a wild boar through a pack of hounds," slays Boccus and hacks his body to pieces.

An invocation to a boar-god, Moccus, equated with Roman Mercury, is known from Langres in modern France, home to the Gaulish tribe of Lingones. This – coincidentally? – is from where Lucius Hiberius marches out to fight Arthur in the *Historia*. Now while initial consonant mutation in modern Welsh does not allow *Moccus* to become *Boccus*, both initial sounds are voiced labials (phonemes that involve the lips), and it may be possible that Geoffrey – who was writing in Latin, after all – transliterated something about Moccus he had read incorrectly. Add to this the imagery of the boar-hunt that, admittedly, is applied to Bedevere's avenging son and not Boccus, and we may have some tentative clues that Geoffrey was, after all, familiar with the tale of Twrch Trwyth.

References

Chris Barber & David Pykitt (1993) *Journey to Avalon* (Blorenge Press)

Ann Dooley & Harry Roe *transl* (1999) *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* (Oxford University Press, Oxford)

Patrick K Ford (1977) *The Mabinogi and other Medieval Welsh Tales* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA)

Adrian Gilbert, Alan Wilson, Baram Blackett (1998) *The Holy Kingdom: the quest for the real King Arthur* (Bantam Press, London)

Lady Gregory (1904) *Gods and Fighting Men* (John Murray; 1976 Colin Smythe, Gerrards Cross, Bucks)

Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm (2002) *Complete Fairy Tales* (Routledge Classics, London)

Lady Charlotte Guest (1848) *The Mabinogion* (1906 J M Dent, London; 1997 Dover Publications, Mineola NY)

Joseph Jacobs (1892) *Celtic Fairy Tales* (David Nutt; Senate 1994)

Brian John (1993) *Walking in the Presely Hills* (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority)

Steven Swann Jones (2002) *The Fairy Tale: the magic mirror of the imagination* (Routledge, New York and London)

Neil Philip (1992) *English Fairy Tales* (Penguin, Harmondsworth)

Catherine Piquemal "*Culhwch and Olwen*: a structured portrayal of Arthur?" *Arthuriana 10* No 3 (Fall 2000) 7–26

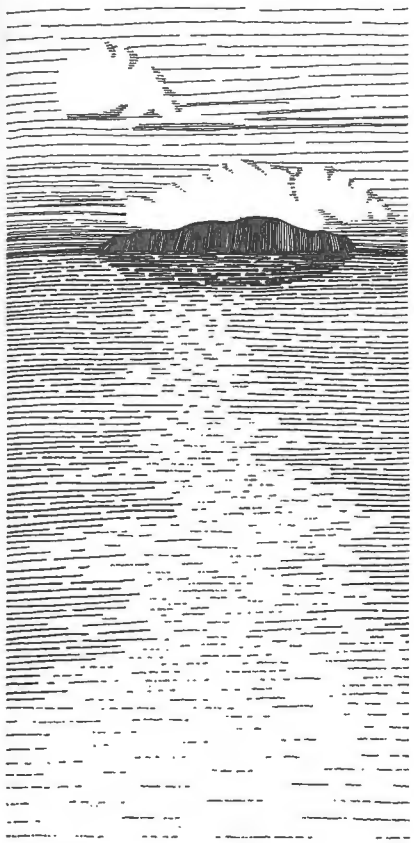
Anthony Rhys (1999) *Celtic Legends of Pembrokeshire* (Llanerch, Felinfach)

John Rhys (1901) *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx, Vol II* (OUP; 1980 Wildwood House)

Moccus (*cf* Welsh *moch* "pig"), Gaulish god	Twrch Trwyth (Welsh *twrch* "hog")	Boccus, king of the Medes
	"Arthur's enemy"	"Arthur's enemy"
	kills Arthur's men	kills Arthur's men
Equated with Roman god Mercury	king transformed into boar	Boccus' killer compared to boar
Langres link		Langres link

Arthur and Merlin in *Wild Wales*

W M S Russell



Borrow and Wales

George Borrow (1803–1881) published many books, mostly translations from various languages, but he is famous, and deservedly so, for his books about his friends the Gypsies and for two of the best ravel books ever written, *Wild Wales*,[1] and *The Bible in Spain*.[2] His life was divided between travel and writing.[3] [4] He was the son of a recruiting officer, and had his first experience of travel as his father went round the British Isles on his recruiting missions. As he grew up, besides his genius as a writer, he gave evidence of two unusual talents. He was a tremendous hiker: in 1832, to get a job with the British and Foreign Bible Society, he walked the hundred and twelve miles from Norfolk to London in twenty-seven hours. He was an equally tremendous linguist: a scholar who helped him wrote to the poet Southey, 'though he is not yet eighteen, he understands English, Welsh, Erse, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese'.

Borrow's first job for the Bible Society was to go to Russia and see through the press a translation of the New Testament into Manchu-Tartar, in 1833. There followed his travels in Portugal and Spain through most of the years 1835 to 1840, distributing copies of a Spanish translation of the New Testament. In 1842 he published *The Bible in Spain* and became established as a writer. On his return from Spain, he had married Mary Clarke, the widow of a naval officer, a woman with a good head for business, who had a daughter Henrietta, with many gifts – drawing, playing on the Spanish guitar, botany and conchology. They lived in East Anglia, where Borrow wrote more books, and which he used as a base for more travels. Mary died in 1865, and Borrow himself in 1881.

Borrow's interest in Wales began early. In his teens, during a brief period when he was articled to a firm of solicitors, he taught himself Welsh by reading a Welsh translation of *Paradise Lost*. To improve his knowledge of the language, he made

[1] Borrow, G (1977) *Wild Wales, its People, Language and Scenery* (London: Fontana Collins)

[2] Borrow, G (1906) *The Bible in Spain; or, the Journeys, Adventures and Imprisonments of an Englishman in an Attempt to Circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula* (London: Dent)

[3] Price, C (1977) "George Borrow" and "Introduction" in: Borrow (ref 1) 7–8, 11–19

[4] Thomas, E (1906) "Introduction" in: Borrow (ref 2) vii–xii

friends with a Welsh groom and learned from him.[5] Borrow developed a passion for Welsh history and culture, and for the great Welsh poets, including the greatest of all, Dafydd ap Gwilym. He determined not visit Wales until he himself was successful and famous, a worthy visitor to this wonderful country. So it was not until 1854 that he made the tour described in *Wild Wales*, which he published in 1862.

The Tour

Borrow, Mary and Henrietta arrived in Chester by train. The ladies continued by train to Llangollen, where Borrow joined them, having walked from Chester. They accompanied him on some of his shorter excursions in North Wales, and Henrietta climbed with him on Snowdon (162–166), but eventually they returned to England by train, leaving Borrow to complete his tour (318–321). He himself took a short train journey from Holyhead to Bangor (225), but the whole of the rest of his tour was on foot. I calculate that his indefatiguable hiker covered more than 400 miles on foot before leaving Wales. He walked all over North Wales and Anglesey, his network of routes almost filling the map. His exploration of Central and South Wales was less thorough, but he saw many interesting things and formed a sound impression of these parts of the Principality. With side trips to Plynlimon and Llandovery, he walked roughly South to Swansea, and then roughly East to Chepstow.

Borrow found some of the Welsh were resentful of the English, and especially suspicious of an Englishman who understood Welsh (373, 485). 'The Welsh are afraid lest an Englishman should understand their language, and, by hearing their conversation, become acquainted with their private affairs' (263). But Borrow usually disarmed their suspicions and made friends with them, thanks to his genuine good nature and generosity, his amusing gift for talking to people of every class, country and religion and putting them at their ease (he would have made an excellent king), and his obvious enthusiasm for and knowledge of the great Welsh poets. Sometimes, indeed, he met with the most touching kindness and hospitality, especially from poor folk (*eg* 174–7). By the time his tour was over, he admired the Welsh people as much as he admired their wonderful literature.

The Welsh were not the only people Borrow met in Wales. He encountered an old gypsy friend, travelling with his family and caravan between Gutter Vawr and Llangadog (478–80). He met Irish all over Wales, and sooner or later they invariable mentioned a famous and much-loved preacher called Father Toban (35, 141, 152, 462, 525). On the pier at Holhead, Borrow encountered a mob of Irish, waiting to embark, who were convinced that *he* was Father Toban. They would not accept any of his denials, even when he offered to swear on the Cross he was not the good Father. They demanded a blessing from him, to ensure a safe crossing to Ireland, and the following dialogue took place with their spokesman (215–219):

'But suppose I were to refuse to give you a blessing?

Why in such a case, which by the bye is altogether impossible, we should just make bould to give your reverence a good big bating.

You would break my head?

We would, your reverence.

Kill me?

We would, your reverence.

You would really put me to death?

We would not, your reverence.

And what's the difference between killing and putting to death?

Och, sure there's all the difference in the world. Killing manes only a good big bating, such as every Irishman is used to, and which your reverence would get over long before matins, whereas putting your reverence to death would prevent your reverence from saying mass for ever and a day.'

Borrow was a big fellow, well able to take care of himself, but obviously not against two or three dozen Irish armed with *shillealahs* (his spelling). So he 'gave them the best Latin blessing I could remember, out of two or three which I had got by memory out of an old Popish book of devotion, which I bought in my boyhood at a stall'.

The Irish were completely satisfied, and could now embark with no fear of storm or shipwreck.

Borrow, Arthur and Merlin

A few miles from Bala, Borrow looked back at the hills he had just crossed, and exclaimed (350):

'Oh the wild hills of Wales, the land of old renown and wonder, the land of Arthur and Merlin.'

In view of this, and Borrow's passion for early Welsh literature, I was amazed to find only *three other pages* with Arthurian references. Perhaps he just took it for granted that there are echoes of Arthur all over Wales, but the scarcity of references in *Wild Wales* is still surprising. I give below *all* these references.

An elderly Llangollen shopkeeper with the memorable name of Jones was interested in Welsh literature. Chatting about this, he asked Borrow a question (96):

'You seem to know something about Welsh poetry; can you tell me who wrote the following line?'

There will be great doings in Britain, and I shall have no concern in them.

'I will not be positive,' said I, 'but I think from its tone and tenor that it was composed by Merddyn, whom my countrymen call Merlin.'

The old shopkeeper thought this probable. He could not help referring the prophecy to the Crimean War then raging, but felt he would not live to see any resulting disasters, so would 'have no concern in them'.

Borrow remarked that the line probably referred to the advance of the Saxons, but he could understand why the shopkeeper gave it this topical application.

At Llan uwch Llyn, Borrow thought of Llewarch Hen, who had taken refuge near there from the Saxons, and Borrow notes (359):

'Whilst a prince he was revered for his wisdom and equity, and he is said in one of the historical triads to have been one of the three consulting warriors of Arthur.'

The longest two references are in Borrow's description of Snowdon (161), first:

'It was to Snowdon that Vortigern retired from the fury of his own subjects, caused by the favour which he showed to the detested Saxons. It was there that he called to his counsels Merlin, said to be begotten on a hag by an incubus, but who was in reality the son of a Roman consul by a British woman. It was in Snowdon that he built the castle, which he fondly deemed would prove impregnable, but which his enemies destroyed by flinging wild fire over its walls; and it was in a wind-beaten valley of Snowdon, near the sea, that his dead body decked in green armour had a mound of earth and stones raised over it.'

And second:

'Who when he thinks of Snowdon does not associate it with the heroes of romance, Arthur and his knights? whose fictitious adventures, the splendid dreams of Welsh and Breton minstrels, many of the scenes of which are the valleys and passes of Snowdon, are the origins of romance.'

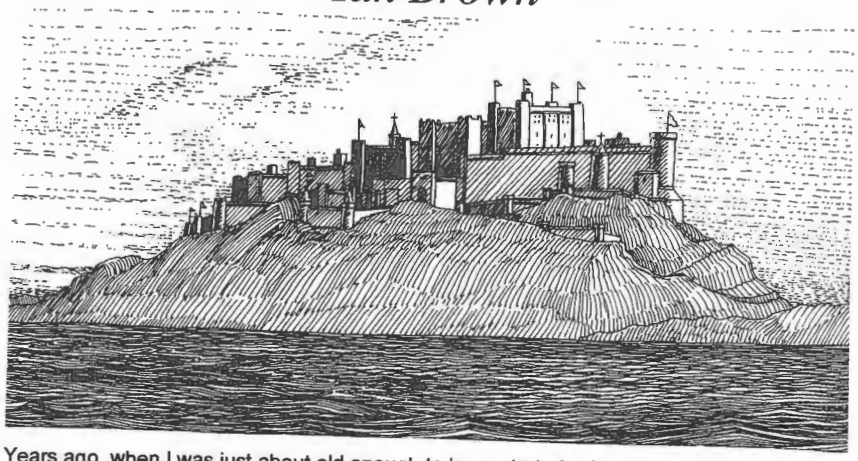
The association of Vortigern and Merlin with Snowdon is of course established by Geoffrey of Monmouth, but it is not clear where Borrow got the idea of locating there the adventures of Arthur and his knights.

This concludes the Arthurian references in *Wild Wales*; scanty as they are, I thought it worth while to present them, in view of the book's importance for Welsh history, geography, legend and literature.

[5] This groom was an interesting man. A veteran of the Peninsula War, he threw an unexpected light on that campaign, telling Borrow of the hatred of the British soldiers for their arrogant and tyrannical senior officers. He said Sir John Moore was certainly shot by his own men, and that Wellington was 'more frequently shot at by the British than by the French' (23–4: all page references are to *Wild Wales*, ref 1). What a contrast with deservedly popular commanders, such as Marlborough, Nelson and Montgomery.

Where was Arthur as a child?

Ian Brown



Years ago, when I was just about old enough to have started school (around about the time they finished Stonehenge, if I remember rightly!), I went on holiday, with my parents, to the Lake District. It was early summer, we stayed in a lovely old cottage and travelled about much of the country. Naturally, some of my memories of that time are vague. I was only young at the time.

One memory stands out, though.

We had been walking along a country road, between drystone walls and rolling fields. It was hot and sunny, so we decided to stop and rest for a while. My parents wandered over to gaze across a wall, and I found a bench beside the road, sitting there and looking across another wall, in the other direction, towards where a few half-buried stones and apparently natural green mounds caught my eye in the midst of a field.

After a few minutes, an old man approached (he looked pretty old to me then, but he was probably a farm worker, just come from another field. He was dressed in a long coat, brown trousers and sturdy walking boots, his hair was greyish, and his short beard a bit stubbly. I remember that much about him. He paused and spoke to me, and then walked on.

Noticing him, my mother walked back to me and asked what he had said.

I nodded towards the field I had been watching and replied, "He said to me, *You see those stones over there? Well, they do say that, when he was but a boy, King Arthur came and lived there for a while.*"

That was all he'd said, and then he wandered on his way.

My mother remarked, at the time, how strange it seemed that he had chosen to tell me – even at the age, I was already fascinated with Arthurian legends.

The incident was pretty much forgotten, after that; but my mother mentioned it again, just a few years ago, not long before she died. It's been intriguing me, ever since then. Not really who the man was or why he spoke to me: it's obvious that was only a coincidence, and he'd noticed that I was looking at the field.

No, what's bothering me is this: none of the family can remember exactly where we were, that day. As far as I know, there were no major archaeological sites there (at least, none that we knew of). I just wondered if anyone might have a clue as to any traditions of Arthur spending any time in his childhood in Cumbria. It's a rum one, isn't it?

The Corrievreckan

Eileen Buchanan

The Corrievreckan is the largest whirlpool in Europe and when in full spate its sides can reach a height of ten metres. It is situated between the islands of Scarba and Jura, Argyll, off the west coast of Scotland. Corrievreckan means 'Breckon's Cauldron' and there is an old legend that Prince Brecon used the tresses of nine maidens to cross it.

The whirlpool is also known as 'The Cailleach', the Goddess in her aged form. According to legend this hag decides who will live and who will die in the whirlpool's maelstrom. It runs in fullest spate at about 10 knots around the autumn equinox, from Alban Elued to Samhuin, and can be heard 10 miles away at Dunadd on the mainland. Indeed, on the island of Skye the wind that carries the sound is still known as 'The Breath of the Goddess'. On the island of Mull, children who misbehave are told that 'naughty children are sent to The Corrievreckan'! Perhaps it is a vestige of a much more ancient truth.

The Corrievreckan forms around a submerged rockstack between Scarba and Jura; beside it is a great narrow pit known as the Gateway to Hell which descends 100 metres below the surrounding seabed to an overall depth of 219 metres. Scientists tell us that the mixing of fresh and salt, warm and cold waters that whirlpools create cause life itself to be formed on earth – truly, this is a cauldron of Birth and Rebirth!

The island of Scarba is a single mountain top that rises out of the sea to a height of 449 metres, and is set between The Corrievreckan and the notorious Grey Dogs tidal race to the north, a narrow passage over to Lunga, itself running at about 8 knots. Scarba is now uninhabited but had a reputation for healthy living and longevity (a woman in the 17th century lived until she was 140!) and myths of ghosts and fairies haunt the island. St Columba's monks used it on occasion and until recently it was a testing ground where school children were trained in self-sufficiency before being taken by boat to various uninhabited islands and abandoned for a few days – no mobile phones allowed, but they could fly a flag when they'd had enough of it!

I am told that there are many great caves on Scarba and what could have been a processional way from steps cut into the rock on the east side of the island along a serpentine path to the Point of the Maidens about The Corrievreckan, where there are the remains of three circular stone buildings. What appears to be a womb-shaped lochan empties its waters into a stream that leads out towards the whirlpool.

Initiation

My friend Hugh McArthur believes that Taliesin's poem *Preiddeu Annwn* is an account of an initiation ritual carried out in The Corrievreckan, the Arthur in question being Artur, son of the half-British King of the Scots of Dalriada (Argyll), King Aedan. Their fortress was sited at Dunadd, 10 miles away on the mainland. Archaeological investigations show that the people living there in the 6th century possessed a degree of sophistication in their lifestyles that took 100 years to filter to southern areas of Britain. The MacArthur Clan of Argyll say that they descend from King Arthur, and I have come to believe Artur was certainly one of the historical models for King Arthur. Legends and place-names of Finn and the Fianna abound in Argyll and Perthshire, so it is interesting to note that Artur was part Scots Gael and undoubtedly led a Fiann or warrior elite. Dr Anne Ross tells us that each such warrior was a fully trained Druid, the leader an Archdruid.

What greater place of initiation could there be for any warrior than sailing The Corrievreckan in full spate? We know that Native American Indians also tested themselves by riding the edges of whirlpools, and even today, in similar style, groups of people challenge death itself by surfing the hugely dangerous North Sea breakers off Scotland. (Occasional attempts at The Corrievreckan are thwarted by The Royal Navy who keep a very close watch by both sea and air!)

Recent archaeological work by prominent members of The Pictish Arts Society shows that the northern British border was further north and west than previously thought, and seems to have included lands in Argyll. Indeed, the fortified site of Dunadd appears to have been almost identical with the British fortresses at Stirling and Edinburgh. It is interesting then to learn that local legends tell that Taliesin was born in the area of Blanefield outside Glasgow: the name Blanefield comes from St Blane or Blaan, King Aedan's son, half-brother to Artur.

In *Preiddeu Annwn*, Taliesin tells us his story:

I am the one who is splendid in (making) fame: the song was heard
In the four-turreted fort, fully revolving.
It was concerning the cauldron that my first utterance was spoken:
It was kindled by the breath of nine maidens.

The *four turrets* are thus the flow and ebb of the tides twice per day. In the autumn, The Pleides ride high in the sky: the nine maidens, one so faint, almost lost. The other sisters weep for her as they are pursued across the night sky by Orion, the Mighty Hunter. As above, so below?

We went, three full loads of Prydwen, into it;
Apart from seven, none came back up from Caer Siddi.

The vortex at the centre of the whirlpool sucks everything downward: almost three full loads of Arthur's boat Prydwen. The vortices in the air itself, the Dragon's breath.

The cauldron of the Chieftain of Annwn: what is its faculty?
– Dark (ornament) and pearls around its rim –
It will not boil the food of a coward; it has not been so destined.

Pearls of surf and spume edge the whirlpool; only the bravest could sail it.

In the four-turreted fort, the island of the radiant door,
Fresh water and jet are mixed.

In Gaelic, one of the other tidal races at the entrance to nearby Loch Craignish is called The Great Door. Whirlpools mix together the salt and fresh water.

Who has not seen Arthur's valour beyond the Glass Fort.
Six thousand men were standing on its wall;
It was difficult to converse with their watchman.

Its water-walls of glass, its thundering noise.

History and legend

The serpent streams of white foam that mark the whirlpool are reproduced in carvings on the ancient Sunstone in St Constantine's Church in Govan and form part of the altar window in St Conval's Church, Inchinnan, both churches whose history goes back to the 6th century and earlier. The Cauldron of Brecon, surely the ultimate source of power to pagan peoples, must have been well-known throughout the British Isles in those days.

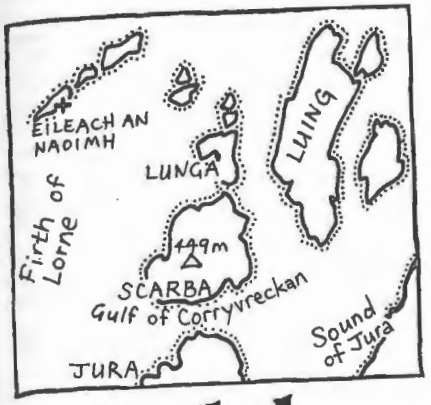
Imagine a 6th-century Water Kingdom that stretched from the Orkney Islands in the north, down the east coast of Ireland, down the west coast of Britain and its islands, along Cornwall and over to Brittany. The information is encoded within the Arthurian legends and we can see it easily enough if we alter our mind-set which labels the lands as Scotland, Ireland, England, Wales, Man and France.

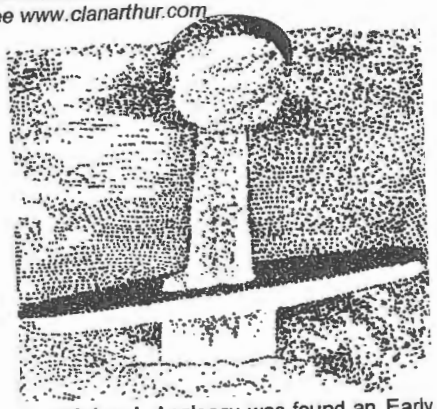
One of the islands nearby in The Garvellochs is Eileach an Naoimh, site of an early and important Druid College, and some way beyond this are the islands of Staffa and Iona. Fingal's Cave on Staffa is also said to have been a place of Druid initiation and of course Iona itself was called Island of the Druids.

Edgar Allan Poe based his novel *The Maelstrom* on the account of a survivor of a whirlpool off Norway. Sailors there say that the shape most likely to survive the whirlpool intact is a barrel-shaped one, which reminds me of a Moses basket and also of the skin bag that washed up Taliesin to Elphin's side – certainly this could account for the myths of the fatherless child prodigies such as Taliesin. Greek legends tell us of the Nine Maidens who inhabit an island, living without men until they wish to have a child. It is an intriguing thought: Scarba of the Nine Maidens, The Cailleach herself choosing only the bravest and most intelligent warriors to father the blessed children that may have resulted. Is it possible that

they could have been floated off, to land along the coasts of Britain and Ireland, groomed to be the Wise Ones, Druid Children of The Goddess?

Previously published in ***Touchstone*** *and* ***Dalriada****.*
For more information see www.clanarthur.com





old news

DARK AGE CHRISTIANS

Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire has laid claim to "the earliest private chapel from Dark Age Britain". Geophysical surveys at St Laurence School playing fields confirmed aerial photos to show that a "unique" double villa with separate buildings had been found, inhabited from the 3rd to the 5th centuries. Unusually, a **font** and a **baptistery** were built into the mosaic floor of the main building's finest room in the immediate post-Roman period.

The mosaic was manufactured in Cirencester and part of it portrays a pair of dolphins either side of a cantharus. The rest was damaged when the 15ft diameter baptistery and font were inserted sometime in the 5th century. Archaeologist Mark Corney from Bristol University believed that the continuity in occupation showed that there was still "a Romanised lifestyle in this part of the world." The discovery featured in a BBC2 *Time Fliers* documentary on October 21 2003.

Below graves from an eroded 11th or 12th century dune-like cemetery at Trearddur Bay in **Holyhead**, Anglesey was found an Early Christian cemetery established on former ploughed land. Radiocarbon dating suggested a 7th century timeframe. The dead were laid out straight in metre-deep graves with no associated artefacts. Stone cists enclosed them, and the mounds formed from backfilling ringed with stone boulders. One burial had a row of quartz pebbles laid on top, an Early Christian practice known from elsewhere (including the Pendragon Society excavation at **Llanelen** in the Gower). *CL*

- David Derbyshire "Unearthed: a luxury Roman villa with chapel and granny flat" *The Daily Telegraph* October 20 2003
- Mike Pitts "Early Christian graves insight at Anglesey dig" *British Archaeology 73* (November 2003) 4

ARTURO D'ITALIA

At the ruined abbey of San Galgano at Montesiepi, near Siena in Italy, a relic from the late 12th century is claimed as the fount of all Arthurian legends by a Templar historian, according to a news report.

We have previously been apprised of the Tuscan sword in the stone (Sneyd 1999), said to have been miraculously placed there by the nobleman Galgano Guidotti when he renounced the high life to become a hermit.

Mario Moiraghi believes that medieval writers were influenced by the tale of Galgano's feat, incorporating the striking image in their various works. It is certainly

true that Robert de Boron introduced the tales of Arthur drawing the sword out of the stone in the early 13th century, followed around about the same time by Sir Galahad achieving a similar feat in *The Quest for the Holy Grail*. However, Moiraghi goes on, rather more daringly, to suggest that the Round Table could have been inspired by the shape of the Rotunda, a chapel built over the Montesiepi sword in the stone. *Why?* one might ask.

In a response to the news item, he writes that he didn't "really say that the story of King Arthur came from Italy". He suggests in his two books that (1) "the story of King Arthur (sword excluded) is connected to ancient novels [*sic*] coming from Persia" and that (2) "the story passed through Tuscany (Pisa precisely) and arrived in Aquitania and Britain".

Among other points, Moiraghi asks us to consider that *Art-* is a prefix for many Persian kings (*eg* Artaxerxes), that Perceval as a name may relate to Persia, and that Camelot is really "the land of camels". *CL*

- Richard Owen "King Arthur came from Italy, says historian" *The Times* June 16 2003
- See http://hnn.us/comments/16140.html (accessed December 3 2003): letter from Mario Moiraghi to US News Archives
- Steve Sneyd "Another sword in another stone" *Pendragon* 27 No 4 (Spring 1999) 20–1
- Chris Lovegrove "From San Galgano to Sir Galahad" *Pendragon* 27 No 4 (Spring 1999) 21–2

THE SWORD IN THE LOOM

The identification of swords in Migration Period Britain and elsewhere was discussed in a recent issue of exchange journal *Widowinde*, which draws attention to "the deposition of so-called iron 'weaving' swords, or battens, in certain female burials" from the late 6th to early 7th century AD. **Weaving swords** measure 40–40 cm, as opposed to the 90–100 cm lengths of the typical Germanic swords, but are otherwise identical (iron or steel composite blade, sometimes a fine, decorated hilt).

About a dozen of these 'swords' have been identified in Anglo-Saxon female graves in England, ranging from the Isle of Wight through Surrey, Suffolk, Kent, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Some scholars have no doubt that these swords or battens are really weaving beaters, even though elsewhere in the world they are of wood or large bones. Lorraine Evans questions this however.

Some of these implements have been found to have pattern-welded blades, cutting edges and decorated surfaces, making them impractical for weaving tasks. Others appear to be adapted from full-sized swords or to have traces of scabbard leather. Evans suggests that all such finds need to be treated on a case-by-case basis: some may have denoted a sacred association with weaving, others a high-status burial, and a few may really have been meant as weapons for the use of female warriors. *CL*

- Lorraine Evans "When is a Sword not a Sword?" *Widowinde 132* (Winter 2003) 16–18

THE SIRENTE CRATER-FIELD AND CONSTANTINE'S VISION

Further to the brief notes in "The Board"[1] on this matter, there are around eighteen probable impact craters in a field roughly one kilometre square in the Italian Abruzzo Mountains. The largest of these is oval, about 140 m x 115 m in size, and has been radiocarbon-dated from rim material to a calibrated age of 412 AD +/- 40 years. Two main papers are of particular interest so far on this, Ormo *et al* (2002) and Santilli *et al* (2003)[2]. The latter also presented a local legend, first recorded in 1898, which may have preserved a memory of the original impact, although it appears to have preserved equally well a detailed account of a Bacchanalian orgy featuring satyrs and nymphs, which was taking place on the same hot summer's night.

In both cases, a possible link was suggested to Constantine's supposed vision of a cross in the sky, seen by himself and his

[1] *Pendragon XXXI* No 1, 45)

[2] J. Ormo, A. P. Rossi, G. Komatsu "The Sirente Crater Field, Italy" *Meteoritics & Planetary Science 37* (2002), 1505-1521; and R. Santilli, J. Ormo, A. P. Rossi, G. Komatsu "A catastrophe remembered: a meteorite impact of the fifth century AD in the Abruzzo, central Italy" *Antiquity 77* (2003) 313-320

army, before the Battle of Milvian Bridge, Italy, in 312 (as mentioned in "The Board" too, where the discrepancy to the date of the main crater was rightly pointed out). However, the problem is still more complex, as this famous vision is actually a modern construct, combining elements found in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* (Cameron & Hall, 1999), Book I.28-32, and Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum* (Creed, 1984), 44.5-6.

Eusebius' *Life* was probably written between 324-339 (when Eusebius died). In Book I.28, "a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, 'By this conquer'" appeared in the sky, resting over the midday sun, as reportedly seen by the Emperor "and the whole company of soldiers which was then accompanying him on a campaign he was conducting somewhere" (quotes all from Cameron & Hall 1999, 81).

The end of this second quote confirms that Eusebius made no connection between the vision and the Italian campaign, let alone the Battle of Milvian Bridge (which follows only in Book I.38). The implication of the vague language, and its placement in the text, is that the vision happened before Constantine began his war in Italy, perhaps while he was still in Gaul, or even Britain.

Book I.29-31 reinforced the daytime vision with a night-time dream, in which Christ told Constantine to make a copy of the sign he had seen in the sky, to protect against enemy attacks. This was duly made up to Constantine's order, into standards for the army and its units. Eusebius' description makes clear this was the *labarum*, a pole topped by a Christian *chi-rho* symbol, with a decorated rectangular tapestry suspended from a horizontal bar below this. The *labarum* is known in various forms from *c* 325 onwards, so is clearly anachronistic as used thus in Eusebius' text. It also conforms poorly to the description of the daytime vision.

Lactantius' writings, dated to *c* 314-315, had Constantine advised in a dream to mark his army's shields with a version of the *chi-rho* symbol just before the Battle of Milvian Bridge (Creed 1984, 62-65). The implication is that doing this helped his force to win, though this was not seen as a sign in the sky by Constantine or his army.

Oddly, Eusebius' earlier *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 9, 9.2-8, completed *c* 315, covered the events leading up to, and during, the Battle, but contained no record of any kind of vision, only Constantine's pre-battle prayers (Oulton 1932, 358-363). The other chief texts to cover events around the Battle are the "Latin Panegyrics" XII (from 313) and IV (from 321; see Nixon & Rodgers 1994), both pagan sources. Although these mentioned various vaguely divine events (IV.14.1-4 especially had Constantine's army ablaze with a celestial glow), there are no references to any vision of Constantine's connected with events at Milvian Bridge.

Thus none of the surviving records support the idea that potential eye-witness reports of a possible major meteorite impact in Italy in 312 were contained in vision imagery linked to Constantine or Milvian Bridge.

A sighting of an impact in 412 that helped Constantine win his Italian war, and converted him to Christianity, in 312, would indeed have been a miraculous event!

Alastair McBeath

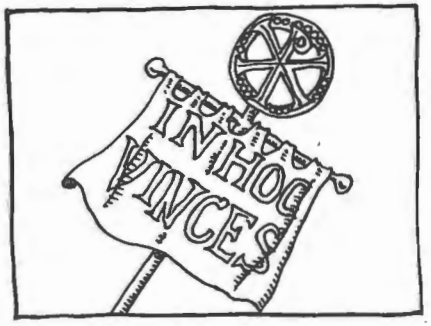
References

Cameron, A, & Hall, S G *transl* (1999) *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Clarendon Press)

Creed, J L *ed & transl* (1984) *Lactantius: De Mortibus Persecutorum* (Clarendon Press)

Nixon, C E V, & Rodgers, B S *transl* (1994, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The* Panegyrici Latini (University of California Press)

Oulton, J E L *transl* (1932) *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History, Volume II* (Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library imprint)



talking head : fred stedman-jones

VOYAGES OF ARTHUR

***'Ocean will undo the chain of things, and the great world will be revealed, and a new mariner will discover a new world so that Thule will not be the farthest land'* (Seneca)**

Dr. John Dee and Richard Hakluyt hunted in vain for the lost texts of early geographical speculation- the 14thc. *Inventio Fortunata* and the *Itinerary* of Jacob Knoyen, relevant parts summarised for them by Gerardus Mercator, and the lost source from which these stories of Arthur's colonising of the sub-Arctic regions around 530 A.D. may have come - the *Gestae Arthuri,* the Deeds of Arthur, of which nothing is really known but its name.

Simon Rouse

John Dee had announced that the Queen could claim 'Empire throughout the Arctic' in November 1577, now he had discovered 'evidence' for Arthur's Empire in the Arctic regions at a cost of thousands of his people; On Mercator's letter he made the note, '*A rare testimony of great importance to the Brytissh title in the Septentrional Regions, Atlantis in particular*', and eagerly incorporated the new evidence alongside Lambarde and his other sources. Mercator's letter was central to his presentation to the Queen of her *Title Royal* on 3rd October 1580 when he delivered the two rolls of the claims to her at Richmond.

One of the rolls is still in existence in the British Library (Cotton Ms. Augustus I.i I.) ; on one side of the parchment is a large map of Atlantis, Dee's name for America. Among his papers is a smaller map upon which he has marked large tracts of the Polar regions with the words "Infinite yse". The other side of the roll is devoted to proving the Queen's title to lands under the four headings:
1.The Clayme in Particular.
2.The Reason of the Clayme. 3.The Credit of the Reason. 4.The value of the Credit by Force of Law.

The map portrays the British Empire as extending from Terra Florida across to Nova Zamlyn (one of the four Polar land areas). The English title to all these lands, lands the Queen was never to see or hear more of, was *'by discovery, inhabitation or conquest'*. Unfortunately it was not Elizabeth's way to pay her intrepid explorers and adventurers from her own funds, instead she expected them to fund their ventures from their own pockets, sometimes lending them money to do so at a premium. But, it must be said, she was always kind to John Dee, had he not helped trace her descent from Arthur while seeking treasure and genealogical proof of his own descent from Rhodri Mawr in Wales making them distant 'cousins'?

Dee was obviously confused by the 'five generation descent from Arthur's time' of the party who arrived at Bergen in 1364. Again, he annotated the letter, calculating that there would have been '*25 generations at the least after King Arthur's time.*' It is probable that they were a band of Norse settlers from Greenland; or even, in view of the interest they provoked, a group from Markland (Labrador). But, they might have been of Celtic descent after all!

Wherever the Vikings went in the Atlantic, apart from Vinland, they found the Irish were there before them. Dicuil (c.825) tells us that the Celtic papae (priests) in Iceland were able to pick the lice from their clothes at night thanks to the 'midnight sun' and a medieval Norse text records that, *'before*

Iceland was peopled from Norway there were men in it who the Norse call the Papae: they were Christians...they left behind Irish books, bells and crosiers'. These religious artefacts have been identified in Iceland and probably in Greenland. The Norse were not racialists, many of them were Christians, some think their sagas owe much to Celtic poets Niall's saga bears a Celtic name and the Vinland Saga tells of an Irish Christian in a Viking crew. Claims have been made that the Irish were also first on the American Continent. (See both articles in biblio.) If the papae themselves had no descendants to travel to Bergen in 1364 their lay brothers might have!

But there was another claim for England's rights to colonisation, a Welsh one! A close friend of Dee was Dr. John David Rhys. He wrote a document, which lacks confirmation, telling that Dee had found a reference to a map of no later date than 1400 which showed an island in the Atlantic called Gwerddonau Llion which had been discovered by Prince Madoc. Another marginal note made by Dee on Mercator's letter is most significant, *'Madoc, sonne to Prince Owen sayled to the land north of Ireland...afterwards above 400 years was judged to have byn...(in the lands)...first by the Spaniards and others discovered'.* Richard Hakluyt echoed Dee in 1584, *'wee of England have to show very auncient and auctenticall Chronicles written in the welshe or brittishe tongue...Madock ap Owen Gwyneth, weary of civil wars, had made two voyages out of Wales and discovered and planted large Countries which he founde in the Mayne Ocean south westward of Ireland in 1170'.*

As Gwyn Alf puts it, *'From 1580 onwards, as relations with Spain spiralled rapidly into open conflict, Madoc moved majestically to the forefront...the Worthiness of Wales reached its Tudor climax in Madoc as the symbolic spearpoint first British thrust into the new world'.* So, Madoc's voyage and discovery of the West Indies had preceded Columbus by 322 years, the Tudors were the Return of Arthur.

The book *Madoc* by Gwyn Alf Williams, listed in my first article, is the definitive account and traces every aspect of this legend of the Welsh prince who left his warring brothers in Wales to find a promising new land and returned once more to gather people to join him in establishing a colony in the Americas. The colonists sailed along the North American coast to the Gulf of Mexico, there they entered Mobile Bay in Alabama and made their way up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to the Falls of the Ohio.

Early explorers told stories of Welsh-speaking Indians. George Rogers Clark was told by Chief Tobacco's son of the Shawnee Indians that, long ago, many white men had been killed in a great battle at the Falls and the survivors escaped to Missouri where their descendants became the Mandan Indians who remembered Madoc as *The Lone Man.* Believers exist in the USA and UK, still. The Madoc International Research Association, holds meetings, 3rd Tuesday monthly, 7.30 pm. at the Corner House Inn, Llangynwyd, Nr. Maesteg, Glamorgan, Wales. (Gremlyn 1@tesco.net)

The quest that took men in cockleshell craft into unknown tumultuous icy waters in the high polar latitudes, where navigation by sun and stars was often impossible, when fog obscured the sky or refraction and mirages distorted the unfamiliar horizon, makes us wonder at their motivations and their courage. Michael Foss writes, *'yet poetry guided the spirit of discovery as strongly as the compass...in this map of the mind beyond Thule, the ultimate lands of desire of the ancients were placed. In the aetherial topography of the poet lay the Lost Atlantis, Ophir, the kingdom of Prester John., the Floating Islands, the Fortunate Isles which are embraced with waters sweet, redolent and cristaline'.*

The romance of the exploration of a world still largely uncharted is captured wonderfully in the book *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic* by Donald Johnson; its sub-title is *The Legends of Seven Lands that Never Were.* With redrawn maps and contemporary engravings, it explores the origins and legends associated with seven of the mythical islands that were later copied and recopied by cartographers, places peopled by demons, loud with strange noises and often veiled in myth. The back cover blurb is accurate in describing it as *'a deft mixture of old maps and travellers' tales, Celtic and Christian mythology... a*

magical journey into the unknown and unknowable'. This is surely the context of thinking in which the Arthurian Voyages should be seen.

Mythical geography finds expression vividly in Mercator's map of the North Pole (though an interesting argument titled *Is it Mythic?* is made for actual locations in the Arctic seas on the website www.geocities.com - a hypothesis which suggests that the original expedition's route, on which the map is based, was along the coast of Newfoundland, past Baffin Island, through the Lancaster Sound to the Foxe Basin - which becomes the 'Indrawing Sea').

Other correspondences can be put forward, both mythical and geographical. Hvergelmer, the great Northern Whirlpool in Norse legends mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis and the Polar one are probably based on The Maelstrom, an oceanic whirlpool rumoured to suck in passing ships off the northwest coast of Norway near the Lofoten Islands. The positive and practical aspect of depicting the Polar Ocean as open - for it is a frozen sea and not a continent like the South Pole - is that it profoundly influenced future Arctic exploration as it offered the possibility that English ships could avoid the long, arduous passages round Africa or South America - routes in the hands of the Spaniards and Portuguese - if a North West passage could be found to get to the riches of India and China.

Martin Behain's globe of 1492, the oldest surviving, also shows the four circumpolar islands in a broken ring around the pole where no islands exist. This legendary diagram appears constantly thereafter until as late as 1700, in the maps of Finaeus, Ruysh, Mercator, Orleius, Hadj Ahmed, etc. Ruysh labels the island north of Greenland and its opposite *Insula Deserta,* the one north of Europe *Hyperboreans,* the one north of America is labelled *Aronphei and* the waters within the four islands are the *Mare Sugenum.*

The whirlpool down which the swirling waters are sucked into the earth's interior is there constantly and the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602-80) further asserts that they emerge again at the South Pole. All in all, a diagram of a sacred centre - an Axis Mundi around which the stars circle, to which all compasses direct their needles and from where all directions are south, and where the eternal waters constantly circulate through the earth.

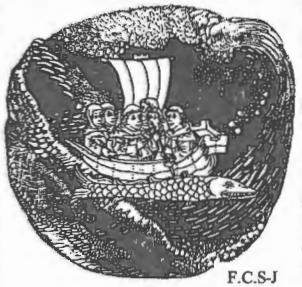
There is an interesting coda to all this. Edgar Alan Poe's short story *The Mss Found in a Bottle* describes a doomed voyage in which a ship is sucked into a watery abyss at the South Pole. In a footnote he tells us, *'the (story) was originally published in 1832, and it was not until many years afterwards that I became acquainted with the maps of Mercator, in which the ocean is represented as rushing, by four mouths into the bowels of the earth; the pole itself being represented by a black rock, towering to a prodigious height'.*

The story makes good reading and illustrated editions of Poe's work have a fine, atmospheric picture of the ship being dragged down in the waters of the Pole. Poe's idea seems to have been founded on the Hollow Earth writings of Jeremiah Reynolds. Strangely, but fitting for this writer - though it is unlikely that they ever met - Poe was calling Reynold's name when he died in a Baltimore hospital in 1849!

The Hollow Earth theories - that there is an interior world where beings live and to which access is gained through openings at the Poles - began as early as 1692 with Edmund Halley of Comet fame. They include claims that Hitler and the Nazi chiefs were flown to the South Pole and are living still within the Hollow Earth. All this is covered with many illustrations in Peter Haining's book *Ancient Mysteries.* There is also much information on the web. This concept of the Hollow Earth links with Celtic ideas of the Otherworld, often reached by sea. Perhaps that is where Arthur's lost crew are still, for Caitlin Matthews tells us that, *'heroes might venture between the worlds, fortified by courage alone'* and *'the realms of the Otherworld are of the ever-living, where everything is possible, where great deeds are accomplished and where poets and druids might travel thence, secure in wisdom and knowledge'.* Is Hitler playing Mordred there twice nightly? Surely a thought not worth the thinking!

Perhaps more useful questions might be: Did Arthur have a navy? Could the Celts of

Arthur's time have made ocean-going voyages, did they have the ships to do so? Julius Caesar describes powerful fighting vessels of the Gauls in 52 B.C. in his *De Bello Galico* as, *'tall, tough, sailing ships with leather sails'* and admits they were better adapted to sailing in treacherous and stormy waters than his own. They could run before strong winds and weather storms and were able to ride reefs and rocks, i.e. warships suited to the seas and weather of the Atlantic. Sean McGrail comments, *'Celtic seamen had solved the problems of deep-sea voyages in some of Europe's most dangerous waters by the 5thc. BC or even earlier. As the evidence stands...they were well ahead of their contemporaries in Northern Europe'.*



F.C.S-J

After 400 years of Roman occupation it would be unlikely that the insular Celts had any sort of national fleet and no major battles have been recorded in Arthur's time but links with Brittany were certainly maintained. John Matthews writes, *'If we imagine an Arthurian 'navy' at all, it must be a motley collection of vessels ranging from swift lightweight scout ships to occasional fighting vessels of a larger size built specifically for warfare or converted from merchant ships'.*

As the Irish from Dalriada spread their rule over the Picts in northern Scotland their operations became large scale. In 578-582 Aidan waged naval warfare in the Sound of Jura and in 590 he led an expedition to the Orkneys. The movement of Celtic shipping back and forth across the sea between Biscay and the Shetlands was enormous. Yes, the Celts had ships and seamanship of the highest standards of their time.

But it was the Irish saints who were amongst the finest sailors that ever stepped into a boat; sagas of mythological heroes were augmented by tales of their extraordinary journeys, the Immramas (voyages to islands). The most famous of these are the voyages of St Cormac and St Brendan. Adamnan, 9th abbot of Iona, tells of a voyage when Cormac ran for fourteen days before a southerly wind, possibly touching Shetland, the Faroes, even Iceland 300 miles further. The voyage of St Brendan is of fascination to geographers, historians and boat archaeologists alike, for not only does it describe how a curragh, a skin covered boat, had been built, it also suggests that St Brendan reached Iceland, perhaps even Newfoundland the fabled land of plenty.

There is so much to write on this endlessly fascinating subject that I am not even going to try; instead I will point you towards the most enjoyable reading listed in these articles. Tim Severin's book describes his reconstruction of Brendan's boat and his crossing of the Atlantic in 1977, proving that an early medieval skinboat could have sailed from Reykjavik to Newfoundland. A further treat is the splendid novel *Navigator,* a fictional account which takes you on board to share the voyage with St. Brendan and his monks - not to be missed!

References:

As for my previous article, plus:

1. Philip Banbury (1975) *Man and the Sea* (BCA. London)
2. Donald S. Johnson (1997) *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic* (Souvenir Press, London)
3. Matthews, J & Stewart, R (1987) *Warriors of Arthur* (Blandford, London)
4. Ed. Miranda J. Green (1996) *The Celtic World,* Chapter 15, Sean McGrail *Celtic Seafaring & Transport* (Routledge, London)
5. Naomi Reed Kline (2001) *Maps of Medieval Thought* (Boydell Press)
6. Tim Severin (1978) *The Brendan Voyage* (Hutchinson, London)
7. Scott. M. & Gaghan, G.(1988) *Navigator, The Magical Story of the Brendan Voyage (*Methuen)
8. Ed. P.Throckmorton (1987) *History from the Sea; Shipwrecks & Archaeology* (Beazley London)
9. Peter Haining (1977) *Ancient Mysteries* (Sidgwick & Jackson, London)
10. Geoffrey Ashe (1990) *Mythology of the British Isles* (Methuen, London)
11. Caitlin Matthews (1995) *The Celtic Tradition* (Element Books, Shaftesbury)

Articles:

1. McGhee R. & Tuck. J. *Did the Medieval Irish Visit Newfoundland?* Canadian Geographical Journal (June-July 1977)
2. Simon Young *Voyage Beyond the Sea* Fortean Times (October 2001, available online.)

bookworm

FICTION

Atlantean Publishing is seeking submissions for an anthology of prose and poetry based around the concept of the grail for publication in 2004, to be called ***The Grail Anthology***. They already have a poetic saga from Steve Sneyd and some short fiction, but they say they need more! They are looking for *very* long poetry (200 lines minimum) or cycles of poetry, or fiction between approximately 1000 and 5000 words in length. How you interpret the grail is up to you (cup of Christ, Celtic cauldron, stone of heaven, any sought object, even a medical grail) and they will consider any genre of fiction: fantasy, science fiction, realistic, horror or humour. The only requirement is that it must relate to the (or *a*) grail in some way.

The deadline is March 2004, and published contributors will receive a copy of the anthology when it appears. Submissions (including SSAE) should be sent to the editor, D J Tyrer, at Atlantean Publishing (Grail), 38 Pierrot Steps, 71 Kursaal Way, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2UY, UK.

The Purple Mouth Press edition of Arthur Machen's ***Guinevere & Lancelot***, is surprisingly apparently still in print, despite being published as long ago as 1986 (reports Steve Sneyd). Edited by Michael Shoemaker and Cuyler W Brooks Jr, and illustrated by Stephen Fabian, it is available for $10.00 (cash or cheque / IMO payable to Cuyler W Brooks Jr) from 4817 Dean Lance, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720, USA.

In the words of its author, Mal Peet's ***Keeper*** is "an attempt to write magically about football." It begins as an interview with the world's greatest goalkeeper, a South American known as El Gato, The Cat, who has lifted the World Cup for his country. As a 13-year-old brought up in a logging settlement in the rain forest, he comes upon a mysterious figure in a clearing known as The Keeper, who teaches him and prepares him for his footballing destiny. As reviewer Jan Mark points out in *The Guardian* (November 5 2003), "there is never any overt reference to Arthurian legend ... but what can we be witnessing but a Grail quest, the wounded Fisher King in the Waste Land, the perfect knight?" *Keeper* – "something for every reader, not least those who revel in excellent writing" – is published by Walker Books (240pp £4.99).

The third of Gwyneth Jones' quintet of Arthurian SF-fantasy novels is entitled ***Midnight Lamp*** (Gollancz 2003 £10.99 320pp). According to Justina Robson's review in *The Guardian* ("Are you ready to rock?" December 20 2003), this is "a rollicking yarn ... difficult to categorise" as it switches genres to explore rock'n'roll, ecotechnology, national identity, sexual politics and Arthurian archetypes. "Jones weaves them into a single fairy-tale with admirable style," write Robson. "It's like *Jackie* magazine written by Iain Banks on acid."

Jenny Colgan's ***Working Wonders*** (HarperCollins £6.99) has Arthur Pendleton leading a bid against rival Slough to make Coventry the European City of Culture. You won't be surprised to find Arthur descended from the king, with consultant Gwyneth as his Guinevere.

Poetry Scotland 29 was a special 'Caves of Gold' issue, with extracts from fourteen long poems entered for the 2002 Deric Bolton Trust Long Poem competition. David C Purdie's ***The Godothin*** translated *Y Gododdin* into Scottish dialect using repetitive rhyming screeds.

The Godothin say, efter lawbour sair
Afore hie Madog's beild whan they cam hame
Juist ae carle in a hunner wad retour.

A digest of the issue is available from 91–93 Main St, Callander, Scotland FK17 8BQ.

Avalon, the fantasy film reviewed last issue, only received a limited UK cinema release. According to a review by Martin Lewis in *Matrix*, the British Science Fiction Association news magazine (No 162, July / August 2003), a Chinese DVD is available from www.movietyme.com

reviews

FACTUAL

Arthurian publications first. Former member Rodney Castleden's ***King Arthur: the truth behind the legend*** is now available in paperback (Routledge 2003 £16.99 0 415 31655 3), but without the promised acknowledgement or permissions to re-produce illustrations from Chris Lovegrove's "The King and Icons" articles for *Pendragon*. In contrast, ***Arthurian Myths & Alchemy*** is the intriguing title of a detailed academic study of Edward IV's reign by Jonathan Hughes (Sutton 2002 £30.00 hb 0 7509 1994 9).

Archaeology next. In Blackwell's Peoples of Europe series comes Christopher Snyder's ***The Britons*** (2003 £20.00 hb 331pp), mostly discussing the post-Roman Brythonic Age, its decline and its culture. From the general to the particular, Brian Philp of the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit has authored the latest report in the Kent Monograph Series, ***The Discovery and Excavation of Anglo-Saxon Dover*** (KARU 2003 £18.00, volume IX), which deals with 6th century settlement of the late-Roman shore-fort. Copies are obtainable from KARU, Roman Painted House, New Street, Dover, Kent CT17 9AJ (add 20% for postage *etc*). Husband and wife team Philip Rahtz and Lorna Watts' ***Glastonbury: myth and archaeology*** is a re-issue of Rahtz's English Heritage classic in a revised paperback edition by Bob Croft (Tempus 2003 £15.00 0 7524 2548 X).

John Grigsby's ***Warriors of the Wasteland*** (Watkins 2003 pb 242pp 1 84293 058 3) links the Fisher King story with its supposed origins in Bronze Age religious belief, as its subtitle, *A quest for the pagan sacrificial cult behind the grail legends*, might suggest. His credentials include academic study, but the nature of his approach may be gauged by his former employment as research assistant to Graham Hancock. *CL, SS*

Landscape Mysteries:
The Terraces of Avalon
BBC Two, broadcast 20th November 2003
Presented by Aubrey Manning
Open University
http://www.open2.net/landscapemysteries/prog8.htm

The documentary was well presented, well researched and most interesting, and some of the suggestions intriguing, if not exactly cohesive, and, in the end, although I'd certainly recommend it as inspiration for further research, it did tend to fall down in a few places, on its own argument.

Aubrey Manning began his presentation in Glastonbury, with the aim of finding out why there are so many myths and legends surrounding Glastonbury, and how and when the terraces came to appear on the Tor. Various experts were consulted in each stage of the discussion, and the conclusion, at face value, did seem to tally with the findings; but on looking a little deeper, even though the conclusion might well be right, it doesn't completely stand up on its own merits, and really begs further research to help the conclusion to stand or fall.

In an interview with Julian Woodhall of the National Trust, who now own the Tor, it was reported that, according to geologists, the Tor is a natural formation, whereas the terraces are not due to natural erosion and are probably due to the activity of man over thousands of years.

Aubrey Manning then went on to interview archaeologist Chris Webster, to ascertain the type of Neolithic activity on the Tor, to see how early it might have been settled or used. Findings from the time are scant, and so it was suggested that the Tor was possibly visited only during occasions such as hunting; although this was a speculative suggestion, based upon lack of strong evidence to the contrary.

Comparison was then made, by Aubrey Manning, between the Tor and such Neolithic monuments as Silbury Hill, approximately 40 miles away. Being possibly more than 4,000 years old, the scale of Silbury would easily confirm that Neolithic people were quite capable of creating the terraces on the Tor. Again, speculative, but perhaps suggestive.

We were then introduced to local historian Ron Hutton, who again gave some clear and interesting suggestions. It was pointed out that people have traced a possible maze winding around the Tor, and this can indeed be followed, although it is broken in places; but again it was suggested that it might well have been more complete in a prior time.

The discussion then moved out from Glastonbury, to take in the nature of the surrounding landscape, to see if this could shed any further light on the problem. At Shapwick Nature Reserve, Vanessa Straker took soil samples with an auger, examining the type of soil and therefore, by direct association, the type of landscape, going back approximately 6,500 years. The area was a salt marsh and then mainly fenland by 4,500 years ago, with, eventually, more areas of wet woodland growing amidst the fens. The discussion was continued in an interview with Richard Brunning at the Peat Moors Centre, who pointed out that, in Neolithic times, when village settlements would have been upon occasional small islands in the fens, the area around the Tor (according to pollen analysis) was heavily wooded. This, Brunning claimed, makes it "highly unlikely" that the Tor itself would have been cleared for any kind of ceremonial walkway.

Aubrey Manning then returned to the Tor, wondering if the Tor might have experienced later occupation. At this point, he brought in the Arthurian legends, pointing out Glastonbury's long and popular association with Avalon. In the earlier interview with Chris Webster, other finds on the Tor had been shown to include 5th or 6th century pottery of a prestigious nature, originating in Turkey. This might suggest use of the Tor by wealthy and influential people, either secular or of a monastic order with connections with Constantinople. This prestigious and influential presence on the Tor seemed to fit well with a speculative time of a "real Arthur."

It was then pointed out, by Aubrey Manning, that, although there has been a Christian settlement upon the Tor since the seventh century, there is no record of King Arthur in Glastonbury until the Middle Ages; and, by that time, Glastonbury Abbey was well established.

We now returned to Ron Hutton, who referred to the disastrous fire in the Abbey in 1184. The monks were naturally demoralised and the Abbey devastated by the fire, and needed something to encourage more visitors and therefore more income. According to Aubrey Manning, "In desperation, the monks cast around for a way out of their plight," and found it in "a rather unlikely quarter." Returning to Ron Hutton, the story is told of the monks, excavating seven years after the fire, and uncovering the bones of a man of substantial stature (Arthur) and those of a woman with blonde hair (and, according to Hutton, Guinevere means simply "Blondie"). The link was made with the popularity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's "History of the Kings of Britain" and it was therefore suggested that, undoubtedly, the monks "manufactured" their miraculous discovery to create a whole new direction for pilgrimage. This, then, was the origin of the Arthurian connection with Glastonbury and its associated mysteries.

Returning now to Meg Watters, who had been conducting a geophysics survey upon the Tor, it was confirmed that there were no traces of fortifications during the fifth or sixth century. This would seem to rule out the possibility of it being used by a local warlord.

Investigating Abbey records further, we were now introduced to Steve Ripon, a landscape archaeologist, at Longleat House in Wiltshire, where the surviving Abbey records are kept: and the amount of records still extant is substantial. Longleat House aquired the Abbey records in the sixteenth century, after the dissolution of the monasteries, and, as he points out, those records contain "a remarkably rich archive."

There is, within those records, no mention of the terracing of the Tor by the Abbey.

However, by association, Aubrey Manning suggests that it could have still been carried out by the monks, as they were adept at adapting the landscape to meet their agricultural needs. The draining of the Somerset Levels was organised mainly by the Abbey, and lowlands, which were still prone to flooding, were used for pasture. Higher ground would have been used for growing crops, where they were safe from inundation.

To illustrate this point, we were then introduced to Bob Croft, Somerset County Archaeologist, studying Mediaeval strip lynchets upon the Mendip Hills. It was demonstrated that, although it would have taken a great deal of labour to form these narrow terraces for ploughing (upon the Mendips), it will have been worth the effort, to secure land safe from flooding, for the growing of crops. By association, it seemed likely that the Abbey would also use the same technique upon the slopes of the Tor. Aubrey Manning emphasises the logic of this by explaining that, at a time when the population was growing and land was in "desperately short supply" the monks would have used every available piece of land for growing food.

In conclusion, Aubrey Manning claims that, in answer to his twofold question about the origin of the terraces and of the myths and legends, "It seems probable that the Mediaeval monks were responsible for both."

Okay, so, good research, good discussion and a possibly accurate conclusion; but there are holes and contradictions in the argument which really ought to be addressed.

First of all, it is shown that Neolithic people were capable of constructing the terraces (with the example of Silbury Hill being shown), but then it is claimed that they probably did not, as there are few artefacts upon the Tor from that time, and, according to Richard Brunning, they would have been "unlikely" to have cleared the Tor of its trees (which is speculation and not conclusive).

Moving forward to the fifth or sixth century, the lack of fortifications shows that a warlord might not have lived upon the Tor; but the existence of prestigious pottery is intriguing. It might be from a monastic settlement, or it might be from somebody else of influence: that direction of research needs to be explored further.

Coming to the twelfth century, it is then claimed that, until the publication of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work, and the subsequent "manufactured" discovery of Arthur and Guinevere in the Abbey grounds, there was no tradition of Arthur or associated legends upon the Tor. Is this true? And, even if so, what other traditions were there around there? Was the Tor considered special in any way at all? This is not covered, as the emphasis has now moved to the Abbey and Arthurian legends. Despite the "amazingly rich archive" of the Abbey records, there is no mention of the landscaping of the Tor; and there is no evidence given, in the documentary, that the monks did indeed profit from their discovery of Arthur and Guinevere's tomb. They might have done, or they might not; but the documentary falls down on not showing evidence either way; and perhaps Aubrey Manning's own expression, about the monks finding their inspiration "in a most unlikely quarter" is telling. Yes, the Arthurian legends might have been popular, but why did the Glastonbury monks seize upon them; and why ignore various Christian traditions which would (possibly) have been equally available? Again, the records might have answered these questions.

Now we come to the association of the draining of the Somerset levels, the strip lynchets upon the Mendips and the terraces upon the Tor (terraces which were apparently created because of a growing population whilst land was in "desperately short supply" according to Manning; whereas the Abbey controlled vast tracts of land: how necessary was the Tor?). Again, the suggestion makes sense, that the monks were capable of organising the draining of the levels, and strip lynchets were a popular agricultural practice: therefore contemporary terracing upon the Tor seems likely. However, we still have no

reference mentioned, in the documentary, to this terracing (and indeed it was claimed that there is no reference: the suggestion is only by association). And that discussion seems to stand by exactly the same merits as the Neolithic suggestion falls. Neolithic people were capable of landscaping the Tor, but apparently did not, because there are few Neolithic finds and it was "unlikely" that they would clear the woodland from the slopes (even though they managed to build the likes of Silbury Hill). If the Tor did have ceremonial significance (and this is just my own speculation and not a suggestion, as such, then might it have been more likely for the trees to have been cleared from such a visible point?). By the same argument, turned about on its head, it is suggested that the monks of Glastonbury were capable of landscaping, with reference to examples in the area; and, even though there are no written records amongst this rich archive, it is assumed that this is exactly what they did upon the Tor. By the same presence, and lack of, similar evidence and speculation, the Neolithic idea is rejected and the Mediaeval idea favoured. Again, the conclusion could be right; or it could be way off-track. Without further in-depth research, discussion and clarification, the whole nature of the discussion remains a moot point.

All in all, then, we do have here a very interesting documentary with some intriguing research; and, generally, I'd certainly recommend it as a good lead to further research. The arguments are clear, even if they are selective and occasionally slightly contradictory, and there is a general logic to the train of thought. Perhaps the nature of the terraces will always be such that it can never be said definitively when and why they were constructed; and the idea of Mediaeval agriculture is as good as any; but it is well worth bearing in mind those three words in Aubrey Manning's conclusion: "... it seems likely." Until the research and discussion is taken further, even though the quality of this documentary is very good, it still remains as speculation at this point.

Ian Brown

Neil Mortimer, compiler
Stukeley Illustrated: William Stukeley's rediscovery of Britain's ancient sites
Green Magic 2003 136pp illus
0 9542963 3 8

Stukeley Illustrated is an introduction to the life, draughtsmanship and achievements of a remarkable 18th century figure. Mostly now associated with his pioneering work on Stonehenge and Avebury, he found time to indulge in a peregrination around Britain, about which he published his *Itinerarium Curiosum*, and to practise as a doctor of medicine.

The *Itinerarium* included fine views of *Glasenbury Abbey* and of *Camalet Castle*, South Cadbury, typical of his detailed and, as far as we can tell, rather accurate observation of sites and monuments existing in his day. There are prospects, groundplans, reconstructions and maps, all testifying to his commitment to anything that smacked of antiquity. In a touching tribute, a contemporary praised him not only for "his sense, his knowledge [and] his honesty" but also for the "mixture of simplicity, drollery, absurdity, ingenuity, superstition and antiquarianism" that he had displayed when alive. You can't say better than that.

The author of this book is currently editing, with Aubrey Burl, Stukeley's *Stonehenge* manuscript of 1723, due for publication in 2004, and *Stukeley Illustrated* is an excellent taster for the talents of the man.

Chris Lovegrove

Pamela Constantine
The Light of Camelot
Firebird Press 2001 £3.50
1 903203 082 32pp

Longtime readers of *Pendragon* will have seen some of Pamela Constantine's work before in the pages of the journal. This collection of 29 poems are all inspired by the world of Camelot and its inhabitants, and sits together nicely in a little book that can be dipped into as required when the spirit is flagging and needs uplifting.

If you find the 'streams of consciousness' school of poetry hard to swallow, the poems collected here will be the perfect antidote. Some appear deceptively simple on first

reading, only to then conjure up and reveal deeper meanings on subsequent readings; an occupation I thoroughly recommend. As with all Pamela's work, her use of imagery is first-rate as this extract from 'Jewels' shows:

Falling level now, the stream
Travels thro' the forests' dream
Flashing sapphire, garnet, jade
Of sky and sun and woodland shade.
Even as we, caught by the sun
Are living jewels, every one.

Wonderful; poetry you can walk into. *The Light of Camelot* is one of those essential companions to have close on your journey through the Arthurian realms. Contact Firebird Press at 104 Argyle Gardens, Upminster, Essex RM14 3EU for this and related titles, enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Simon Rouse

William Morris: Selected Poems
Edited and with an Introduction by
Peter Faulkner
Fyfield Books 2002 £9.95 156pp
0 85635 926 2
Carcanet Press Ltd, 4th floor,
Conavon Court, 12–16 Blackfriars Street,
Manchester M3 5BQ

This handsomely produced book, with a thorough and enlightening introduction by the editor of the William Morris Society, gives a wide-ranging representation of the work Morris produced during a long poetic career, extracting books published between 1858 and 1891 (albeit inevitably somewhat skewed to the extent that the longer narrative poems are omitted, or represented only by short lyrics and songs from within them).

This review, however, will focus on the two major Arthurian poems which begin the book, along with brief mention of a handful of those of the other poems where the medieval setting, although not directly Arthurian, nevertheless has a commonality of feel and atmosphere with what might be called the world *à la* Malory.

Morris, in many ways, was a Renaissance man out of time – designer, reviver of many dying crafts, and pioneer socialist as well as poet – in that connection, it's irresistible to quote Morris himself from the book: "If a cap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry he had better shut up"! That intense involvement with the visual, in particular the natural world, and with its shaping into patterns at once seeming ever-new and almost hypnotic in the cyclic recurrences which infused his designs, and the powerful human sympathy and empathy which drove his social and political work, are both strongly reflected in his poetry.

And this is certainly true of the long 1858 Arthurian poems, "The Defence of Guenevere" and "King Arthur's Tomb". Because of the enormous popularity, then and now, of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, they tend to be seen as the be-all and end-all of Victorian era Arthurian poetry. However, to read Morris' contributions is to realise that, while Tennyson in effect aligned the Arthurian story with the ruling paradigm of Victoria's Empire and its ideals, the Matter could also lend itself to overt defiance of such codes, and sharp, if indirect, criticism of the way they and their lip-service cut against the natural grain of humanity, the uncontrollability of love, and the full overall development of the individual.

But to theorise generally around the two poems is to distract from their great individual power.

"The Defence", aside from a handful of framing initial and final verses, uses the form of the dramatic monologue throughout. As with those of Browning, another great Victorian enthusiast for the form, the result is startlingly modern, Guinevere voiced in a convincing, almost stream-of-consciousness, riposte to her accuser, Gawaine. The form, rhymed triplets (until a final quatrain), with the middle rhyme of one becoming the first and third rhyme of the next, by enlacing pulls the poem forward, yet unobtrusively enough that it seems always natural, if emotion-heightened, speech, constantly believable as the words of a passionate woman – whose "defence", in essence, is to proclaim the human unstoppability of her relationship with Launcelot, and the unbridgeable gulf between that reality (in effect a force of nature at work), and the

colourless and therefore, in essence, untrue, "facts" of misbehaviour derived from blinkered witnesses to construct a banal, if deadly, charge-sheet, lacking in human understanding.

In the catalogue of a 1985 exhibition of Arthurian publications at Rylands Library in Manchester, the compiler, Margaret M Wright, said 'The abrupt opening of "The Defence of Guenevere", which enhances the dramatic effect of the poem, was not intentional but was the result of the printer's mistake in starting the poem with the second page of manuscript.' Somehow, this has the air of an apocryphal tale – certainly, many other poems in this book use the same technique of plunging *in medias res*, and it's hard to believe either that Morris perpetually suffered from page-shuffling typesetters, or subsequently adopted the technique purely as a result of encountering such an error – but Wright's remark does draw attention to how effectively plunging us into the middle of the situation works to grip the reader.

(This is also true of other poems where the story is far less well-known, ones drawing, for example, on episodes from Froissart's *Chronicles*, or almost totally mysterious, as with the remarkable penultimate poem in the book, the 1891 "The Folk-Mote By The River", where we find ourselves in the middle of a hay-harvest, about to reach its completion with the mowing-for-ritual-offering of a barrowmound, while the threat of an attack on the peasants by a feudal tyrant gradually unfolds.)

"Never apologise, never explain!" not only offers the essence of Guinevere's attitude but also expresses the way Morris respects the reader, in poem after poem, by avoiding the spelling out of data and background: those he voices, including as here Guinevere, recall as we ourselves do in vivid, jump-cutting fragments of mood and image, not in linear narrative. As Faulkner in his introduction puts it, "These poems demand to be read in terms of Keats' Negative Capability when the reader refrains from any 'irritable striving after fact and reason'."

Also around 12 pages long, although this time in *abab* rhymed quatrains, "King Arthur's Tomb" shows us two sleepless people, Launcelot riding through the night, torturing himself with memories of Guenevere as dawn, and Glastonbury, grow nearer; then the former Queen, now a nun defeated into acceptance of her sinfulness, crying out through the night. Morning brings them together, he, sprawled to rest across the tomb he does not even realise is, ironically, the King", she, come to test herself and her ability to reject him. We witness an encounter, in what is in effect a dialogue of the deaf, of two mutually uncomprehending torments, even solipsisms (curiously recalling how, in "The Defence", Guenevere at times seems more excited by her own beauty than by Launcelot's splendour) which ends only when he falls, exhausted by emotion, and stuns himself on the tomb, waking to find her gone for good.

Both poems are alive with vivid language and image, although each is so closely-woven – despite their length, there is no trace of verbal wastage – as to be difficult to meaningfully extract.

One other poem – "Near Avalon" – very short, that is both Arthurian and in a sense a posterior footnote to the first two, tells of a mysterious ship, with on each sail "A portraiture of Guenevere" (an unexplained image reminiscent of an illuminated letter in a manuscript); while in "Golden Wings" (one of the dark-mooded medieval poems, which have this that is Arthurian about them, that love and its loss alike breed almost casual violence), the doomed protagonist, Jehane, before destruction arrives for her and her home, restlessly beats time as – an elegantly economical foreboding – "The minstrels in the gallery / Sung: Arthur, who will never die, / In Avallon he groweth old". "The Haystack In The Floods", "Concerning Geoffrey Teste Noir", "The Wind", and "The Blue Closet", albeit none with any such direct Arthurian referent, are other powerful instances of how Morris succeeds in entwining love and death in a way true in mood, if different in form, to the grim Border ballads, the "Dance of Death" so beloved of

medieval illustrators, or, earlier still, the Norse sagas that so fascinated him.

Yet, despite their ostensible inexplicability in terms of conventional narrative, and their brooding darkness, all are also vivid with life, and believable truth to the worlds and people they create, as if, through time's darkness, a powerful light is suddenly but briefly shone onto a scene from a lost world, compelling despite its strangeness.

Nor is that world so utterly far from our own, equally violent one, as we might imagine. For an instance of the shiverily contemporary suddenly rising out of Morris' pages, consider this from "King Arthur's Tomb": "But not quite grim; ... his cloven head // ... Being by embalmers deftly solder'd up". Yes, it is Guenevere recalling the bringing of Emperor Lucius' corpse for Arthur's triumph. But is it not also Saddam Hussein's son, facially reconstructed before being put on display for the world's media?

The past, be it Arthur's court or the badlands of the Hundred Years War, may be another country: Morris' triumph as a poet is to show us that, differently as they may do things there, its inhabitants are – were – also truly human, truly individual, and, in his poetic hands, compellingly, movingly, intensely, memorably so.

Steve Sneyd

Ronan Coghlan
The Robin Hood Companion
Xiphos Books, Bangor, Co Down 2003

Along with The Green Man, there has been a recent renewal of interest in Robin Hood, that other quintessential hero of insular tradition. But though, superficially, it may appear that Robin, Marian, Little John and Friar Tuck complement the figures of Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and Merlin, there really is no fit.

However, this thoroughly researched volume – which includes a delightfully idiosyncratic A-Z dictionary reflecting the legend's broad chronological spectrum, a useful bibliography and a modern rendition of *A Little Gest of Robin Hood* – provides plenty of excuses for Arthurians to dip into it. Modern novelised, filmed and televised versions of Robin's legends draw in Arthur, Merlin and the Round Table, for a start. The origins of the outlaw, like the once and future king, are shrouded by uncertainty, a state of affairs which has not stopped but indeed encouraged numerous hypotheses. (One of my favourites, not noted by Coghlan, is that our hero's name derives from Ra-Benu, the phoenix form of the Egyptian god!) And the mystery surrounding Robin's death and burial place is not a little reminiscent of you-know-who.

This *vademecum* is a delight to peruse, taking the reader into the byways of the embellished legend. Popular culture is especially explored – TV, comics, fiction, folklore as well as fakelore – showing that the stories continue to evolve. Ronan Coghlan's *Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends* itself successfully metamorphosed into a popular illustrated edition; one hopes that this self-published title will do the same.

Chris Lovegrove

the board

BIG SCREEN

Long-time Pendragon associates **John and Caitlin Matthews** report in *Hallowquest Newsletter* about their involvement in the new Jerry Bruckheimer film from Disney, ***King Arthur***. John has been advising on aspects of design, story and historical background, and Caitlin has been recreating the Pictish language for use by Merlin in the film.

The storyline is premised on the presence of Sarmatian troops in Britain in 5th century Britain. Filming has been taking place in Ireland, where 3 miles of Hadrian's Wall has been reconstructed in Co Wicklow and a "basilican" stable built at Ballymore Eustace in Co Kildare.

Architect Gary McGinty and set designer Dan Weil decided that a real barn-like building would be "easier and cheaper to create ... than a makeshift structure," so a 6,000 sq ft stable in kit form, with giant timber trusses and columns sitting on steel shoes, was designed. Built by the Berkshire-based company that worked on the new Globe Theatre in London, the stables were based on a nave and two aisles made from Douglas fir held together with oak peg joints. The structure went on the open market in October for £175,000, to be reconstructed elsewhere for use as shop, pub, office, studio or off-beat home.

The cast for *King Arthur* includes Clive Owen, Ray Winstone, Keira Knightley and Ioan Gruffydd as Lancelot, and the script is by David Franzoni (whose credits include *Gladiator*). Despite anachronisms – some of the names, for example! – the Matthews believe "this may well be the best Arthurian flick yet to appear." The film is due for release in winter 2004, with John Matthew's new book *King Arthur* delayed to tie in.

A sequel to the CGI-animated film ***Shrek*** is in post-production. Ian Brown reminds us that the gist of the story of the original fantasy (based on a novel) is a neat twist on the idea of the **Loathly Lady** of Arthurian romance, not unlike that in *The Marriage of Gawain*.

John Boorman's ***Excalibur*** was given a retrospective in a new history magazine by the Senior Curator of European Edged Weapons at the Royal Armouries, Leeds, so he was in a good position to judge the film's High Medieval vision of the Arthurian legend. "The knights appear almost insect-like perpetually clad in their metal exoskeletons. They eat, drink, battle, rape, live and die in full armour." Only thirty armours of the 250 constructed survived the "violent" battle scenes and are now housed in Cornwall and at the National Film Studios in Bray, Ireland.

Adam Ant wore Lancelot's armour in his 1981 *Prince Charming* music video. **Excalibur** was stolen from Boorman's home many years ago but the **Grail** is still apparently there. A Warner Brothers DVD came out in 2000.

- *Hallowquest Newsletter 54* August 2003
- Colin Coyle "Stable fit for a king" *The Sunday Times* September 21, 2003
- Bob C Woosnam-Savage "Medieval Movie Mayhem" *Medieval History Magazine 3* November 2003

BROADCAST

National Poetry Day was on October 9th, and Radio 4's *Today* programme featured Michael Simmons-Roberts on their Thought for Today slot. Though Steve Sneyd didn't catch the title (and nor did I), the Thought took the form of a poem on the theme of **Arthur** re-arisen in a contemporary inner city.

In the fourth of seven programmes, Bettany Hughes examined the period 410–1066 for Channel 4's ***Seven Ages of Britain*** (broadcast December 6 2003). The new political correctness decrees that, because recent limited DNA studies suggest fifty to ninety percent of modern British males are descended from North European males, the old model of Angles and Saxons exterminating the inhabitants of lowland Roman Britain is now somehow proved. The programme eschewed discussion of the validity of this and moved on.

TREADING THE BOARDS

Red Shift celebrated 21 years in 2003 while on tour in October with ***The Legend of King Arthur***. Adapted from Malory, this dramatisation "transposes the mythical Camelot to the tough, sleek world of a modern successful company" while making use of the martial art form *capoeira* "to give the battle scenes that extra edge". *Legend* was shown at the UCL Bloomsbury Theatre, London, the Blackfriars Arts Centre, Boston and the Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield.

Music Theatre Wales' previous production was the "acclaimed" musical comedy ***Gwyneth And The Green Knight***. Their current production is *Ion*, based on a play by Euripides, which went on show in November 2003 in Sheffield. More details at www.musictheatrewales.org.uk

Gerald Thomas' direction of Wagner's ***Tristan und Isolde*** so displeased the opening-night audience at the Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro that they booed and jeered at him. "I'm not a realistic director," he is reported to have said. "I love mixing things up and doing all this metalinguistic stuff that I do ..." The "stuff" included a masturbation scene, Sigmund Freud sniffing cocaine, a chorus of Hasidic Jews and a fashion show.

The upshot was that he mooned the audience from the stage. He said he lost it due to anti-Semitic remarks directed at him from members of the International Richard Wagner Forum in the audience. Thomas' supporters are pleading that a charge of public indecency be dropped.

- Red Shift notice in *The Guardian Guide* October 18 2003
- Music Theatre Wales notice in *Metro* November 11 2003
- Larry Rohter "A fright at the opera" *The Guardian G2* November 12 2003

NAMING NAMES

Sword on the Rocks, anyone? In a recent *Index* catalogue there appeared the **Excalibur Bar Master**. This is a hip flask with a database, containing a list of the 500 most popular drinks, and descriptions of cocktails and other such information. The ideal gift perhaps for Sir Drinkalot (suggests Ian Brown who spotted it), this is in the smaller *Index* catalogue (page 138) and costs £19.99 (order number 108-134).

In Northampton, between the city centre and the suburb of Abington, Steve Sneyd reports a surprising cross-cultural sight: confirmed by a sign showing a wizard in traditional outfit, **Merlin's Tandoori** is indeed named after Arthur's spin-doctor.

An advertisement in *The Observer*'s Business section (30th November 2003) caught the eye: "**Merlin** is looking for an experienced, dynamic and enthusiastic individual ..." The ad however was actually for a charity ("Providing healthcare in crises") seeking to appoint an Operations Manager in West Africa to lead their Country Managers "in implementing challenging humanitarian operations". Merlin in 2003 celebrated their tenth anniversary of intervening in international health crises (merlin.org.uk).

At its 2003 Professional Developers Conference in Los Angeles, Microsoft "revealed the technologies at the heart of the next generation of its operating system". This includes "the Universal Canvas", a tool for creating application user interfaces, and Microsoft has codenamed this as **Avalon**. This will be the key to the next version of Microsoft Windows, due between 2005 and 2006, and promises to introduce significant changes in building applications.

Avalon, incidentally, is also the name of the production company behind the transfer of *Jerry Springer: the Opera* from the National Theatre to the Cambridge Theatre in London.

Did you, like me, miss the British Clematis Awards in 2000? If so, then you may not have come across a cultivar called ***Clematis* 'Pendragon'** which, while not a winner, was recommended by the judges as of potential interest. Entered for trial and named by Robin Savill, it was a *crispa-viticella* hybrid raised by Denis Bradshaw. "The flowers, similar in shape to those of *Clematis* 'Étoile Rose', are small, nodding and reddish purple in colour," their website reported.

- Simon Bisson "Microsoft fills in the canvas" *The Guardian* November 6 2003
- http://www.britishclematis.org.uk/awards.html

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Sir Terry Matthews is a Welsh electronics billionaire, a "self-made plutocrat" who intends to leave his mark in the land of his fathers. The 2010 Ryder Cup golf tournament is due to take place at his Celtic Manor leisure complex near Newport, and, in advance of the event, Matthews plans to erect a 60ft statue in the Bristol Channel.

Matthews' statue of "the goddess of the tides" (**Sabrina** perhaps?) will take advantage of the River Severn's tidal range of nearly 50ft. "When the tide's in, the only thing you'll see is an arm holding a sword," he says. "As the tide goes out, it reveals this beautiful maiden – with fab'luss tits," *an Englishman reported.*

Thought to be the last survivor of its kind, an **East Asian giant softshell turtle** has recently been caught on amateur video after long being assumed as mythical, like Nessie. The existence of the five-foot-long male turtle was thus finally proved in 1998, but the hunt is now on to find a mate for the giant, which resides in a lake in **Hanoi**, Vietnam. As we have reported before, a turtle in the lake has long been associated with a Lady of the Lake-type legend according to the news item:

King Le Loi was boating off the lake with his courtiers when a giant turtle genie rose and took his magic sword, a gift from the gods. The turtle plunged down and returned the sword to its divine owners. From then on the lake was known as Ho Hoan Kiem, which means Lake Of The Returned Sword.

Arthur and the Round Table were the highlight of the festive season at the **Royal Armouries, Leeds**. From December 20th to January 4th visitors were able to "relive every battle, skirmish and adventure" courtesy of the museum's "team of fearless interpreters". Magic tricks from Merlin and storytelling sessions were also on offer (armouries.org.uk).

Member **Laurence Main** is planning to undertake a mammoth trek around the island of Britain in 2004 to support The Vegan Society in its diamond jubilee year. Beginning on the Celtic festival of Imbolc (February 1st), Laurence will take a route from the stone circle at Callanish on the Isle of Lewis, through Scotland, the North of England, Wales, Wessex, Sussex and Kent before ending in London on Saturday 30th October for The Vegan Society's AGM.

Along the way he will visit many significant ancient sites including **Stow-in-Wedale** (where the fragments of Arthur's shield are reputedly preserved), and **Camlan** near Dinas Mawddwy (a claimant for Arthur's last battle). More details from 9 Mawddwy Cottages, Minllyn, Dinas Mawddwy, Machynlleth SY20 9LW.

- Martin Baker "Lord of the Celtic Manor" *The Sunday Telegraph* October 26 2003
- Suzy Austin "The loneliest animal in the world" *Metro* October 13 2003
- Chris Lovegrove "The Lake" *Pendragon* 29 No 3 (Summer 2001) 29
- Malcolm Robertshaw "Wizard stuff at the Royal Armouries" *Huddersfield Weekly News* December 9 2003

REVISIONISM

Not directly Arthurian, reports Steve Sneyd, but of interest for its British Celtic history and legend overlap, is Eric Ratcliffe's website dedication to **Commius** (who fought for Julius Caesar in Gaul, then against him Britain); it also theorises links with the origination of the Lear story:
http://homepage.ntlworld.com/chessmaster/Commius/Pge_1.html

Eric Ratcliffe is best known to Pendragons for his **Great Arthurian Timeslip** theory, which postulates that Arthur's activities really took place against the backdrop of the Roman invasion of Britain.

You may prefer, however, to believe that **Ambrosius Aurelianus** is "the real-life hero upon whom the mythical King Arthur is probably based". According to Geoffrey Williams, "Wiltshire was Arthur's power base." He continues, "Gildas ... credits the pivotal British victory over the Saxons at the siege of Mons Badonicus solely to [Ambrosius]"; sadly, "later writers purged the Latin-named leader and another figure emerged to take the plaudits – ... the virtuoso King Arthur."

Presumably, Steve Sneyd comments, Williams has the rare second edition where Gildas responded to complaints from readers by filling in all the gaps. Williams later concedes that "Of course, Ambrosius might not have been the basis for Arthur at all, but nobody else fits the historical bill." Anything, however, is better than "to delve into the fantasy world of Arthurian myth".

- Geoffrey Williams "Great Drives" *The Daily Telegraph* May 25 2002

Compiled by C Lovegrove, S Sneyd, I Brown

JOURNALS AND SOCIETIES

Light's List of Literary Magazines 2004 **(1 897968 25 6)** contains the names, addresses, price, frequency, page count and a brief note of interests of over 1400 UK, US, Australasian, European, African and Asian **small press magazines** publishing creative writing and artwork in English.

The 19th annual edition runs to 70 pages and costs £3 inclusive of postage (US $7 surface: US $8 air) with cheques or POs payable to John Light (Photon Press, 37 The Meadows, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 1NY).

Arthurian Association of Australia Enquiries: 19 Carcoola Road, Cromer, NSW 2099, Australia *arthurian.asn.au*

The Cauldron Paganism, folklore, earth mysteries. Sample: £2.50, annual subs: £12.00, cheques M A Howard, BM Cauldron, London WC1N 3XX
the-cauldron, fsnet.co.uk

Celtic Connection Journal of Celtic and related subjects. Sample: £1.25, UK annual subs: £10.00 / £18.00, cheques: Celtic Connections Magazine. Editor: David Barton, 97 Rosehill Drive, Bransgore, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 8NX
editorceltconn@aol.com
Celtic-connections-magazine.co.uk

Hallowquest Caitlin and John Matthews' publishing and teaching programmes. Four issues $8.00 / £16.00 World, cheques: Caitlin Matthews, BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX
hallowquest.org.uk

Meyn Mamvro Cornish ancient stones and sacred sites. Sample: £2.20, annual subs: £6.50, cheques Cheryl Straffon, 51 Carn Bosavern, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX
cornwt.demon.co.uk
cheryl.straffon@meynmamvro.freeserve.co.uk

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

The Round Table Occasional Arthurian poetry and fiction. Editors: Alan Lupack, Barbara Tepa Lupack. Enquiries: The Round Table, Box 18673, Rochester, New York NY 14618, USA (enclose IRC)
lib.rochester.edu/camelot/arthmenu.htm

Widowinde Anglo-Saxon literature, history and culture. Editor: Karl Wittwer. Sample: £3.50, enquiries: BM Box 4336, London WC1N 3XX
tha-engliscan-gesithas.org.uk

MIRAGE GLASS

The Green Knight © 2003

Pendragon members Johan and Wolfe Van Brussel have been designing and making stained glass to commission since 1978, using traditional and innovative techniques. Wolfe trained at Wrexham College of Art and met Johan from the Netherlands on the slopes of Cader Idris. Their work is a response to Welsh landscape and legend and the Matter of Britain. In 2003 they spent a week's refreshment with other creative artists at the Camelot Castle Hotel, Tintagel, where they felt the spirit of the Round Table to be upheld and an inspiration for their work. Wolfe was also at the Caerleon Round Table with us in June.

The panel of the Green Knight above is a recent example of their work and Wolfe is now about to undertake a commission for a piece showing King Arthur himself, a challenge she is eagerly anticipating.

Visitors are welcome at the Llangedwyn Studio which is situated on a riverside site with free parking, toilets and other crafts to see in the beautiful Tanat Valley. Nearby is Sycharth, the home of the Princes of Powys; Pennant Melangell; Pistyll Rhaeadr; Oswestry Hillfort and Offa's Dyke; not to mention the beautiful Severn Valley and Montgomery (the Camelot of *The Keys to Avalon*).

Open all year, Tuesday to Saturday, there is a Display Area of attractive pieces for sale: lamps, mirrors, boxes, and pictures of the artists' commissioned work. There is also a Supplies Shop where enthusiasts can buy glass, lead and tools for stained glass and mosaic work. You can attend a beginner's summer class at the Mill and learn basic skills for yourself with hands-on tuition.

Please visit our website, send us an SAE or email us for information, inquiries and to discuss ideas for commissions.

Mirage Glass, Llangedwyn Mill, Llangedwyn, Oswestry,Shropshire, SY10 9LD

Phone: 01691 780618 Email: info@miragеglass.co.uk
Website: www.miragеglass.co.uk